

Charles University in Prague

Faculty of Education

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BACHELOR THESIS

Latinos in the USA:

Correlation between the U.S. interventions in Latin America and the number of  
immigrants of Latinx origin

Hispanci v USA: Korelace mezi intervencemi USA v Latinské Americe a  
počtem hispánských přistěhovalců

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Prague 2021

## DECLARATION

I proclaim that I have worked on this thesis on my own and used only the sources that are stated in the bibliography.

## PROHLÁŠENÍ

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto práci zpracovala samostatně a použila pouze zdroje uvedené v seznamu pramenů.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Jakub Ženíšek, PhD., for his guidance, patience and helpful advice when writing this thesis.

#### PODĚKOVÁNÍ:

Ráda bych poděkovala panu Mgr. Jakobovi Ženíškovi, PhD., za jeho vedení, trpělivost a nápomocné rady.

#### ABSTRACT:

The focus of this thesis are Latinos living in the United States. The thesis is divided into two parts, one being the theoretical part, the other the practical part. In the theoretical part, the aim is to summarize the historical interaction between Latin American countries, seeking to establish a correlation between US interventionist policies in some Latin American countries and the number of Latino immigrants in the United States. This is previewed by a brief characterization of Latin American communities living in U.S., with one chapter focusing on bilingualism. The practical part is dedicated to complementary research conducted in the form of a survey with the target group being Latin Americans living in the U.S.

KEYWORDS: USA, Latin America, intervention, immigration, bilingualism

#### ABSTRAKT:

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na občany latinskoamerického původu, kteří nyní žijí ve Spojených státech amerických. Práce je rozdělena na část teoretickou a praktickou. Teoretická část shrnuje společnou historii některých států Latinské Ameriky a USA, přičemž pojednává zejména o korelaci mezi intervencemi Spojených států v Latinské Americe a počtem latinskoamerických přistěhovalců v USA. Této stati předchází stručná charakteristika latinskoamerické komunity v USA, včetně kapitoly věnované bilingvismu. V empirické části je proveden doplňkový výzkum ve formě dotazníku. Cílová skupina respondentů jsou latinskoameričtí občané žijící na území Spojených států.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: USA, Latinská Amerika, intervence, imigrace, bilingvismus

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The main motivation behind this thesis is mostly my Latin American descent. This, however, is not the only reason for choosing this topic. The history of U.S. political and military incursions in Latin America is never mentioned as a noteworthy item in the public discussion of Hispanic immigration. Whether it is a pro-immigration position, such as one endorsed by the current U.S. President, Joe Biden, or the anti-immigration rhetoric embraced by the late President, Donald J. Trump, this specific consideration seems to be absent from the public discourse. And yet, it seems legitimate to ask the question as to whether the US neocolonial policies in South and Central America had an impact on the influx of migrants from the south. The thesis focuses on the most demographically significant US inhabitants of Latino origin, namely people with Puerto Rican, Cuban and Mexican ancestry. We seek to establish a correlation between the number of migrants from these countries and the history of US political and military incursions in these countries. This research-based project is complemented by an opinion survey filled out by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latino immigrants.

In the practical part of the thesis, a complementary opinion survey targeting a specific group will be conducted. This specific group consists of Latinos living in the USA. Its aim is to find out their experiences, feelings and opinions about America and racism in the U.S. They will also be asked about whether they are bilingual and about their experiences in education in the U.S. From this survey, we will hopefully get enough information to paint a picture of what the current generation of Latinx immigrants (or Latinos living in the USA) face on the daily. It seeks to confirm the hypothesis that U.S. citizens of Latino origin are still subjectively experiencing prejudicial treatment. This flies in the face of the general impression that major improvements have been accomplished vis-à-vis the social standing of ethnic minorities over the past 50 years, thanks to affirmative action and political correctness. The thesis puts this assumption to a test and argues that people of Latino origin still face major discrimination and that Trump's administration has only gotten matters worse. This hypothesis stems from the continual racism being displayed across the United states.

Admittedly, this constitutes a double focus. The two-tiered research question can therefore be formulated as follows: (1) Is there a direct correlation between US incursions into Latin American countries and the influx of US migrants from those countries and (2) is there a reason to suspect that US citizens of Latin American ancestry still encounter prejudicial treatment, even after affirmative action?

# 1. LATINX IMMIGRANTS

In this chapter, we will focus on both legal and illegal immigration and its problems, as well as some of the benefits of immigration. Then we will delve into the topic of bilingualism. Both the aforementioned topics, however random they may seem, are closely tied with the Latinx<sup>1</sup> population residing in the United States. (Be it 1st or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of immigrants, most of the Latinx population is bilingual.)

## 1.1. IMMIGRATION

The United States is a country where immigration played a key role from the very beginning the nation formed. It was partly built by immigrants. They had a massive impact on the development of the nation and were often used as cheap labor. Moreover, majority of the United States citizens can track their descent to foreign countries.

Today, around 14% of its residents come from countries all over the world with more than a half of them having received U.S. citizenship. According to the American Immigration Council, it is estimated that around 75% of these immigrants, come into the U.S. already speaking English fairly well.

In the data chart below, borrowed from the Pew Research Center, we can observe the origin regions of the American immigrant population throughout the years 1960 and 2018 (e.g. see fig. 1).

---

<sup>1</sup> “Latinx” is used as a universal epithet which subsumes both male and female people of Latin American ancestry. It can also be argued that the term proactively presumes non-binary gender identities.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Europe/Canada and other countries in North America</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Other Latin American countries<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Mexico</b>
1960	84%	4%	3%	6%
1970	68%	7%	11%	8%
1980	42%	16%	16%	16%
1990	26%	22%	21%	22%
2000	19%	23%	22%	29%
2010	14%	25%	24%	29%
2015	13%	27%	24%	27%
2018	13%	28%	25%	25%

Figure 1: Country of Origin of American Immigrants (www.pewresearch.org)

The shift in the regions of origin is rather extensive after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act – the first law ensuring that the U.S. will accept immigrants from all nations no matter their race, place of origin or sex.

In 1960, most of the immigrants were coming from Europe and North America with only 4% coming from Asia and about 9% from Mexico and other Latin American countries. In 20 years, the number of immigrants with North American origin was reduced

<sup>2</sup> Note: Other Latin America includes Central America, South America and the Caribbean. Asia includes Central, East, Southeast, and South Asia.

in half with immigrants from Mexico and other European countries slowly taking the lead. In 2018, majority of immigrants were coming from Asia, an influx which has by now outnumbered the Latinos, and Latin American countries. Immigrants with European or Northern American descent were no longer in the lead.

Latinx immigration is a rather controversial subject of debate in the U.S. Both the late president, Donald Trump, and the current president, Joe Biden, have had a lot to say regarding immigration from Latin American countries. None of them have mentioned however, the highly probable cause behind such a massive immigration surge. The USA's involvement in internal political and economic affairs and its neocolonial treatment of Latin American countries such as Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guatemala. All of these countries experienced U.S. incursions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which then shaped the countries' development. Later in the thesis, the history between the aforementioned countries and the United States will be elaborated on further.

Regarding Latinx immigrants, Luis Noe-Bustamante and Antonio Flores in their article "Facts on Latinos in the U.S." state that in 2017, there were almost 60 million people of Latin origin in the USA. According to the data collected by the United States Census Bureau, around 18% of the whole nation's population is of the Latin American origin. With the highest count of Latino immigrants being those of Mexican descent – around 62% of all Latinx immigrants. Puerto Ricans fall in second, with around 10% of all Latinx immigrants, followed by Cubans with 3.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

### 1.1.1. PROBLEMS OF IMMIGRATION

Immigration has its problems, of course. Namely illegal immigration. Illegal immigration is the process of migrating into a country without the proper documentation and thus violating the state's immigration laws. Overstaying, i.e. staying in the country after the expiration of legal documentation, such as visa and other, is also a form of illegal immigration (Nolo). A study done by the Center for Migration Studies in New York in 2019 shows that the number of visa overstays is significantly higher than illegal border crossing and continues to rise (Center for Migration Studies).

Those who enter the USA illegally are committing a criminal offense and could face imprisonment and later deportation, with denied possibility to re-enter the United States in the following years (5 years to permanent bar on admissibility, depending on the type and number of violations). Those, who overstay their visa, are committing a civil violation and face deportation and restrictions for future visa applications. Those who overstay their visa for more than 180 days but less than a year are deported and banned from entering the USA for 3 years. A visa overstay longer than 1 year leads to deportation and results in a 10- year ban from entering the States. (People who overstay their visa have no criminal record.) A first offense is considered a misdemeanor and any following offense is considered a felony (Nolo).

It is impossible to grant all the applicants U.S. citizenship, as such a voluminous population influx could destabilize the country's economy and cause massive unemployment for U.S. citizens. Unemployment could lead to poverty, tax strains and low wages due to the influx of (cheap) labor force. Many anti-immigrant groups also mention drug trafficking and increased crime rates with immigrants being the cause. However, there is no evidence to prove that that is the case (Miles and Cox). In fact, research shows that immigration enforcement has virtually no effect on U.S. crime rates. Natives commit more crime than illegal immigrants (Baker).

In connection with illegal immigration, Mexican immigrants will be mentioned, as Mexico is the most common country of origin for illegal immigrants and the biggest Latino minority living in the U.S. The strict border control and inability of U.S. to grant

all Mexican nationals citizenship sometimes leads to them trying to get into the country illegally. It is estimated, that in the year 2017, there were around 4.9 million of unauthorized Mexican immigrants. According to the Pew Research center, the number of unauthorized immigrants has been on a decline in recent years, however. On the other hand, the number of unauthorized immigrants from other parts of the world, such as Asia or Central America, has grown (Pew Research Center).

### 1.1.2. BENEFITS OF IMMIGRATION

It is worth mentioning some of the benefits of immigrants and immigration. The immigrants increase the U.S. economic growth as consumers and tax-payers, they also increase the country's diversity and multiculturalism.

Immigrants in the United States are also a key component of the U.S. workforce in multiple industries across the board. They account for over a third of all farmers, fishermen and forestry workers and nearly 25% of them appear in the computer and math sciences. The industry with the highest count of immigrants is health care and social services. Over 4 million of immigrants provide these services. They are an essential work force of the U.S. Health care system, especially with the recent COVID-19 pandemic (American Immigration Council).

It is a widely accepted truism that the United States of America is a land which has been built by immigrants for immigrants. Immigration is an essential part of its history and development as a nation. It is, however, also important to realize that the U.S. does not have endless options, space and finances to accommodate all of the illegal immigrants or all of the applicants for citizenship. Even if this thesis argues that the previous U.S. administrations played a hand in the actions leading to the current predicament of many Latinx countries and therefore the United States should take responsibility, this statement does not in any way endorse illegal migration.

### 1.1.3. U.S. PRESIDENT, DONALD TRUMP, ON IMMIGRATION

The U.S. President Donald J. Trump has based his entire campaign on stopping Mexican immigrants from entering the United States including his controversial plan to build a wall on the entire border with the United States. He also stated that Mexico will be paying the expenses. The president has proven himself to be a quite a racist in multiple occasions, not only in his behavior towards Mexican immigrants, but also towards black Americans during the BLM – Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd or people of Muslim origin imposing a temporary ban on their entering the states. His behavior towards women is oftentimes also very questionable, but that is a different matter.

Below, there are some of Trump's comments and tweets regarding Mexico and its citizens coming into the U.S., which are borderline unacceptable for a person of his status and position as the leader of the country.

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best,... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with them. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

I love the Mexican people, but Mexico is not our friend. They're killing us at the border and they're killing us on jobs and trade. FIGHT!

That could be a Mexican plane up there -- they're getting ready to attack...  
(Trump)

During Trump's administration, there were several actions taken affecting the immigration policy such as stricter border control, it expanded the categories of unauthorized immigrants prioritized for deportation and focused on terrorism prevention

meaning it banned Iraq, Iran, Sudan or Somalia nationals from entering the United States for a period of time and banned Syrian and other Muslim nationals for an indefinite period of time. Among other things, the Trump administration suspended the U.S. refugee program for 120 days and the President has sought to make it more difficult for people seeking asylum to enter the country (Felter).

In 2017, the administration ended temporary protected status (TPS) for individuals who had previously been allowed to stay in the U.S., as a result of their homeland having been struck by a disaster or a conflict (nationals of Haiti, Sudan, Nicaragua), and work there for a maximum of 18 months (this period could be prolonged by the U.S. president). In 2018, this relief program was also terminated for hundreds of thousands of Honduras, Nepal and Salvador nationals by President Trump (Felter).

The president's remarks have led to a rise of discrimination and prejudice against all Latin American nationals, not just Mexicans. "They're taking our jobs, they're taking our manufacturing jobs, they're taking our money, they're killing us." (Trump). Such unsubstantiated claims fueling hatred and racism are not befitting of a man of such importance. In a position of power, where Trump should have united people, he chose to turn them against each other with his racist and xenophobic rhetoric.

## 1.2.BILINGUALISM

### 1.2.1. DEFINING BILINGUALISM, BASIC STATISTICAL DATA

Bilingualism is closely tied with Latinx immigrants and immigration generally. Moving to a foreign country with a different official language requires an individual to learn the given language in order to properly fit in and lead a successful life.

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, which puts it very simply, bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages. It also denotes the ability to read and write in those two languages. The level of fluency differs in every language. The person speaking two languages is called a bilingual. There are also, of course, terms which describe people who speak more than two languages such as: trilingual (3 languages), multilingual (more than 2 languages) or polyglot (more than 3 - 4 languages) - although the ability to speak proficiently in more than 4 languages is very rare.

Defining bilingualism itself is rather complex and can be influenced by many things such as the age of acquisition of the second language (L2), the degree of exposure to the first acquired language (L1) or the environment in which the languages are learnt. The age of acquisition of the L2 and exposure to L2 can determine the level of proficiency in it (Grant and Gottardo).

Children growing up in a bilingual environment being exposed to the two languages from a very young age, which seem to be the children exposed to the second language before the age of three, acquire the language the same way a monolingual does, although this has not been sufficiently proven yet. It can thus be regarded as an instance of *simultaneous acquisition* of two L1. They can speak the two “first” languages on the same level of proficiency as monolinguals speak their one language (Meisel). Children exposed to the L2 at the age of three or older have no opportunity to build receptive skills the way children before the age of three have and thus are learning the new language “from scratch” (“Sequential or successive bilingualism”). It is the same for adults. This type of acquisition is regarded as *successive or sequential*.

Jürgen M. Meisel in his article “*Bilingual Acquisition*” also states that:

Given our current state of knowledge, it is plausible to assume that age of onset is a crucial factor causing fundamental differences between child and adult language acquisition. Consequently, it is necessary to distinguish between *simultaneous* and *successive acquisition* of bilingualism. (Meisel)

People speaking two or more languages usually have one dominant language which can be the L1 in which they are more proficient in. Their vocabulary in each language can be tied to a specific field. For example, my siblings, who are bilingual (Spanish, English), speak Spanish at home with their family but English with their friends or siblings. Bilinguals also have different range of vocabulary in each language when it comes to speaking about certain topics. For example, some bilingual proficient in English almost on the level of a native speaker is presented with a mathematical problem. He originally learned math in his L1 and although he is in an English environment, he will automatically switch to his native language to solve it. These speakers claim it is easier to process the mathematical problems in the language in which they originally learned it. It can be considered context-specific this way (Altarriba).

Nowadays, bilingualism is considered to be more of a norm than monolingualism, with roughly 60% of the world population being bilingual, trilingual or multilingual and only about 40% of the world population monolingual. The rest of the population can speak three or more languages. Interestingly, the highest concentration of monolingual people seems to be in some of the most developed countries. It is the English-speaking states such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand, where the

acquisition of a second language is not of high importance. There seems to be no need to learn another language as majority of the world already speaks English (languages).

On the other hand, there seem to be smaller countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland or Luxemburg which have a rather high concentration of bilinguals. It is, however, rather difficult to find out the precise numbers of multilinguals in the world as the perception of who is considered a bilingual varies around the world. Is it someone who can roughly communicate in the L2 or more likely someone who can use both languages on the level of a native speaker? The counting methods vary from country to country that is why the following graph is just an approximate division of people around the world (e.g. see fig. 2).

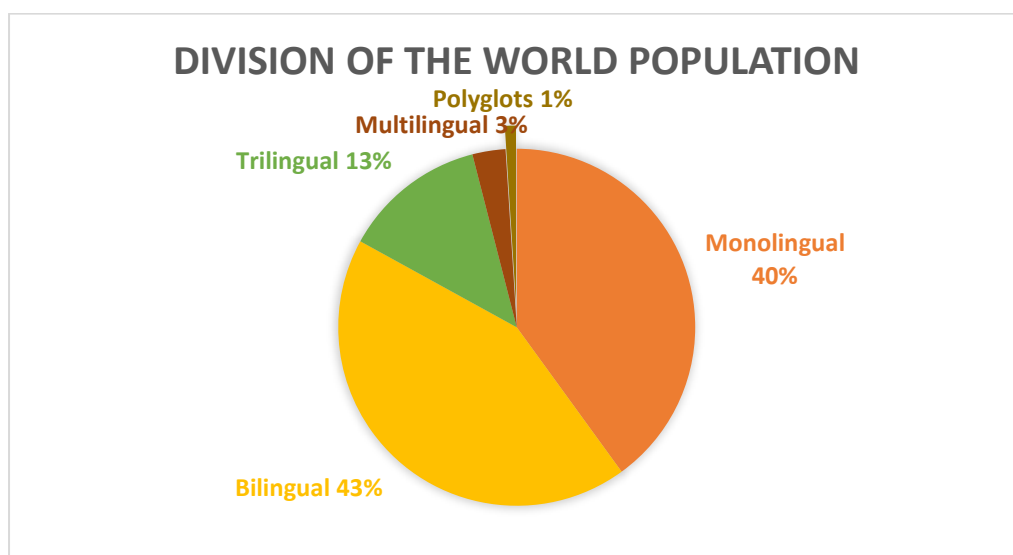


Figure 2: Global multilingualism (multilingualismandbilingualism.weebly.com)

Bilingualism has been proven by many researchers to be beneficial for the mind.

In her article "Bilingualism" Jeanette Altarriba states that:

It has been documented that bilingual speakers possess a certain cognitive or mental flexibility that serves as an asset in cognitive processing in general. For example, bilingual children outperform their monolingual counterparts in tasks

that involve role-playing, classifying objects, creativity, concept formation, memory, metalinguistic awareness, perceptual disembedding, problem-solving, role-taking, social sensitivity, and understanding complex instructions. High-performing five- and six-year-old bilingual speakers exhibit a greater degree of divergent thinking, imagination, grammatical awareness, and perceptual organization. Clearly, bilingual children have more than one way of labeling their environment and have an early awareness of the multiple ways in which concepts can be described and named across languages. Bilingual children simply have more examples for words and grammar to choose from than do monolinguals. Therefore, language competence often influences the range of interactive skills and capabilities that a bilingual can use. (Altarriba)

Speaking to your child in two languages can greatly influence his cognitive, emotional and social development and aptitude for learning new concepts. Research shows that children who were raised in a multilingual family tend to be better at solving problems, are more likely to adjust well in groups of other children and find it easier to accept other cultures than monolingual children. They develop a better sense of empathy (Lynch). The ability to say something in one language to their father and then something to their friend in another language requires skills called *inhibition* and *task switching*. It might influence their ability to be in better control of themselves. Another study says that actively using two languages seems to have a protective effect against age-related dementia (Kamenetz). It is also so much easier to learn a language as a child than later in adulthood. Children are like little sponges that soak up every bit of new information. They learn faster than adults.

In their research paper “*Defining Bilingualism*” Alexandra Gottardo and Amy Grant state that:

... one study found that children who had proficiency in two languages (Hebrew and Russian) and were learning English as a third language, outperformed children with less proficiency in these two

languages and also outperformed monolingual children who were learning English only as an L2 on measures of phonological awareness, nonword reading, and nonword spelling (e.g., *barp*, *stip*) (Schwartz, Geva, Share, & Leikin, 2007). Thus, research seems to show support for the trend that acquiring more than one language has benefits for literacy acquisition. (Gottardo and Grant)

Not only is bilingual education beneficial for the mind, it is also useful to know more than one language when applying for a job position. It is usually required to know at least one other language than your first, thus knowing two or more languages can prove to be quite an advantage. Among other advantages there is the one of traveling. It can be quite difficult traveling while knowing just your mother language.

#### 1.2.2. HISTORY OF BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Education in other languages than English has been provided in the United states as early as 1694. Ever since the first colonist have arrived on American soil. Colonists built schools in their language of origin and as the country expanded and language minority groups slowly gained more power it was possible for bilingual education to spread through the country (Zelasko).

By the middle of the 18th century there was education in German, Norwegian, Dutch, Spanish as well as many other languages all across the States. Laws were created to authorize bilingual education. In the late 1800 and early 1900 however, there was a wave of nativism and as the number of immigrants rose with the beginning of the World War I., the language restrictionist movement rose to power and demanded that schools replace immigrant languages and culture with the culture and values of the US (Zelasko).

In 1923, majority of the states in the country passed laws making English the only language of instruction in public schools. As a result, bilingual education in public

schools became almost non-existent for the next twenty years. A series of events after the World War II, including a new wave of immigrants or civil rights movement and overall globalization of the United States gave bilingual education new life. In Florida – Miami large groups of Spanish speaking people emerged as immigrants from the islands of the Caribbean, like the aforementioned Cuban or the Dominican nationals arrived. Schools thus had to deal with an influx of Spanish speaking children with no knowledge of the English language (Nieto).

In 1963, Coral Way Elementary School implemented a new teaching method – a two-way bilingual program for both English and Spanish speaking children. In 1967 a *Bilingual Education Act* was introduced by a U.S. Senator stating the obvious: children who cannot speak the English language, cannot understand subjects introduced in English, thus cannot learn anything. In order for a person to effectively learn new things, he/she needs to have at least basic knowledge of the language of instruction. After this bill many states passed laws permitting education in other languages than English, some even made it mandatory (Nieto). This was the start of proper introduction of bilingual education into the U.S. educational system.

### 1.2.3. BILINGUALISM IN LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

According to an analysis of the Pew Research Center conducted in 2013, around 36% of all Latinos use both English and Spanish in their everyday communication. In her dissertation Akanne S. Torres Beltran states that:

Despite the negativity surrounding their native language, Spanish-speaking Latinx people do not share a strong distaste for English. Dowling et al. (2012) and Rumbaut et al. (2006) discuss the stereotype that claims that Mexican-Americans are less willing or motivated to assimilate to the U.S. culture and learn the English language. Specifically, Dowling's research counters this claim by expressing the high value that Mexican immigrants or Mexican-Americans have towards learning and

becoming fluent in English due to the advantages in the job market and education opportunities. Dowling's survey results showed a highly skewed pattern: over 95% of respondents stated that English proficiency is "very important." (Torres Beltran 11-12)

In the article "A majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are bilingual" on the analysis conducted by the Pew Research Center the authors state that the:

...survey showed that Latino adults valued both the ability to speak English and to speak Spanish. Fully 87% said Latino immigrants need to learn English to succeed. At the same time, nearly all (95%) said it is important for future generations of U.S. Hispanics to speak Spanish. (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera)

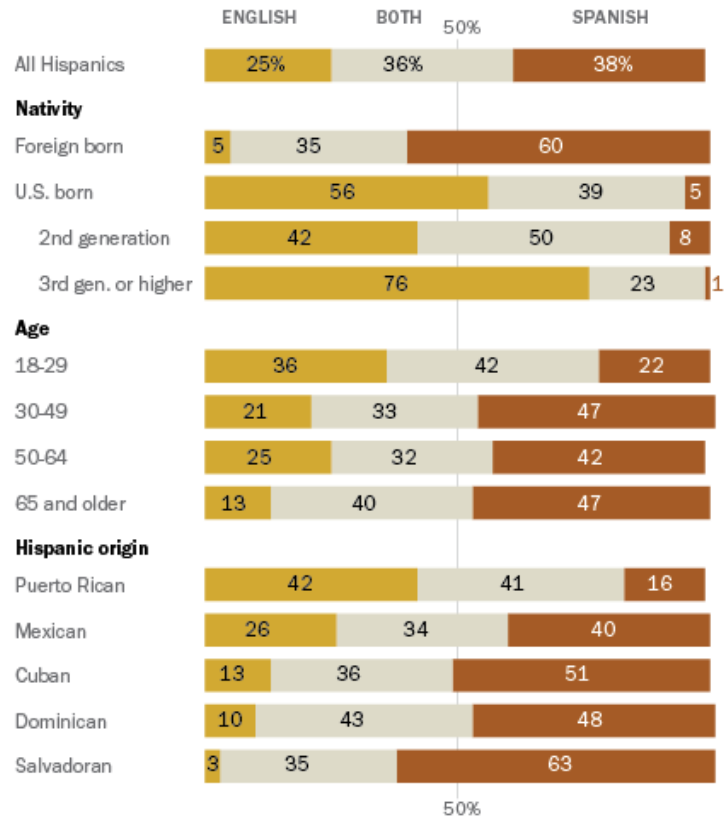
Below we can observe a chart showcasing the bilingualism in Latinos of different origin countries (e.g. see fig. 3).

In this chart the most bilingually prominent seem to be Latinos from the Dominican Republic with around 43% of the population being bilingual, Puerto Rico comes in second with 41% and Cuba 3<sup>rd</sup> with 36%. It is quite surprising to see that so much as 42% of Puerto Ricans speak English only opposed to just 16% Spanish speakers.

What is also interesting is to see the language shift in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations of Latinos with less than 1% of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Latino generation speaking Spanish.

### Half of 2nd Generation Latinos Are Bilingual

*% of Hispanic adults who mainly use English, Spanish or both*



Note: Foreign born includes persons born outside of the U.S. and those born in Puerto Rico even though those born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens. Second generation refers to those born in the U.S. to at least one parent who was born outside the U.S. or in Puerto Rico.

Source: Pew Research Center 2013 National Survey of Latinos

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3: Bilingualism in Latinos (<https://www.pewresearch.org>)

Both of these studies show that bilingualism is an essential part of the Latinx immigrant culture. There is no doubt about the importance of both English and Spanish to the Latinx population living in the U.S. Many Latinos agree that knowledge of English provides better employment and education options. However, it is also important for them to know their mother tongue, therefore many Latinx families choose to raise their children bilingually (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera).

### 1.3.MOST DEMOGRAPHICALLY SIGNIFICANT SOURCE COUNTRIES

In this chapter, some of the notable source countries of Latinx immigrants will be briefly characterized and discussed.

#### 1.3.1. PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico, officially the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is a small island located east of the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean Sea. After the Spanish-American war, Puerto Rico came under the U.S. rule and has been under the U.S. administration ever since. Its official languages are Spanish and English (Wagenheim).

In 1917, the U.S. had granted Puerto Ricans citizenship allowing them to move freely through the whole country. Puerto Ricans are however not fully covered by the American constitution, meaning that among other things they cannot vote in Congress and for the president (Wagenheim). (In this case we could call it internal migration, rather than immigration, as Puerto Rico is taken as part of the USA.)

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land has suffered a grave economic depression resulting in most of the land's inhabitants having to live in terrible conditions and poverty. Akanne Torres Beltran mentions in her Dissertation another reason for the Puerto Rican migration onto the U.S. territory.

In addition to the exodus from Puerto Rico that occurs during periods of economic stagnation, Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico and the surrounding islands in September 2017, also played a critical role in the mass migration of recent years. The disaster left the island in ruins and, with minimal support from the U.S. mainland, Puerto Rico experienced damage to their transportation and communication infrastructure as well as the collapse of their electrical system in the following months, which dropped employment prospects (Torres Beltran 14).

Puerto Rico may be part of the U.S. territory and under its administration, but it does not receive the same kind of benefits as other U.S. states or citizens would, therefore many Puerto Ricans seek better options and a higher living standard in the USA.

Currently around 9.6 % of the Latinx immigrant population traces their descent to Puerto Rico accounting for over 5 million of people. In a study done by the Pew Research Center in 2013, around 41% of all Puerto Ricans were bilingual.

### 1.3.2. GUATEMALA

Guatemala is a highly populated country situated in Central America south of Mexico. Its capital Ciudad de Guatemala being the largest city in Central America. Guatemala is the core of ancient Mayan civilization making Guatemala an important archeological hotspot for archeologist studying the ancient Mesoamerican civilizations. Many of its citizens trace their descent to the Mayans. Guatemalan official language is Spanish, but there are many Mayan languages being used on the daily (Wikipedia).

This is another country which suffered from the U.S. governments' incursions supporting cruel dictators, which destabilized the country, promoted violence and multiple civil wars until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In recent years, the country has grown both economically and politically (Wikipedia). Nevertheless, the country's struggle with poverty, criminality and drug cartels remain, making it for many an unstable land to live in.

There are currently around 1.5 million Guatemalans in the United States, accounting for approximately 2% of the overall Latinx population (U.S. Census Bureau).

### 1.3.3. MEXICO

The history between Mexico and the United States is yet another complicated one. It will be discussed in the next chapter. Mexico, officially United Mexican States, is a federal republic comprising of 31 states situated in the south-west of the U.S border. It is

the 13<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world along with being the 10<sup>th</sup> most populous in the world. Its capital, Ciudad de México, is the largest Mexican city. The nation's official language is Spanish (Cline).

It is a developing country with a large economy and population. Mexico is also an important archeological site for scientist studying the ancient Mesoamerican civilizations with Olmec, Mayan and Aztec empires having built complex centers, remainders of which are scattered throughout the country (Cline). Mesoamerica is one of the six cradles of civilization. The Mexican republic is also a major tourist destination thanks to the country's richness in culture, nature and climate diversity, placing 6<sup>th</sup> in the most visited country ranking in 2018 (Wikipedia).

Immigrants of Mexican origin are the largest group of immigrants living in the United States. They are the largest group of not only immigrants of Latin American descent, but of all immigrants as well, accounting for nearly 37 million people. It is estimated that they account for nearly 62% of all Latinx immigrants. In a study conducted by Jens M. Krogstad and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera for Pew Research Center around 36% of immigrants of Mexican origin are fluent in both English and Spanish.

#### 1.3.4. CUBA

Cuba, officially Republic of Cuba, is an island situated in the Caribbean Sea. It lies south of Florida with Bahamas, Haiti and Jamaica as its neighbors. Its largest city, as well as capital, is Havana. Cuba's official language is Spanish. Cuba is a popular tourist destination. Tourism dominates the lands industry and together with the export of produce such as sugar, tobacco and coffee, it is an important source of income for the country. The land's government is highly authoritarian, with no free or fair elections possible (Levinson).

Cuba is a land of diverse ethnicities and culture. Its culture and customs derive from the merge of diverse origins, the original inhabitants, Taíno and Ciboney people, the influence of the Spanish colonization, African slaves and the establishment of close connections to the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Levinson).

The republic has gone through some brutal convulsions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulting in the current communist regime. Most of these riots have been against U.S. supported governing bodies.

There are currently roughly 2.6 million Cubans in the USA today, accounting for around 3.9% of the whole Latinx immigrant community. Around 36% of Cubans are bilingual (Krogstad et al.).

### 1.3.5. THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic is sharing an island called Hispaniola with another nation – Haiti. The island is located in the Caribbean Sea with its neighboring countries being Cuba and Jamaica in the west and Puerto Rico in the east. Its official language is Spanish. The capital city of the Dominican Republic is Santo Domingo (N. L. González).

The Dominican Republic, or as its nationals living in U.S. call it - DR, is, same as many of the nations mentioned previously, a land with history full of conflicts. During the Spanish colonization, Hispaniola was one the first islands Christopher Columbus had landed on during his voyage in 1492. Santo Domingo was one of the first settlements and political centers of the Spanish monarchy in the Americas. Same as Mexico or Cuba, DR had later gained independence from Spain. Throughout its history, DR experienced periods of social unrests and civil wars. The republic has been under U.S. military occupation multiple times throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (N. L. González).

On a less scholarly and more personal note, Dominican Republic is where my father and the rest of his family grew up. It is a country very close to my heart. I was fortunate enough to have visited its most beautiful places as a tourist but, much like Mexico or Guatemala, there is a very large divide between the rich and the poor population.

Currently, there are around 2 million Dominican nationals in the U.S., accounting for roughly 3.4% of all Latinx immigrants living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau). Around 43% of all Dominicans are bilingual (Krogstad et al.). The Dominican

Republic has the highest percentage of bilinguals out of all the previously mentioned Latin American countries.

## 2. DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

### 2.1. HISTORY OF DEMOGRAPHICALLY SIGNIFICANT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

First, we will discuss the history between the United States and some of the Latin American countries. Juan González, a journalist and investigative reporter inside covert Latino communities, an author of the book *Harvest of Empire*, argues that “by the end of the century a majority of the U.S. population will trace their origins to Latin America, not to Europe.” He calls this demographic trend “an enormous shift in the composition of the nation.” Why? What caused this massive surge of immigration?

González breaks down the reasons for this massive shift and points out the direct impact the U.S. government’s interventions in the past have on the current immigration wave. What anti-immigration or even pro-immigration movements fail to mention, is that the majority of the immigrants come from countries which were once domineered over or even occupied by the United States. The United States has presumably “seized and controlled the territories” of all the mentioned countries (Beltran 12). Immigration is a direct result of the U.S. actions in Latin America, which forced millions of Latinos to flee their country and come into the United States in search of a new home and better employment options, as well as means to escape the immense financial struggles and poor living standard resulting from the U.S. administration meddling in the internal affairs of their homeland. Many of those immigrants were brought to America by large companies as cheap labor, as they could pay Latin American workers less than they could pay a regular American citizen. Latinx immigrants would then work in U.S. factories, sweatshops, on fields and so on. Others were invited into the country by the U.S. government, because their homeland could no longer provide safety following the U.S. interventions. We will look at Puerto Rico and its history with the United States first.

### 2.1.1. PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean that was taken as a prize of war between Spain and United States in 1898. This was also the case of Philippines and Cuba, which were later released. Puerto Rico was not. The United States held on to Puerto Rico for its sugar cane and tobacco plantations, as well as fruits (J. González). In his “Message about the state of Puerto Rico” Theodor Roosevelt, president of the United States in the years 1901–1909, talks about the fertility of the land and its profitability:

In traversing the island even the most cursory survey leaves the beholder struck with the evident rapid growth in the culture both of the sugar cane and tobacco. The fruit industry is also growing. Last year was the most prosperous year that the island has ever known, before or since the American occupation. The total of exports and imports of the island was forty-five millions of dollars as against eighteen millions in 1901. This is the largest in the island's history. Prior to the American occupation the greatest trade for any one year was that of 1896, when it reached nearly \$23,000,000. Last year, therefore, there was double the trade that there was in the most prosperous year under the Spanish regime. (Roosevelt)

Puerto Rico was a valuable source of sugar, tobacco, fruits and other produce and an important income for the US economy. The United States have therefore kept it under their rule and further exploited Puerto Rico and its citizens. The sugar plantation owners, mostly Americans, worked Puerto Ricans on these plantations. They often gave them minimum wage, sometimes even less than a dollar a day. The insufficient income led these workers to poverty and as a result they often could not take care of themselves, let alone care for their children. Those were either left starving or given away to friends and family to care for (J. González).

Puerto Ricans were used as cheap labor, while their homeland was being plundered for sugar. In his message, Roosevelt mentioned nothing of the conditions Puerto Ricans had to live in and the poverty they had been experiencing, but he has,

among other things, mentioned the desire to grant Puerto Ricans American citizenship. Roosevelt continues as follows:

There is a matter to which I wish to call your special attention, and that is the desirability of conferring full American citizenship upon the people of Porto Rico. I most earnestly hope that this will be done. I cannot see how any harm can possibly result from it, and it seems to me a matter of right and justice to the people of Porto Rico. They are loyal, they are glad to be under our flag, they are making rapid progress along the path of orderly liberty. Surely, we should show our appreciation of them, our pride in what they have done, and our pleasure in extending recognition for what has thus been done, by granting them full American citizenship. (Roosevelt)

In 1917, American citizenship was indeed imposed on Puerto Rico. By a cruel irony, Puerto Ricans were granted citizenship just in time for the U.S. to dispatch around 20 000 of them in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War (J. González). However, as mentioned before, Puerto Ricans were not meant to “enjoy all the constitutional rights and privileges of US citizenship” (Duany). Imposing citizenship on Puerto Ricans could be seen as a way of inviting them into the U.S., which is what indeed happened later.

At that time, the official language of the country, of courts and schools, was English. Speaking Spanish in schools was forbidden and children were often punished for the use of their mother tongue to speak to their classmates and friend. On the outside, it seemed as though everything in Puerto Rico was perfect, but that was sadly not the case. United States may have given Puerto Ricans citizenship, but they were not treated as equals. Over the years, a dislike of the Americans rose in Puerto Rico and replaced the initial welcoming mood (J. González).

Only after Harry Truman became the president in 1945, did the administration address problems in Puerto Rico, such as mass poverty and unemployment. And so, mass migration started. Both the Puerto Rican and the U.S. government saw migration as means

to solve the economic problems Puerto Rico was facing (J. González). In contrary to popular belief, Puerto Ricans, same as Mexicans were invited and brought into the country and not the other way around. They did not come to steal the jobs and money of the good American people as some were led to believe.

Thousands of Puerto Ricans were recruited and brought to America by American companies to work for them, as they could pay them lower wages than to the average American. They filled sweatshops and factories all over industrial Northeast (J. González). Below, we can see the rapid rise of Puerto Rican migration in the 1950s (e.g. see fig. 4). It had, however, been slowly rising ever since Puerto Ricans gained citizenship in 1917. The U.S. openly encouraged Puerto Rican immigration.

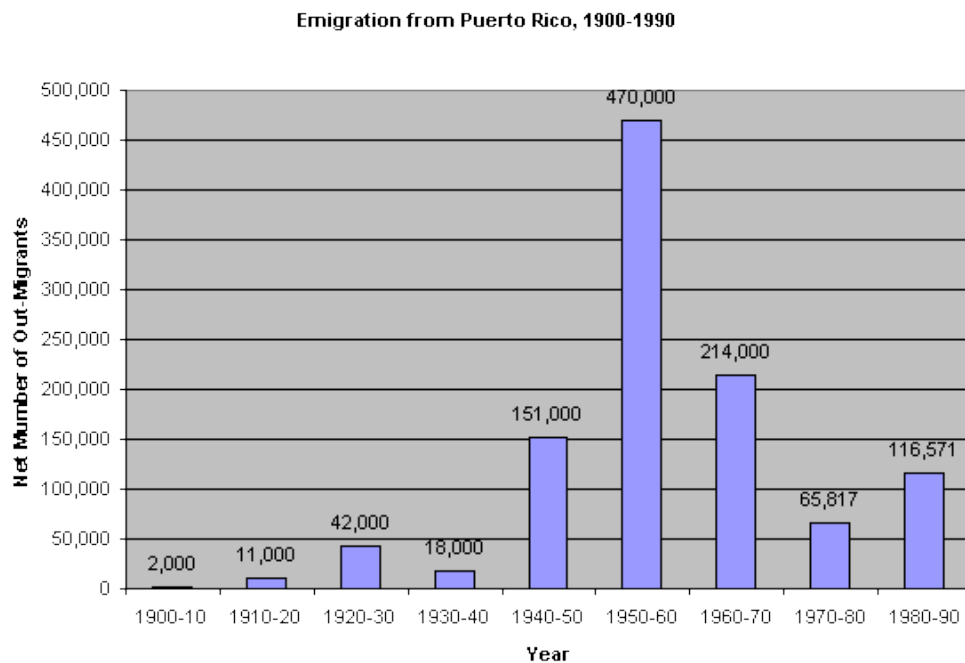


Figure 4: Puerto Rican Migration (lcw.lehman.edu)

The Latinos may have seen it as an escape from the poverty and unemployment they faced in their homeland and thought they were going to find and live “the American Dream”. What they expected was far from what they found, however. America was at the time, and still is, very intolerant of Latino immigrants. All they saw were savages or cheap labor force. Immigrants, therefore, faced severe discrimination and prejudice, and were often told to go back to their country.

This kind of mentality is not very different from today's America, actually. When you look at some of the statements of the last president, Donald J. Trump, you see the same mentality as of those, who were against Latino immigrants in the past. Donald Trump and his actions and statements were discussed in one of the previous chapters.

A more recent reason for Puerto Rican immigration is the 2017 natural disaster, hurricane Maria, leaving the nation in shambles, with minimal support from the U.S. mainland. The state in which the nation has been left afterwards only worsened the economic struggles and left its citizens without many employment prospects fueling another immigration wave (Beltran).

By the year 2003, Puerto Ricans living in US outnumbered the population on the island. U.S. Census Bureau states that in 2016, Puerto Ricans accounted for approximately 1.7% of the overall United States population and around 9.5% of the nation's Latinx immigrant community (U.S. Census Bureau). According to the Pew Research Center, it is estimated that there are currently about 5.6 million Puerto Ricans living in the USA (López et al.).

### 2.1.2. GUATEMALA

Let us consider Guatemala as our next example. It is by now an established fact that, in 1952, the CIA launched an operation called “PBSUCCESS”, a coup, with the aim to assassinate Guatemala’s elected President, Jacobo Árbenz Guzman, and overthrow his rule. The CIA was unsatisfied with the direction he was leading the country in, and with his socio-economic reforms. They regarded his attempts as “an intensely nationalistic program of progress colored by the touchy, anti-foreign inferiority complex of the ‘Banana Republic’.” (Doyle et al.).

Before the coup, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Guatemala had experienced a brief democratic period. Jacobo Árbenz was elected in its free elections, he had plans to bring Guatemala out of poverty. His reforms regarding land division were especially unwelcome and not in accordance to what the US fruit companies had in mind, and thus he became an obstacle which needed to be removed. One of the most prolific companies, United Fruit Company, was at that time represented by John F. Dallas, the U.S. secretary of state under President Eisenhower, and his brother Allan Dallas, the head of the CIA. They both were the key elements of the U.S. government at the time, and it was in their best interest to remove obstacles hindering the expansion of the company their law firm was representing (J. González).

CIA got involved in managing public opinion on Árbenz and created an image of him as a dangerous radical, a communist and an ally of Kremlin. They then composed a whole list of people to be neutralized, either through Executive Action, in other words targeted killing, or through exile or incarceration, as they were viewed as a threat. Árbenz was on top of that list. It was a successful attempt to destabilize the nation and government of Guatemala, which threw the country into chaos (J. González).

In 1954, Árbenz resigned and managed to flee the country unharmed. The power was then transferred (by the CIA) to general Carlos Castillo Armas, who, after assuming his power, rounded up hundreds of Guatemalans, progressives and protesters against the coup, and supporters of the democratic president Árbenz and his regime, and had them killed (Stansifer).

After the coup, Guatemala experienced times of terror and repression causing a Civil War (1960 – 1980). Declassified documents show that the CIA had secretly trained Guatemalan death squads, dealing with the insurgence of Guatemalan people. It is estimated that between the years 1954 and 1990, the repressive military regime had murdered around 100 000 civilians and more than 100 000 Guatemalans have been either executed, reported missing or killed in the war (J. González). Around 82% of the missing or executed being Mayas, according to Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1992. Hundreds of mass graves have been unearthed since the end of the war.

As a result of these unstable and dangerous living conditions, many Guatemalans have decided to flee the country. To migrate to the North, to the USA. The United States had, with its political meddling, destroyed their homes as they knew them and thus, thousands of Guatemalans came in search of the security and peace their country no longer offered, asking for a political asylum. Many had to leave their families behind, children were separated from their parents.

Below we can observe a steep rise of immigration in the years 1960 and 1990, after the “PBSUCCESS” coup (e.g. see fig.5). The United States meddling in the country’s affairs caused an internal conflict leading to a civil war. As consequence of these interventions, thousands of Guatemalans immigrated into the U.S. This leads us to believe that, paradoxically but perhaps inevitably, the U.S. interventionist policies in Guatemala do correlate with an influx of Guatemalan immigrants seeking asylum in the United States.

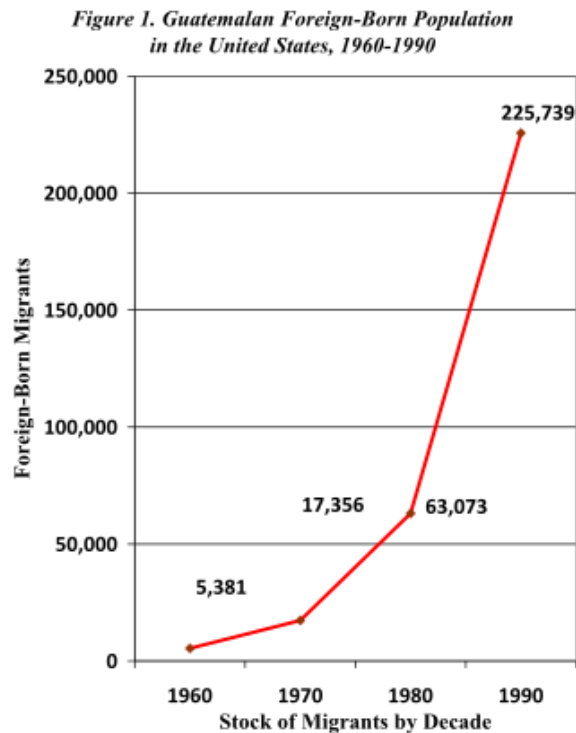


Figure 5: Guatemalan immigration (en.wikipedia.org)

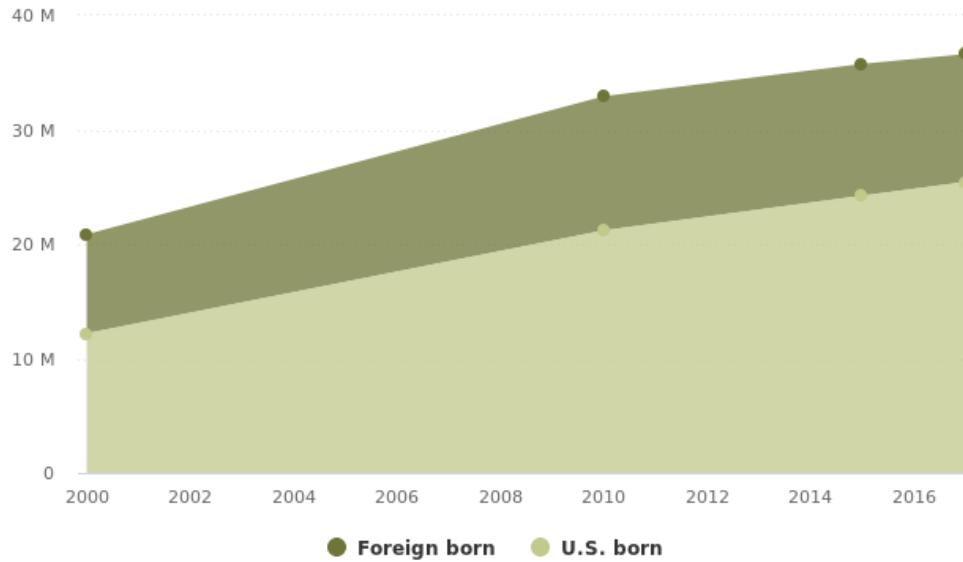
More than 1.5 million of Guatemalans live in the U.S. today accounting for 2% of all Latinx people living in the U.S. (Noe-Bustamante et al.).

### 2.1.3. MEXICO

Mexicans are by far the largest group of the Latino population living in the United States, accounting for around 62%. This includes not only Mexico-born Latinos but American-born tracing their family origins to Mexico as well. Latinos coming from Mexico account for 25% of all immigrants in the U.S. (Noe-Bustamante et al.).

Below we can observe a graph, borrowed from the Pew Research center, portraying the demographic changes and the constant growth in Mexican population in U.S. since the year 2000 (e.g. see figure 6).

## Mexican-origin population in the U.S., 2000-2017



Note: Latino origin is based on self-described ancestry, lineage, heritage, nationality group or country of birth.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2000 census (5% IPUMS) and 2010, 2015 and 2017 American Community Surveys (1% IPUMS).

Figure 6: Mexicans in the USA ([www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org))

According to the migration data portal, it is recorded that between the years 2014 and 2019 about 2 243 Mexican migrants have either died or been reported missing. Most of them, if not all, died trying to cross the U.S.-Mexican border (Noe-Bustamante et al.). What has led so many people to be willing to risk their lives trying to get to the U.S.? Let us look at the historical background of the nation and the role the U.S. played which had helped spark this massive migration.

Mexico has always been a country full of conflict. It was left in a desperate state after winning the War of Independence and becoming independent from Spain in 1821. The country was deeply divided between two groups, Conservatives and Liberals, which struggled to reach unity. Both groups disagreed on almost everything, from education to the army. Mexico experienced a century of chaos, military coups, death and after the Mexican – American war even the loss of its territory (Editors of Britannica).

To understand why there are so many Mexicans in U.S., we have to discuss the history between these two nations. First, let us look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexican-American War (1846 – 1848). Before the war, most of the south-western states, such as California, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, parts of Utah and many more, were part of the Mexican territory. The Mexican-American war was a result of the U.S expansion to the West. These territories offered land and were fairly uninhabited. Southern slave owners saw great potential in Texas, with its spacious fields ready for their crops and plantations and took the opportunity to acquire this new land (Editors of Britannica).

In 1836, the internal struggle of Mexico reached its peak and led a group of Mexican rebels, and American families settled in Texas, to claim Texas as an independent state from Mexico. This action was strongly encouraged by the U.S. government, as the USA was searching for ways to expand their territory. This later on resulted in the annexation of Texas in 1845 by the U.S., further fueling the conflict between the two nations and later leading to the war. Mexico was overpowered by the American forces and consequently lost, not only the war, but also its territory of more than a million square kilometers. As Mexican territory was reduced in half many Mexican citizens already living on that land now became part of the U.S. population (Editors of Britannica)

In the picture below, borrowed from the book *Voices from Colonial America: California, 1542-1850*, we can see the territory which was taken by the U.S. after the war.



Figure 7: Original Mexican Territory (nationalgeographic.org)

States such as California, Colorado, Arizona or Nevada were originally Mexican territory. It is no wonder then that California, with the share of total Hispanic population of 26%, and Texas with 19% are on the top of the list with the highest concentration of the Hispanic population. Third on the list is Florida with 9%.

Losing the war against the USA and losing so much territory resulted in an even bigger instability of Mexico (to which USA largely contributed). Mexico had fallen into a Civil war three years after losing the Mexican-American war. The poor living conditions, financial instability and continued violence in the country were the perfect opportunity for corrupt dictators to gain power.

During the years 1876 and 1911, Mexican economy was massively restructured by Porfirio Díaz. Díaz promoted massive economic changes, expanded the nation's railway system and promoted land privatization with U.S. companies funding most of them. The U.S. involvement in the country's economy was so substantial that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 80% of Mexican railways, 75% of mines and half of the Mexican oil fields were in the possession of U.S. companies leaving approximately 5 million of the rural farmer population without access to communal land holdings and thus without income (Bedolla; Hernandez 25). The U.S. involvement in the country's economy is another factor influencing the Mexican migration North to consider. Most of the Mexican industry did not belong to Mexico. Díaz's oligarchical politics made wealthy people wealthier while poor people were left to starve. This, as well as the form of Díaz's leadership – dictatorship, consequently led to a rise of discontent throughout the country and ended up resulting in the Mexican revolution.

The Mexican Revolution (1910 – 1920) was a violent and bloody clash of multiple factions. Its aim was to oust Díaz after his despotic 30-year rule, however multiple conflicts arose between the revolutionaries. U.S. intervened multiple times, though instead of helping end the violence in the streets, the Taft administration "...officials protected investors' interests rather than helping end the brutalities of the Díaz regime." (Library of Congress). The United States interventions did not help resolve the conflicts and only led to more civilian casualties (Greenspan). As a result, the country became unsafe to live in which facilitated migration even more.

Another factor to keep in mind is that it was the U.S. companies which frequently recruited Mexican nationals as cheap labor force, encouraging them to come into the United States to compensate for the deficit in manpower it was experiencing and oftentimes even covering their travel expenses.

An example of such actions is the Bracero Program initiated by the United States in 1942. The U.S. had a shortage of workforce in agriculture and other fields during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Mexican nationals were recruited to work on the plantations and fields growing and collecting crops, and on the railroads in return for decent living conditions and financial reward. Thanks to corruption of the officials administrating the program, it slowly became impossible to be accepted into the program, unless providing a bribe (Hernandez 27). Consequently, this “led to an increase in undocumented immigration and a growing preference for operating outside of the parameters set by the program” (Ngai). Over the years, the U.S. corporations and farms started heavily relying on Mexican workers. Kelly L. Hernandez points out in her journal article “Mexican Immigration into the United States” that:

Finally, many agri-businessmen in the United States... objected to the worksite and labor relations interventions engendered by the Bracero Program’s bi-national framework and, instead, preferred to hire undocumented workers. (Hernandez 27)

After several years, following protests from both the Mexican and U.S. side, in 1964 the Bracero Program was terminated.

When the U.S. economy was hit by the Great Depression in the 1930s, the local governments and officials decided to solve the problem by deporting nearly 1.8 million Mexicans in hopes of securing employment for its white American population. An estimated 60% of those deported were born in the United States and thus were basically

exiled. They were forced to leave their homes and leave all of their belongings in the U.S. arriving to Mexico with only a backpack. Oftentimes, those deported were sick individuals taken from hospital beds (Little).

Although, these repatriation raids were not officially ordered by the U.S. administration, the administration did help facilitate it by, among other things, arranging agreements which prevented the Latinx population from getting employed. Studies done by the National Bureau of Economic Research suggests that the repatriation of the Mexican population had virtually no effect on the Great Depression wages and employment. It did, however, leave the deported Mexican population traumatized, without income and without a home (Little). “Mexico’s migration history to the U.S. can truly be seen as a system of labor exploitation that ended up encouraging illegal immigration which could not be managed or controlled” (Torres Beltran 13). This statement regarding the relationship of U.S. and Mexico’s immigration history is rather pertinent.

Sadly, even the current living conditions in Mexico are far from safe and prosperous. Poverty, inability to find a well-paying employment, street violence and fear for one’s life lead many Mexican families to immigrate into the USA. Some parents only send their children in hopes of letting them have a shot at a better life, but the situation on the border and the general attitude towards Mexican migrants in the U.S. is not very welcoming. Many Americans despise Mexicans, treating them as inferior, aliens and illegals (Arana).

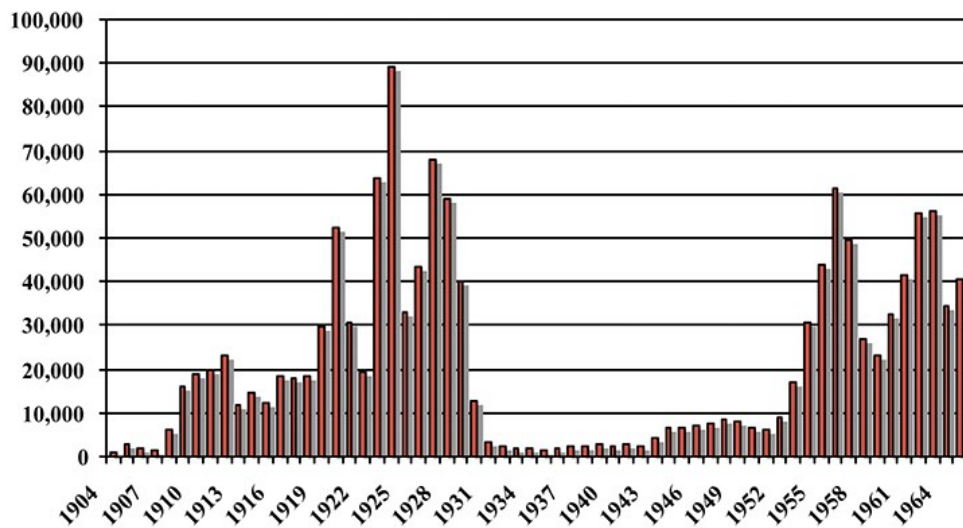
The current Mexican – American border barrier sparks strong controversy. During Trumps administration, the admission of Mexican migrants into the USA was very low. The surge in immigration after President Joe Biden’s election, has never been seen before. There are thousands of Mexicans and Mexican children waiting in detention facilities on the border. These facilities are not built to accommodate such high numbers of immigrants for periods longer than a few weeks. Some of the immigrants have been there for over a month. Poor Mexican families struck by the covid-19 pandemic are reported to be even more desperate to get to the USA. As stated above, America has had a very strong

impact on Mexico’s stability or rather instability, with its actions resulting in this massive Mexican migration (BBC).

The border crisis is undoubtedly a very complicated matter which will not be easily resolved. Hopefully, the two countries manage to come up with a viable solution by working together rather than against each other.

Bellow we can observe a graph showcasing immigration data for a period of 60 years (e.g. see fig. 8). The data shows that mass migration started even before the bloody revolution starting in 2010 and it can be argued that it was partly caused by the U.S. involvement in the shaping of the development of Mexican economy. A large role was played by the Mexican Revolution of course, however, we can find the U.S. intervening here as well. A pause in immigration during the 1930s was largely a result of the repatriation raids and massive deportation during the Great Depression. The numbers start to rise again as the U.S. launches the Bracero program, inviting Mexican nationals into the country to compensate for a deficit in work force.

**Table I. Mexican Immigrants to the United States, 1904–1967**



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2006.

Figure 8: Mexican Immigration (clas.berkeley.edu)

Although perhaps unintended, the U.S. involvement in the country largely shaped the country’s economic and social development and consequently influenced the

following rise in immigration numbers as well. Not to mention the U.S. encouragement of Mexican immigration in times of need of cheap work force in the United States. All of these have had an impact on the current immigration waves as well.

As a result of all these incursions, and the annexation of California, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada and Texas in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be summarily argued that there is a very pronounced correlation between the interventionist policies of the US vis-à-vis Mexico and the number of Hispanic US population of Mexican descent.

#### 2.1.4. CUBA

The relationship between the USA and Cuba has been more than difficult and at one point almost resulted in a third world war. Cuba has had major economic problems, as a result of poor management and U.S. involvement in their internal politics. Let us look at the reasons and history behind Cuba's social and economic problems.

In 1898, after Cuba gained independence from Spain (with the support of the USA), it became a sort of colony for the United States. In 1902, Cuba was turned into somewhat of a protectorate under U.S. rule. It seemed independent, but U.S. had a say in its internal affairs. Cuba was a very profitable land for the U.S. as it was a country quite rich in produce. Same as Puerto Rico, the land had perfect conditions for growing sugar cane, which was quite a profitable business for U.S. companies (Levinson).

Over the years, Cuba tried strengthening its democracy and government, but it only resulted into a further political radicalization of the country. In 1952, there was a coup led by a cruel and corrupt dictator Fulgencio Batista. Encyclopedia Britannica describes him as "a dictator, jailing his opponents, using terrorist methods, and making fortunes for himself and his associates." His tyrannical and oppressive rule was supported by the U.S. government. He received financial as well as military support and in return he made sure that most of Cuban plantations were lucratively sold to the U.S. companies, namely the United Fruit Company. His actions destabilized the country's economy and

led to massive riots as they were unsurprisingly not received well by Cubans. Censorship, torture and public executions were on the daily schedule with USA turning a blind eye, as long as it would benefit the country. However, after realizing the full scale of his tyranny, the U.S. administration realized their mistake and placed an arms embargo on Batista, which subsequently led to the rebels ousting him (J. González).

In 1958, Batista's government was overthrown with the communist rebel Fidel Castro in the lead of the revolution. Under his administration Cuba became a communist state with only one party. Businesses and industries were nationalized and socialist reforms were implemented. USA was alarmed by the rising communist influence in Cuba and tried to overthrow Castro's government. In April 1961, "the U.S. government secretly equipped thousands of Cuban exiles to overthrow Castro's government" (Editors of Britannica). However, this attempt was an embarrassing failure, with Cuban forces crushing the rebellion, and only led to Cuba establishing even closer ties to the Soviet Union. This shift in the country's administration further increased the tensions between the U.S., the Soviet Union and Cuba, subsequently leading to the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was one of the most escalated moments of the Cold War period. For one whole month the world was on the brink of a nuclear war. It was a period of uncertainty and fear of conflict, which could then result into another world war. Fortunately, this conflict was resolved peacefully (Editors of Britannica).

Cuban and American relationship is also a complicated one. U.S. involvement in Cuba's politics, internal and economic affairs had a dire impact on the living conditions of most Cubans. From a decidedly left-wing perspective, it has been argued that Cuba is yet another country destroyed by American corporate greed, assisted by the corruption of Cuban officials. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the U.S. owned most of the Cuban mining industry, sugar cane production and public utilities along with a quarter of all Cuban bank deposits (Bedolla). It basically owned the republic. Most Cubans had to live in poverty and constant fear throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With the revolution and the Cold War under way, many Cubans started fleeing the country headed for USA. This was largely encouraged by the U.S. government as it was a form of opposition to Castro's communist regime. Cuban immigrants had been given

advantage over immigrants of other nationalities. Even now, they are the only immigrants automatically gaining residency upon entering the U.S. and as a result, encouraging many of them to immigrate to the United States (Bedolla).

In 1980, following a growing political and economic pressure, Castro permitted anyone who wanted to leave Cuba to do so. Around 125 000 of Cubans came into the U.S., namely Florida. In 1991, Castro opened the borders again with 35 000 Cubans leaving for the U.S (J. González). Although immigrants have been coming to the U.S. since before the ousting of Batista, immigration between the 1940s and 1980s was on such a massive scale that it was unprecedented. Below, we can observe a graph showcasing the rise of immigration during the Cold War period (over 40 years) which had been facilitated and supported by the United States (e.g. see fig. 9).

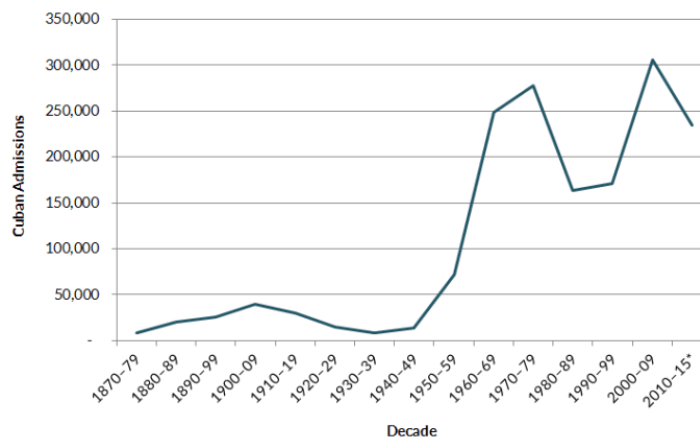


Figure 9: Cuban Immigration (migrationpolicy.org)

The relations of Cuba and U.S. today have improved tenfold since then. The 2014 meeting between Raúl Castro, Fidel’s brother and the current president of Cuba, and President Barack Obama, discussing the process of restoration of Cuban-American diplomatic relations, is being regarded as the Cuban Thaw.

According to an analysis carried out by the Pew Research Center in 2017, there were about 2.3 million Cubans living in the U.S. accounting for roughly 4% of the Latinx population (Noe-Bustamante et al.).

### 2.1.5. THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic is another Latin American country which has experienced political and military incursions by the U.S. administration. The republic witnessed two major U.S. occupations, first in 1916 and second in 1965 (J. González).

The Dominican Republic with its tropical climate has also been a country rich in agricultural produce. As U.S. expanded its commercial interests in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic became an interesting prospect. There were also concerns that Germany could use the island of Hispaniola as base for attacks during the World War I, as it had established ties with Haiti (N. L. González).

In 1916, after a major instability in the country, the U.S. military seized control of it. The occupation lasted until 1924. In the meantime, the U.S. Marine Corps helped build schools, roads and communications in the country. This, however, came at a high price. The U.S.-led government in DR “enacted legal reforms that allowed U.S.-owned sugarcane companies to expand their operations” (N. L. González), and generally abused its power in favor of the United States at the expense of the Dominicans. During the occupation, the marines also founded and trained “a modern, unified military constabulary” (N. L. González), the Dominican National Guard, to police the country. This force was meant to ensure the country’s stability and protect U.S. foreign interests, as “the Marines and intervention were replaced by a home-grown dictator who based his power upon a Marine-trained constabulary force as a means of creating stability” (Pulley). This guard would then prove to be a very powerful tool for the country’s leading dictators. As the “U.S. occupation caused considerable Dominican and international opposition” (U.S. Department of State Archive), the U.S. decided to withdraw its military and ended the occupation in 1924.

After the withdrawal of the American naval forces, the country fell into an economic depression later resulting in the savage rule of their military leader, Rafael Trujillo, in 1930.

Trujillo was one the soldiers trained by the Marines and he was a truly terrifying person. His election was rigged and ensured by the liquidation of his opponents. His rule brought a sort of stability to the country, however, it was at an enormous cost. He made

his political opponents disappear, supported the violence and hatred towards Haitian immigrants, even ordering the massacre of thousands of them in the *Dominican-Haitian incident*. Trujillo would take ownership of virtually everything he touched, would routinely assault the wives even of his supporters and enforced strict censorship, as well as founded the secret police (J. González). His dictatorship was presumably “one of the longest, cruelest, and most absolute in modern times” and lasted for 30 years (N. L. González).

What is, however, even more abhorrent, is the U.S. support and backup of the Trujillo regime. Even though the United States knew how Trujillo gained his power, the U.S. Department of State ordered its representatives in Santo Domingo “to recognize Trujillo and maintain the most friendly relations with him” (Pulley 23).

It is even more controversial, given the fact that the USA condemned other totalitarian leaders and dictators. In the case of Trujillo, however, they seem to have turned a blind eye. Raymond Pulley in his *Caribbean Studies* remarks that:

In view of Roosevelt’s statements against the Mussolini and Hitler regimes in the years before the outbreak of World War II, it seems inconsistent and almost hypocritical that the United States supported, and in some cases helped to maintain a dictatorship in the Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo which was in every way as repugnant to American institutions as the more famous strong-man governments of Europe. (Pulley 22)

In return for the support, Trujillo would make Dominican Republic more accessible to the U.S. companies with its foreign affairs conforming to the U.S. interests (J. González).

In the later years of his rule, after the rising opposition and continual discontent of the Dominicans, Trujillo slowly started losing his military support, as well as the support of the U.S. government. Finally, in 1961, Trujillo was assassinated in a U.S. supported operation (N. L. González).

In 1963, a progressive and reformist president, Juan Bosch, was elected. He was, however, a thorn in the eye of the U.S. officials and Dominican oligarchy and was soon overthrown. In 1965, following a revolution aiming to oust the oligarchical government, the U.S. once again intervened and invaded the country for fears of an installation of another communist regime, as in Cuba (N. L. González). This time, the U.S. scheduled elections in 1966, in which the former right hand of Trujillo, Joaquín Balaguer, was able to take part and ended up winning the election. His presidency was “marred by political violence, assassinations of government opponents, inflation, and alleged electoral fraud” (Editors of Britannica). Balaguer snuffed out any political opposition, public killings took place almost daily.

Again, same as with the other mentioned countries, the U.S. involvement in the Dominican Republic was causing major social, political and economic unrests leading to a revolution. This consequently caused massive waves of migration.

In the graph below, we can observe the rise of immigration during the Dominican Revolution and after the installation of Trujillo’s right hand, Joaquín Balaguer (e.g. see fig. 10). As a result of the dangerous living conditions and instability in the country, the U.S. administration decided to allow thousands of Dominican immigrants into the United States. The U.S. government saw migration as means to solve the economic and social problems of the Dominican Republic.

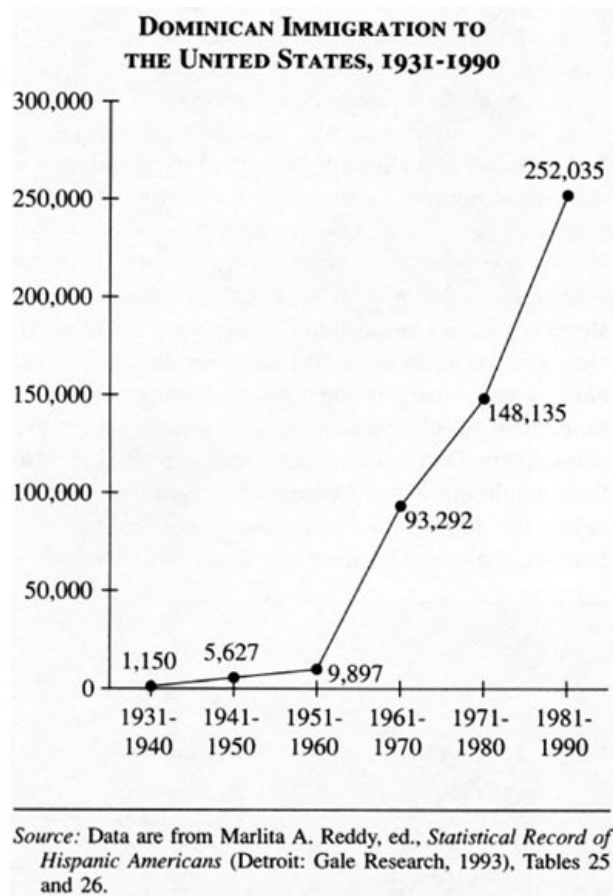


Figure 10: Immigration into the U.S. ([latinamericanstudies.org](http://latinamericanstudies.org))

According to the 2018 American Community Survey done by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were around 2 million Dominican nationals in the U.S., accounting for roughly 3.4% of all Latinx immigrants living in the United States. Again, this is yet another testimony to the correlation between diplomatic and military incursions and ensuing immigration patterns.

### 3. PRACTICAL PART

#### 3.1.COMPLEMENTARY OPINION SURVEY

In this part of the thesis, we will process and analyze the answers gathered through an opinion survey. The target group consists of Latinos living in the USA.

The aim of this opinion survey is to determine whether Latinos subjectively face segregation, racism and discrimination even in modern America, to find out their experiences, feelings and opinions about the United States of America and their possible experience of racism, to find out how they view their culture and whether they regard themselves as bilingual. Additionally, the respondents are also asked to express their opinion on the research question at hand, namely the correlation between US incursions in Latin America and the influx of Latin-American immigrants.

The reason for conducting this survey is my Latin American descent. Most of my family are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of immigrants living in the USA. My aim was to find out how the multicultural land treats its Latinx citizens.

##### 3.1.1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS

In this chapter, we will briefly characterize the group of respondents before moving on to the individual responses.

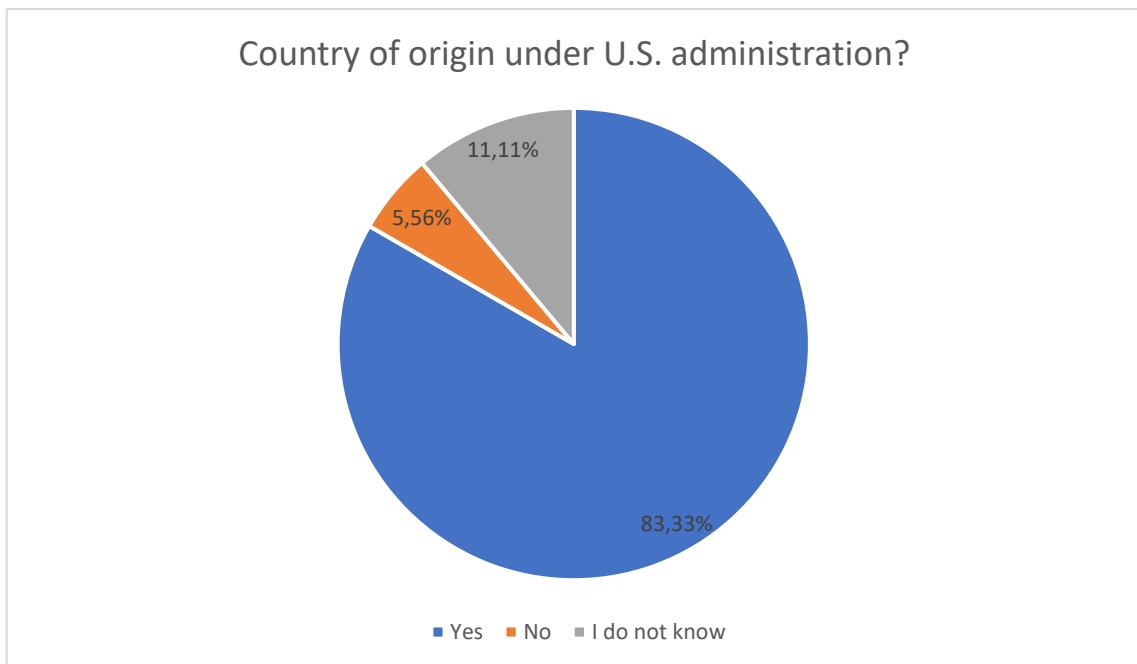
There were 39 respondents to this opinion survey. All of them were Latinos who currently live in the U.S. or have spent an extended period of time in the States. 63.16% of the respondents were female opposed to 36.84% being male with the age ranging from 23 to 57 years old. Around 68% have stated they have been born in one of the Latin American countries and immigrated at the ages between 7 to 25 years old. The most frequently mentioned countries of origin Cuba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. There was one mention of Guatemala and Venezuela. The younger generation of respondents accounting for roughly 32%, were born in the United States to Latinx parents.

Let us now briefly examine the survey questions.

### 3.1.2. INDIVIDUAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Has your homeland ever been under U.S. administration?

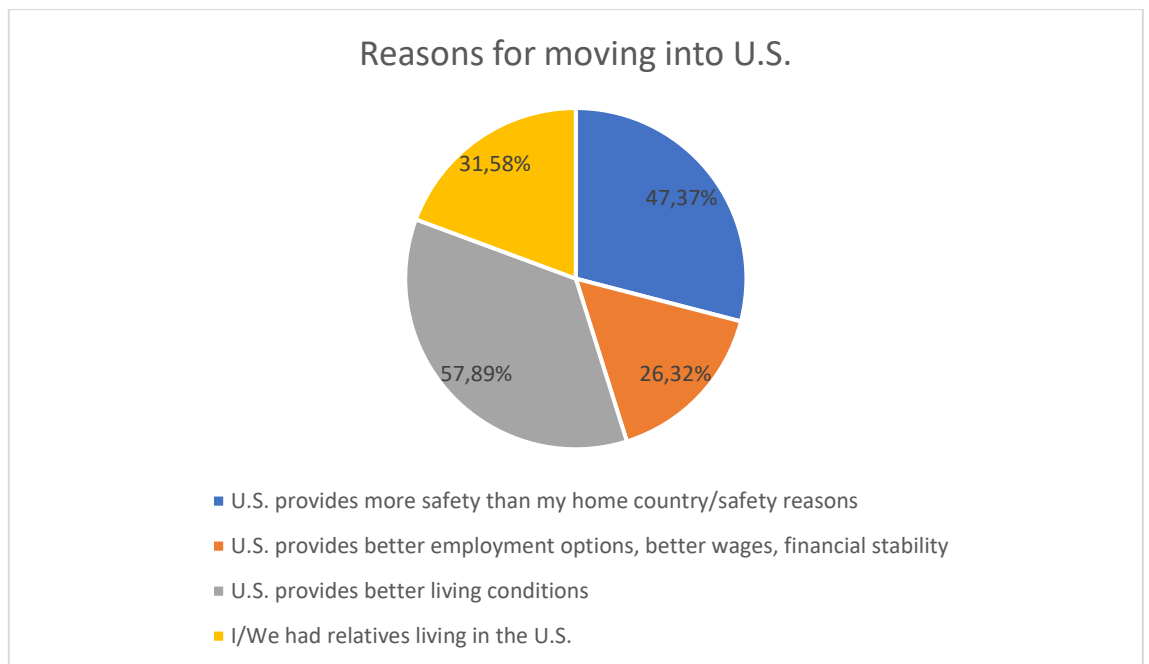
Around 80% of the respondents chose the answer “Yes” to this question. What is interesting, however, are the answers “No” and “I do not know”. All the respondents choosing those two answers were Latinos born in the U.S. Meaning they received education in the U.S. and do not know their homeland’s historical background. It makes one wonder, if the history of U.S. interventions in the Latin American countries is implemented in the U.S. history education. Or perhaps, the respondents just did not remember.



2. Why did you (or your family) decide to move to U.S.?

This question allowed the participants to choose multiple answers. The most commonly chosen answer was that the United States provides better living conditions. Most of the respondents who chose this answer, also chose safety reasons as a reason for moving to the U.S. Around 32% of them had stated that they already had relatives living in U.S. and 26% said that U.S. provides better employment options, better wages and financial stability.

The graph below, shows that most of the immigrants had safety concerns in their homeland and chose United States for it provided more security and better living conditions.

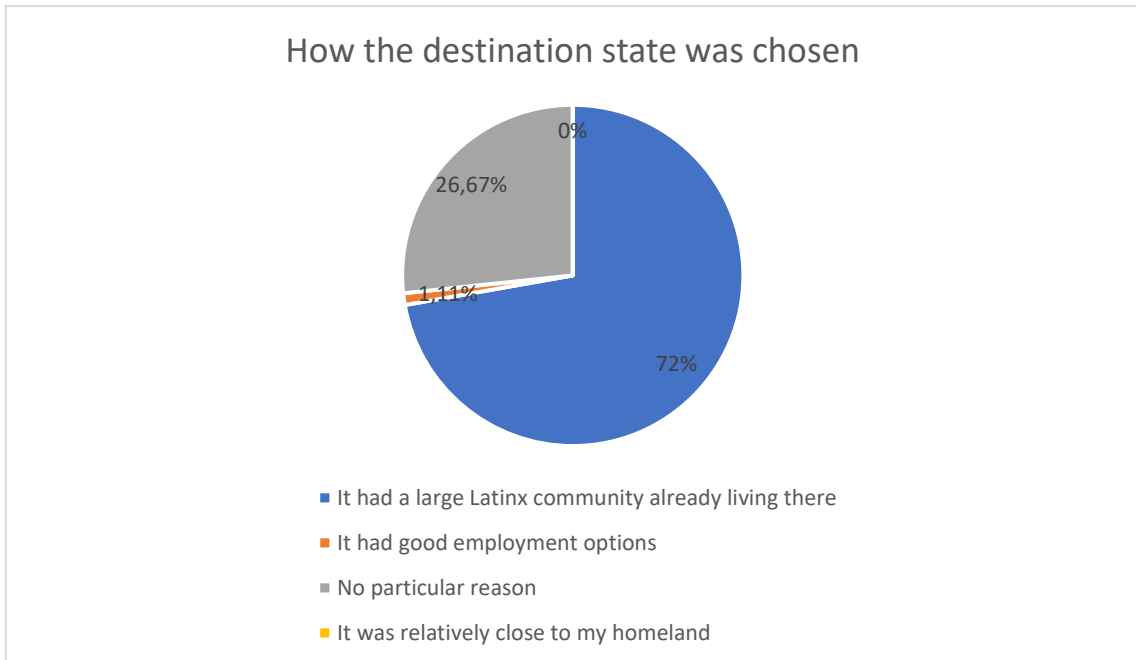


3. Where do you currently live?

Around 80% of the participants live in Florida. Other states mentioned are Virginia, California, Massachusetts and New York.

4. How did you choose where in the U.S. you would move to?

Most of the participants stated that they chose the state because it had a relatively large Latinx community already living there. Those were the Latinos living in Florida and California. Around 27% have stated that there was no particular reason for why they chose the destination. The rest came to the state for good employment options. None of the participants chose the option “It was relatively close to my homeland”.



5. Have you ever felt you were being discriminated just for being a Latino, faced racism?

Out of all the respondents only 26% have stated to have been discriminated against for being of Latinx origin compared to 74% stating “No”. When asked whether they have faced racism, the numbers are the same. However, 81% of them agree that their experiences are influenced by the state and community they live in, whereas 19% of the participants disagree with that statement.

6. Do you think that U.S. political intervention in Latin American countries (such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba etc.) has had an impact on Latinx immigration?

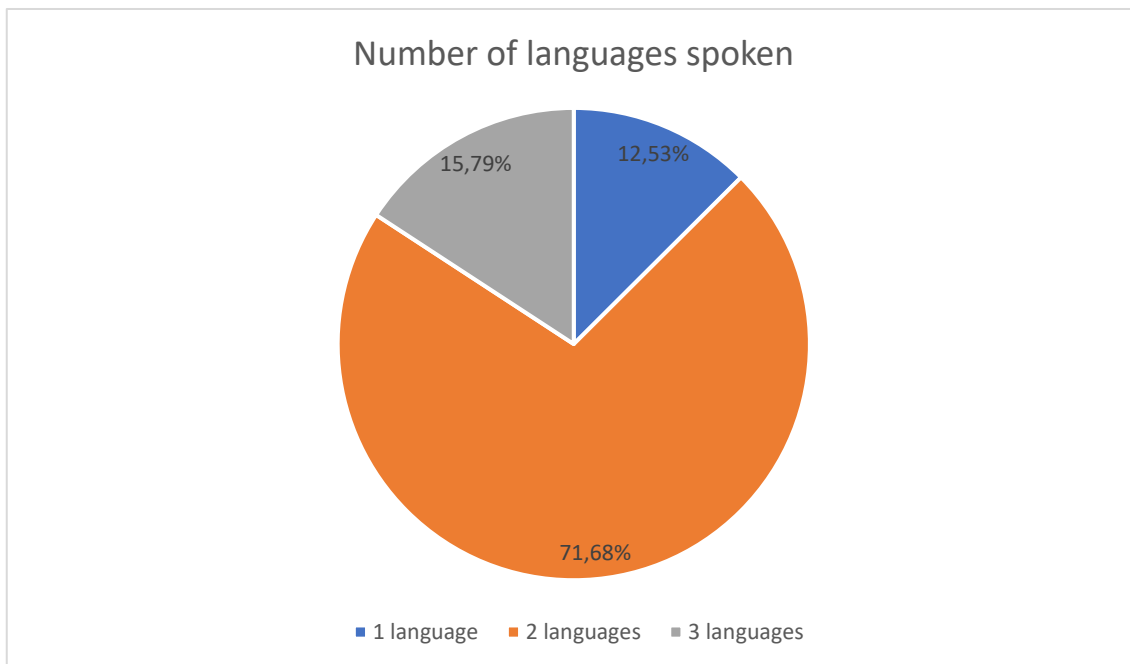
In this question, 72% of the respondents think that it indeed had a large impact on the Latinx immigration into the U.S. 22% think it has had no impact at all and 6% do not agree with any of the propositions/are undecided.

7. Bilingualism

As stated previously, bilingualism is a very important part of the Latinx integration into the U.S. society. The results of the survey show that 88% of the participants are bilingual compared to 12% of monolinguals. 52% of the bilinguals state that they have learnt English in school back in their homeland, the rest learnt it in U.S. either at work, home or school.

8. Languages

Around 72% of the respondents consider themselves bilinguals, 16% of them can even speak 3 languages. The rest is monolingual. All of the survey participants would raise their children to be bilingual with 74% teaching them Spanish as their first language.



## 9. Education

When asked if the respondents had any experience with education in the U.S., 68% chose “Yes” compared to 32% choosing the option “No”. The statement that American nationals have better university options than Latinos has half of the Latinos agreeing and half disagreeing, the answers being exactly 50% to 50% ratio. This result is rather puzzling.

11% of the respondents faced discrimination from teachers, with 89% stating they have not. This, as well as the question whether they were offered bilingual education is influenced by the number of participants attending schools in the U.S. 53% state they were offered bilingual education, 47% were not. Most of those who were not offered bilingual education attended schools in the U.S. in states other than Florida.

Most of the respondents feel that their ability to speak 2 languages has been viewed as something favorable. None of them were ever reprimanded for speaking Spanish in schools.

## 10. Culture

None of the participants have experienced social ostracism in schools or employments. These experiences stem from the fact that most of the respondents come from states with high Latinx population.

When asked which culture is closer to their heart, 68% of the participants chose Latin American culture. 11% chose American and 21% could not decide. Most Latinos find themselves to be more accepting of other cultures compared to the average American. All of them are proud of their Latinx heritage with 74% stating their friends and colleagues have encouraged them to feel proud as well.

70% of the respondents feel that racism against people of Latin American origin has gotten worse during Donald Trump's presidency with 19% disagreeing and 11% being undecided.

When asked whether they thought the current U.S. is more accepting of Latino people, many stated that it is difficult to decide as Donald Trump's rhetoric promoted a considerable amount of prejudice and racism against people of Latin American origin. However, 79% still think that the U.S. is more accepting of them than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

### 3.1.3. SUMMARY

The opinion survey gave an interesting insight into the lives and opinions of the current Latin American immigrant population living in the U.S. but did not confirm the hypothesis. Surprisingly, most of the respondents have not experienced any major racism or discrimination due to living in mostly Latinx communities. It was made clear that the experience largely depends on where in the U.S. the respondent lives, as those from states other than Florida and California did experienced some form of discrimination.

Most of the respondents agree that the U.S. administration actions in their respective country of origin has had major influence on the number of immigrants in the United States. They also agree that Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric has worsened the way Latinos are perceived in the U.S.

All of the Latinos are proud of their heritage and have not experienced any form of social or cultural ostracism. Most are bilingual and would raise their children to be bilingual as well, teaching them Spanish as their first language.

Although the results of the survey have surprised me, the outcome can be viewed as something positive. It shows that at least those living in largely Latinx communities do not have to experience racial prejudice and discrimination.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The multicultural country of United States of America has recently leaned towards painting immigrants as a problem. This public discourse may be seen as paradoxical, given that most of its population historically traces its ancestry to foreign extraction, though mostly of European descent.

In this thesis, we established a correlation between the U.S. neo-colonial treatment of the Latin American countries and the influx of immigrants from those countries. In the first chapter of the theoretical part, we characterized the Latinx population living in the United States and touched up on immigration, bilingualism and brief characterization of the most demographically notable source countries of U.S. immigrants, which would later on be discussed.

In the second chapter of the thesis, we talked of the history of American interventionism and established correlations between the number of immigrants entering the United States and the U.S. involvement in the countries of origin.

The U.S. political and military incursions have undoubtedly had an impact on immigration from Latin America. Whenever there was a large social unrest in any of the mentioned countries, the U.S. would typically get involved by way of protecting its economic and political interests in the given country, rather than trying to do what was best for that country and its citizens. Oftentimes, the U.S. government argued that it was their civic duty to intervene. However, in most cases, not all, those social unrests can be viewed as a result of some form of a U.S. incursion in the past. These social and economic unrests then consequently led to massive spikes in migration in the subsequent years. Another matter discussed was that this migration was oftentimes strongly encouraged by the United States government as it, at that time, benefited the country in some way.

In the practical part of the thesis, a complementary opinion survey targeting a group of Latinos was conducted. Its aim was to find out their experiences, feelings and opinions about America and racism in the U.S. and confirm the hypothesis that U.S. citizens of Latino origin are still subjectively experiencing prejudicial treatment.

This hypothesis was not confirmed, as majority of the respondents have lived most of their lives in large Latinx communities, which consequently influenced their experience. The opinion survey did, however, give an interesting insight into the lives of the current Latin American immigrant population. Most of them have not experienced any major form of racism or discrimination due to living in mostly Latinx communities. It was made clear that the experience largely depends on where in the U.S. the respondent lives. Most of the respondents agree that the U.S. administration in their country has had major influence on the number of immigrants in the United States. They also agree that Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric has worsened the way Latinos are perceived in the U.S. All the Latinos are proud of their heritage and have not experienced any form of social or cultural ostracism. Most are bilingual and would raise their children to be bilingual as well, teaching them Spanish as their first language.

To conclude this thesis, I would like to summarize the mentioned reasons for migration. What many people forget, when bashing immigrants, is that it was the United States that first came into Latin American countries, often plundered their natural resources, meddled with its economic development and trained squads which then helped create chaos, poverty and terrible living conditions for the native people. These conditions then forced these people to flee their homeland and try to seek a better life in the United States. Although perhaps unintended, Latinx immigration can be readily seen as a consequence of the economic exploitation of Latin America.

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