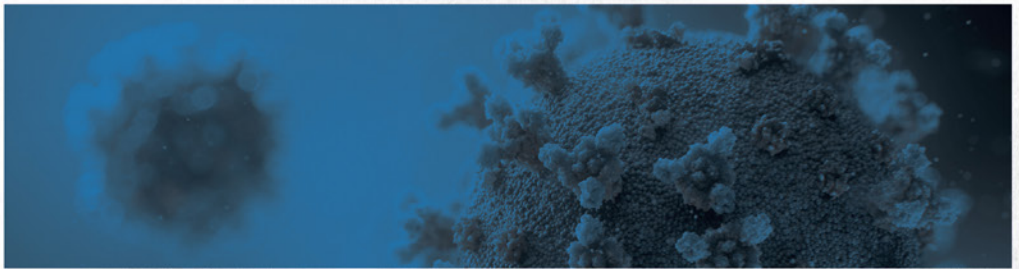




Beyond the Byline:

The Impact of Latino Journalists on Local Newspaper Coverage During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Francisco I. Pedraza, Andrea Borbon, Citlali Tejeda, Gabriela Aros, Dianna Gallardo, Zoey Paredes, Christopher Yearout, and Misael Galdámez



JUNE 30, 2025

Acknowledgments

ASU CLAPR would like to thank Zenya Weatherall, Rodney Hero, Angie Bautista-Chavez, and Eileen McConnell-Diaz for their helpful feedback in early iterations of this report.

UCLA LPPI would like to thank Alberto Lammers, Cris Rivera, Mariah Bonilla, Silvia R. González, Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, and Julio Ricardo Varela for their review in earlier iterations of this report.

About the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute (LPPI)

The UCLA LPPI addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.

About the ASU Center for Latina/os and American Politics Research (CLAPR)

ASU CLAPR's mission is to foster and support thoughtful, innovative research on the political and policy circumstances of the nation's Latina/o-Hispanic (Latinx) population, thereby creating a fuller, deeper understanding of politics and governance in the United States. This mission entails facilitating and disseminating scholarship that emphasizes, but is not limited to, empirical and normative theoretical perspectives, historical context, institutional dimensions, and public policy issues, which complements and extends the large body of behavioral research that has been so prominent in informing the study of Latina/o politics.

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the University of California, Los Angeles, or the Arizona State University as a whole. The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report.



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Data and Methodology	7
Findings	8
Structural Gaps in Latino News Representation	8
When Portrayed, Latinos are Often Portrayed Negatively	12
Latino Journalists Cite More Latino Sources, Feature Latinos Earlier, and Portray Latinos More Positively	13
Recommendations for Journalists and Newsrooms	15
For Journalists	15
For Newsrooms	16
Conclusion	17
Endnotes	18

List of Figures

Fig. 1. U.S. News Coverage of Major Racial and Ethnic Groups	8
Fig. 2. News Undercoverage Gap of Major Ethnic Groups	9
Fig. 3. Latino-Focused Newspaper Article Authorship	10
Fig. 4. Share of Newspaper Articles Citing at Least One Latino Source by State	11
Fig. 5. Median Percentile of First Mention of Latinos in Articles	11
Fig. 6. Portrayal of Latinos in the U.S. During COVID	12
Fig. 7. Average Latino Community Image	13
Fig. 8. Average Share of Latino Sources Cited by Author Ethnicity	13
Fig. 9. Median Percentile of First Mention of Latinos in Articles by Author Ethnicity	14
Fig. 10. Average Latino Community Image in Articles by Author Ethnicity	14

Executive Summary

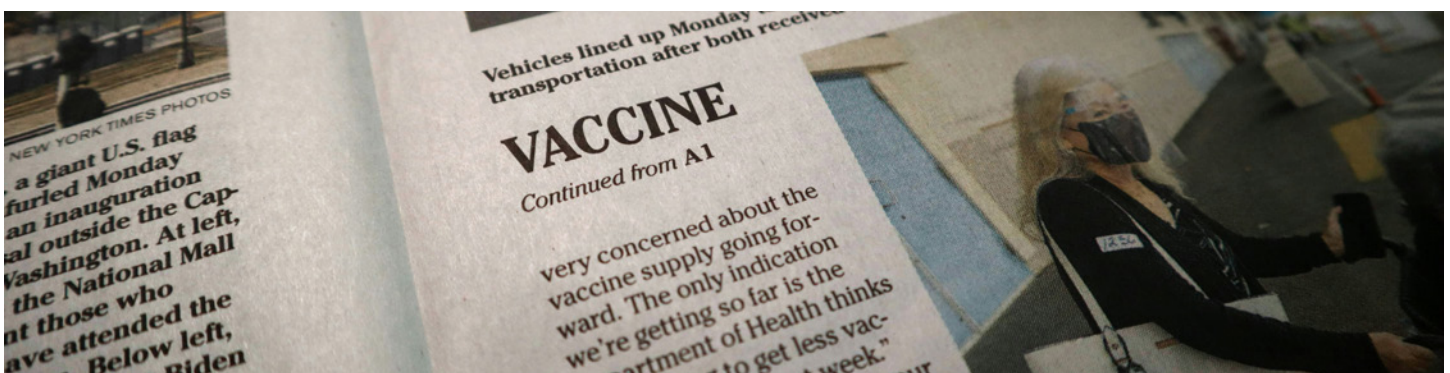
Although Latinos make up nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population, they are consistently underrepresented in news media. This systematic underrepresentation has rendered Latino communities—and the issues that impact them—less visible to the broader public.¹ Additionally, Latinos are vastly underrepresented in the media industry workforce,² on editorial boards, and in Op-Eds³—indicating that the voices and narratives of the nation’s second-largest ethnic group often go unheard and their policy needs unmet.

This brief analyzes 13 million English-language newspaper articles published in the United States between March 2020 and October 2023 to examine the visibility and portrayal of Latinos during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by disproportionate impacts on Latino communities.⁴ We provide coverage data from news outlets based in Arizona, California, and Nevada—three states with sizable and growing Latino populations—and assess the impact of Latino journalists on coverage of Latino communities.

We find:

- **Coverage Disparity:** Only 2 percent of daily newspaper articles mentioned Latinos, despite comprising 19 percent of the population—a 17 percentage point gap. The percentage point coverage gap is larger for Latinos than for Black (6 percentage point gap) or Asian American communities (4 percentage point gap).⁵
- **Representation Imbalance:** Over 80 percent of articles written in the U.S. that mentioned both COVID and Latinos were written by non-Latino journalists.
- **Narrative Deficit:** Half of the articles mentioning Latinos either depicted them negatively or failed to portray them substantively. Community portrayals were most negative for the U.S. overall and highest in Nevada.
- **Authorship Matters:** Latino-authored stories were more likely to cite Latino sources, feature Latinos earlier in the narrative, and portray Latinos more positively.
- **Extent and Type of Coverage Varies by State:**
 - Latinos were underrepresented in news coverage in all three states relative to their population share. The Latino news coverage gap was highest in California and lowest in Nevada.
 - Of the states analyzed, Nevada led in citing Latino sources, featuring Latino-authored stories, and had the highest positive portrayal score.
 - California had the widest authorship gap.

Representation in news coverage is not just about visibility; it is also about shaping public perception, civic participation, and public policy. In a media landscape that remains largely disconnected from the communities it covers, increasing Latino authorship and newsroom leadership is essential for telling fuller, fairer stories.



Recommendations for Journalists and Newsrooms

Latino representation in the media has lasting impacts on public perception, civic inclusion, and policy outcomes.⁶ The following recommendations aim to improve the accuracy, depth, and fairness of coverage about Latinos and their communities, a key step toward a more inclusive and responsive democracy.

For Journalists

- 1. Broaden sources and expand expertise included in stories.** While expert sources can include public officials like policymakers, government representatives, and academics, community members can also provide expertise from their lived experiences. Journalists can partner with community-based organizations and other trusted intermediaries to feature underrepresented voices, such as those of Latino immigrants, youth, and local leaders.
- 2. Use asset language when reporting on U.S. Latinos.** Journalists should avoid deficit language—defining communities by their problems—when reporting on how Latinos are impacted by a particular issue. Instead, they should highlight Latino strengths, aspirations, and contributions before addressing challenges.
- 3. Provide context, not just contrast.** When presenting data on Latinos—and how their experiences differ from other groups—journalists should also offer historical and policy context to give a holistic understanding of the issue at hand. Without the necessary context, readers may interpret differences in a way that reinforces negative stereotypes or individualizes systemic challenges.

For Newsrooms

- 1. Increase Latino representation in newsrooms through targeted recruitment and fellowship programs.** This can be accomplished through partnerships with Hispanic-Serving Institutions and affinity organizations such as the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, creating a robust pipeline for aspiring Latino journalists. Even for newspaper operations whose investments in diversifying the demographic profiles of their reporters are in an early stage, staff writers on the team can and should include the voices of Latinos who live, work, and play in the stories about the locales they cover.
- 2. Ensure Latino voices are well-represented in key editorial and executive positions.** News organizations can begin by assessing how many Latinos hold key editorial leadership roles (e.g., assigning, managing, and executive editors) and using local Latino population shares as a benchmark for representation efforts. News organizations should also include Latino voices in editorial planning beyond Latino-focused coverage and establish mentorship programs that support junior Latino staff, providing clear paths to promotion.
- 3. Create data collection systems to track the diversity of voices included in articles.** News organizations should keep track of author demographics and the acceptance and rejection status of submitted Op-Eds. Additionally, editors should aim for parity between the share of articles that mention Latinos and the share of Latinos in their local or subscription area.
- 4. Actively partner with and contract Latino-centric, Latino-owned, and Latino-led newsrooms.** To create lasting impact, national and regional newsrooms must stop treating Latino-led journalism as secondary and **fund, contract, and credit Latino-centric, Latino-owned, and Latino-led media organizations as collaborators.** Newsrooms must move beyond temporary pledges and indirect support via affinity groups and instead conduct direct business with Latino-led media outlets already setting high coverage standards.

As with other institutions central to democratic life, the press must be held accountable not only for who it reaches, but for whose voices it amplifies. A more representative media landscape—and by extension, more representative news narratives—is essential to ensuring that all communities are seen, heard, and accurately reflected in the stories that define public discourse.

Introduction

News media outlets have the power to shape public perceptions and draw attention to issues of public concern.⁷ By centering the needs, circumstances, and interests of a group or cause, news coverage can mobilize a public and policy response.⁸ However, when the news media overlook a group, needs that might have been addressed by public policy reform may remain unmet due to a lack of attention.

For U.S. Latinos, systematic underrepresentation in news coverage and media has rendered them and their interests less visible.⁹ One analysis of local news found that in 2015, only 5 percent of local news articles covered Latinos, despite Latinos comprising almost 18 percent of the national population.¹⁰ Additionally, Latinos are largely underrepresented in the media industry,¹¹ on editorial boards, and in Op-Eds¹²—indicating that the voices and narratives of the nation’s second-largest ethnic group often go unheard.

As a deeper inquiry into Latino (under)representation in news media, this brief analyzes local daily newspaper article coverage of Latinos across the U.S. from March 2020 to October 2023. Specifically, we analyzed news coverage of Latinos during the COVID-19 pandemic,¹³ a period when Latinos were disproportionately represented among the unemployed,¹⁴ those exiting the labor force,¹⁵ and essential workers¹⁶ as well as in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.¹⁷ We assessed:

1. the level of attention that Latinos received in daily news,
2. the extent to which Latinos were authors and co-producers of news that mentioned them, and
3. the contours of language used in the Latino narrative.

Additionally, we provide news coverage data from news outlets based in Arizona, California, and Nevada—three states with sizable and growing Latino populations—and assess the impact of Latino journalists on coverage of Latino communities.

In this issue brief, we describe our research approach and present our findings. We conclude with policy and advocacy recommendations for newsrooms and journalists.



Data and Methodology

To analyze the extent and type of news coverage of U.S. Latinos, we used *Access World News*, curated by Newsbank, Inc. This full-text newspaper article database features an easy-to-use search interface with intuitive search options and filters. The database includes many small-town dailies, including those with modest subscription bases. Additionally, *Access World News* curates daily newspapers that cover the experiences of racial minorities, with separate archives for “Black Life in America” and “Hispanic Life in America.”

Using *Access World News*, we constructed a database of 13 million news articles written between March 2020 and October 2023 containing the term “COVID*” and a group label (e.g., “whites” or “Hispanic”). The database only included English-language sources, and most articles were from local dailies.¹⁸ We accounted for various terms used for any group by conducting multiple searches with revised terms for African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos.¹⁹ We then compared the share of articles that mentioned each group to their share of the national population. We use the 2020 Decennial Census for the population share analysis, as it is the most comprehensive and accurate count of the U.S. population.

Following the population share analysis, we conducted more in-depth analysis of representative random samples of newspaper articles from Arizona, Nevada, California, and the U.S.²⁰ We investigated the following:

- **Latino authorship**, or the share of articles about Latinos written by Latino journalists, estimated using Spanish-language surname analysis.
- **Latino sources cited**, or the sources cited in an article that are Latino voices, estimated using Spanish-language surname analysis. Sources cited included quotes, people interviewed, and references to reports, polls, institutions, or data.
- **Latino narrative centrality score**, or how early Latinos are mentioned in the full text. Articles that mentioned Latinos earlier in the text were assigned a higher score, reflecting that Latinos were more central to the story’s content.²¹
- **Community image**, or whether articles depict Latinos in a positive, neutral, or negative tone. Community image for each news article was scored by an individual reader, and classified as negative (-1), neutral (0), or positive (+1).

We selected Arizona, California, and Nevada to analyze in more detail because these states have sizable Latino populations. However, we see variation in the total number of people who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino across these states and in the share of each state’s respective Latino population.

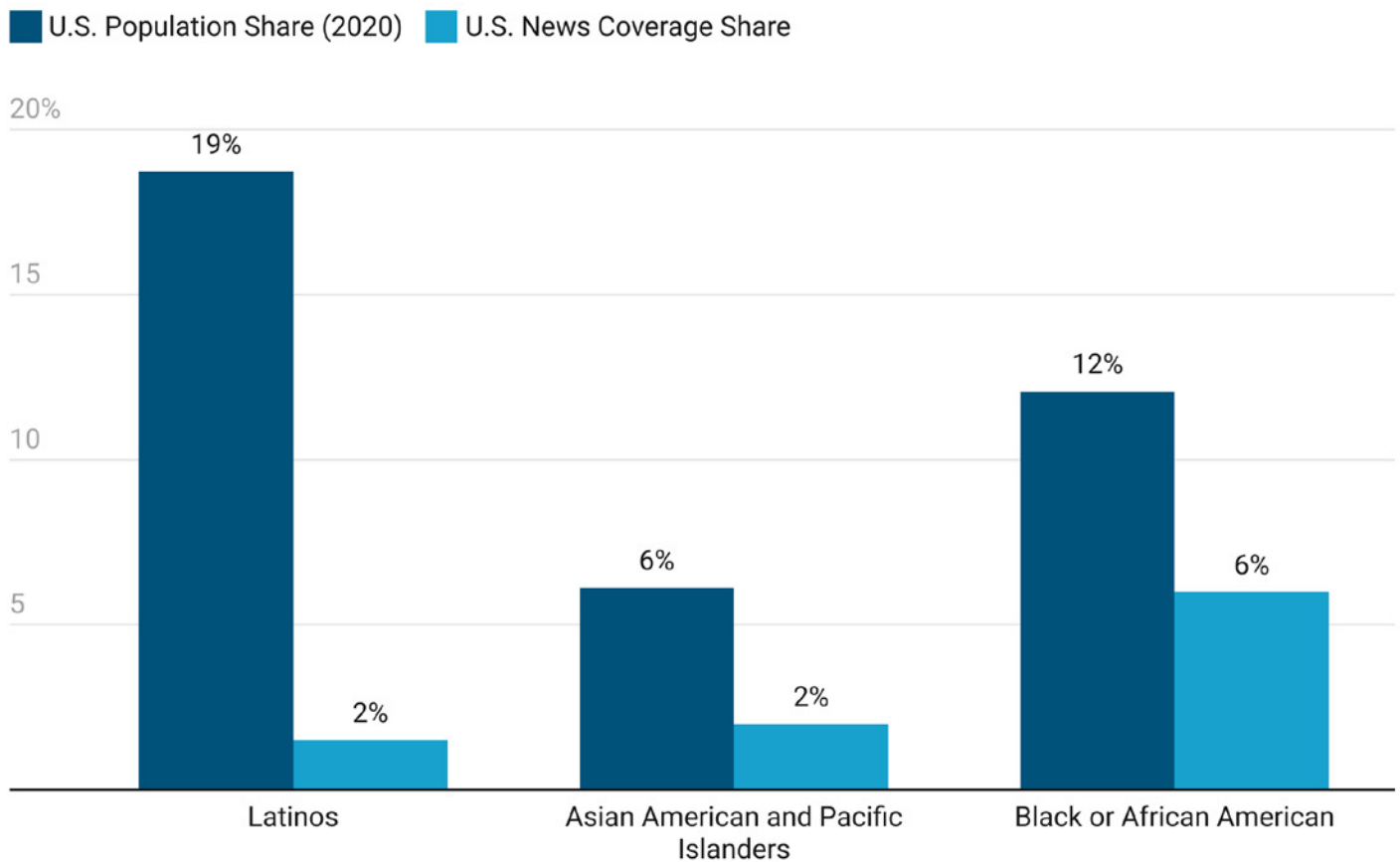
Findings

Structural Gaps in Latino News Representation

Finding 1. Latinos are underrepresented in local newspaper coverage relative to their share of the total U.S. population (Figure 1). Although Latinos made up 19 percent of the total U.S. population in 2020, only 2 percent of daily newspaper articles mentioned Latinos, a 17 percentage point gap (Figure 1). The news coverage gap was wider for Latinos than for their Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) peers (4 percentage point gap) and Black peers (6 percentage point gap).²²

To close the news article deficit for Latinos, each of the 1,200 daily newspapers in the U.S. would need to publish about 1.4 articles per day focused on Latinos.

Figure 1. U.S. News Coverage of Major Racial and Ethnic Groups, March 2020 to October 2023

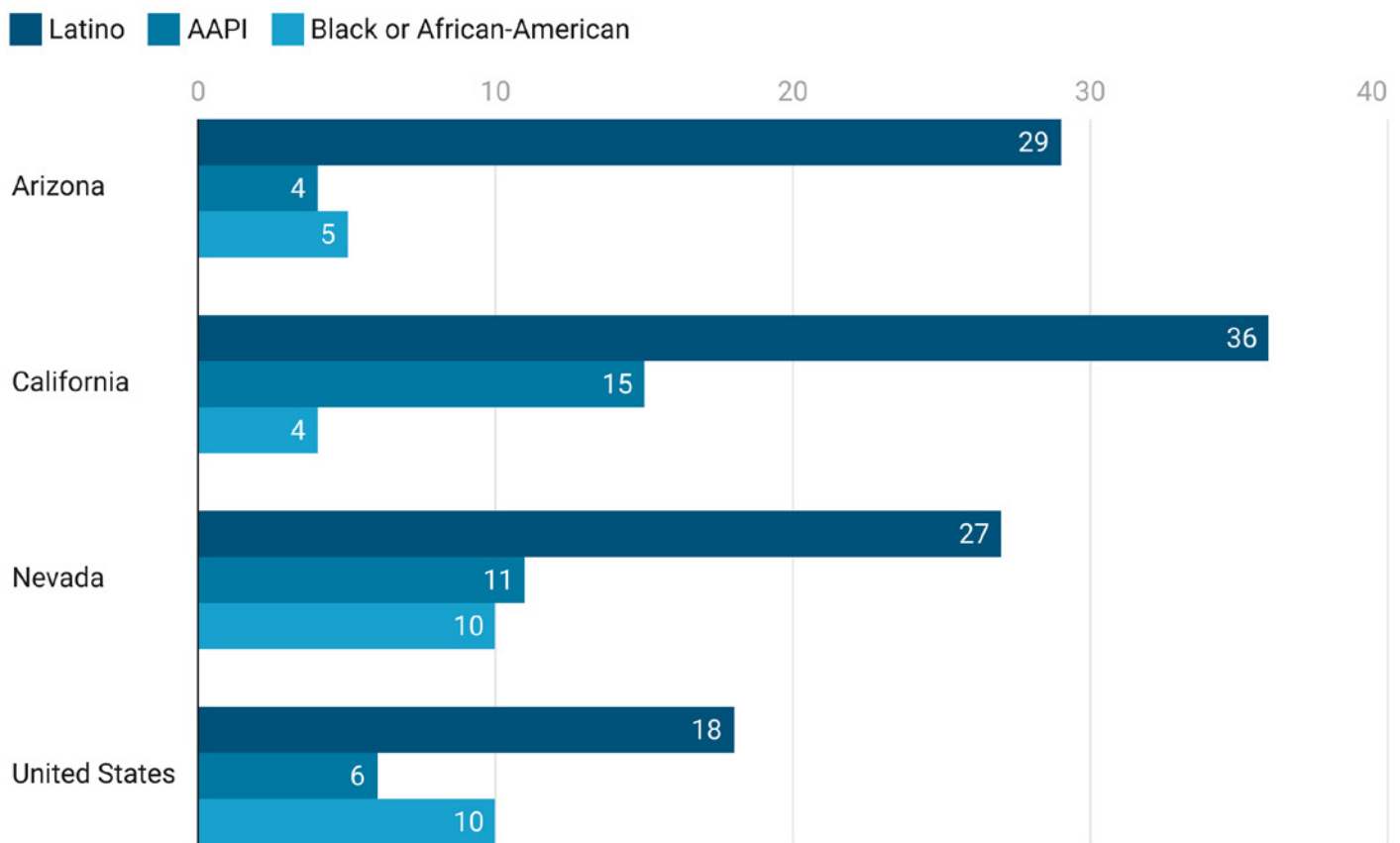


Sources: Authors’ analysis of 13 million English-language daily newspaper articles published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023 that contain the terms “COVID*” and a group label, searched in Newsbank, Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources. Population share data is from the 2020 Decennial Census, [available online](#).

Finding 2. Latinos are underrepresented in local news coverage relative to their population shares in Arizona, California, and Nevada. In Arizona, for example, only 2 percent of daily newspaper articles mentioned Latinos, a 29 percentage point gap (Figure 2). The news coverage gap was highest in California (36 percentage points) and lowest in Nevada (7 percentage points). Overall, across all three states, the news coverage gap is wider for Latinos than for their AAPI and Black peers.

Figure 2. News Undercoverage Gap of Major Ethnic Groups in Arizona, Nevada, and California, March 2020 to October 2023

Percentage Point Difference Between Population Share (2020) and Share of Articles about Group



Notes: In 2020, 40 percent of Californians were Latino, 18 percent were AAPI, and 7 percent were Black. In Arizona, 31 percent of the population was Latino, 5 percent was AAPI, and 6 percent was Black. In Nevada, 29 percent of the population was Latino, 12 percent was AAPI, and 12 percent was Black.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of 13 million English-language daily newspaper articles published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023 that contain the terms “COVID*” and a group label, searched in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources. Population share data is from the 2020 Decennial Census, [available online](#).

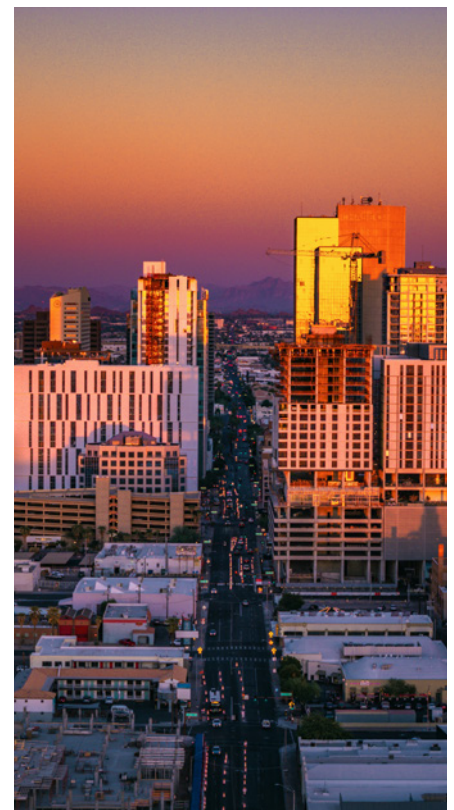
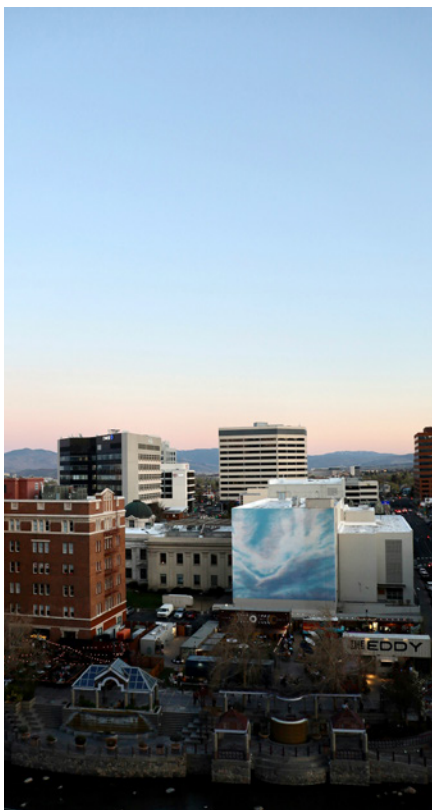
Finding 3. Latino authorship is closest to parity in Nevada and furthest from parity in California (Figure 3). Almost one in five newspaper articles about Latinos in Nevada, where Latinos comprised 29 percent of the population, were written by a Latino author. This was the smallest gap of the three states analyzed. In contrast, Latino authors penned only 12 percent of California news articles, less than half of the state’s Latino population share (39 percent).

Overall, over 80 percent of newspaper articles written in the U.S. that mentioned both COVID and Latinos were written by non-Latino journalists.

Figure 3. Latino-Focused Newspaper Article Authorship, March 2020 to October 2023

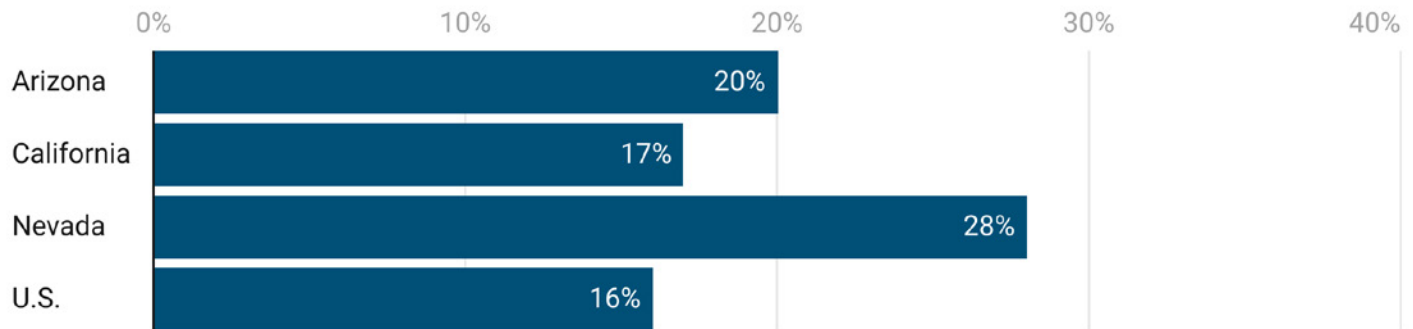
State	Latino Population Share (2020)	Share of Latino-Focused Articles Authored by Latinos	Difference (Percentage Points)
Arizona	31%	11%	20
California	39%	12%	27
Nevada	29%	19%	10
U.S.	19%	16%	3

Sources: Analyses of representative samples of English-language daily newspaper articles, published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023, that contain the terms “COVID*” and “Latino” or “Hispanic,” searched in Newsbank, Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources. Population share data is from the 2020 Decennial Census, [available online](#).



Finding 4. Nevada newspaper articles are the most likely to cite at least one Latino source (Figure 4). About 28 percent of sources cited in Nevada news articles were Latino sources, a higher share than were cited in articles from Arizona sources (20 percent), California sources (17 percent), and the U.S. overall (16 percent).

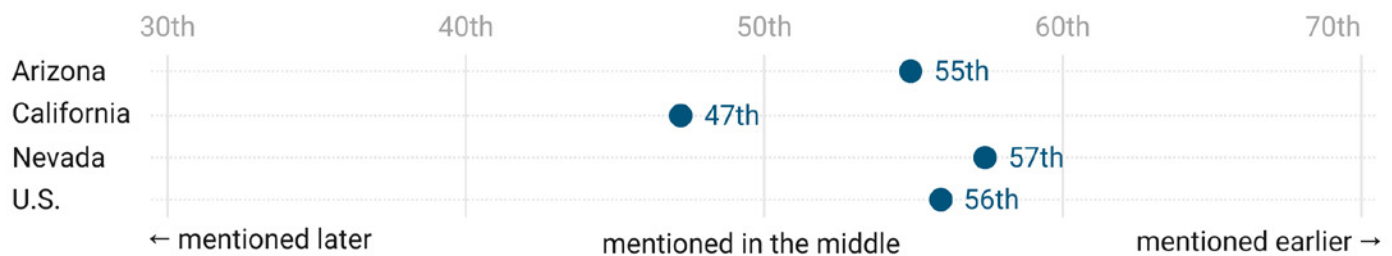
Figure 4. Share of Newspaper Articles Citing at Least One Latino Source by State, March 2020 to October 2023



Sources: Analyses of representative samples of English-language daily newspaper articles, published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023, that contain the terms “COVID*” and “Latino” or “Hispanic,” searched in Newsbank, Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources.

Finding 5. Most articles that discuss Latinos and COVID-19 mention Latinos in the first half of the text, especially in Nevada and Arizona (Figure 5). The median Latino centrality score for Arizona, Nevada, and the U.S. overall was above 50, indicating that most articles discussing COVID and Latinos mentioned Latinos in the story’s first half. California had the lowest centrality score at 47, meaning that more often than not, California journalists mentioned Latinos in the second half of stories that mentioned them.

Figure 5. Median Percentile of First Mention of Latinos in Articles, March 2020 to October 2023



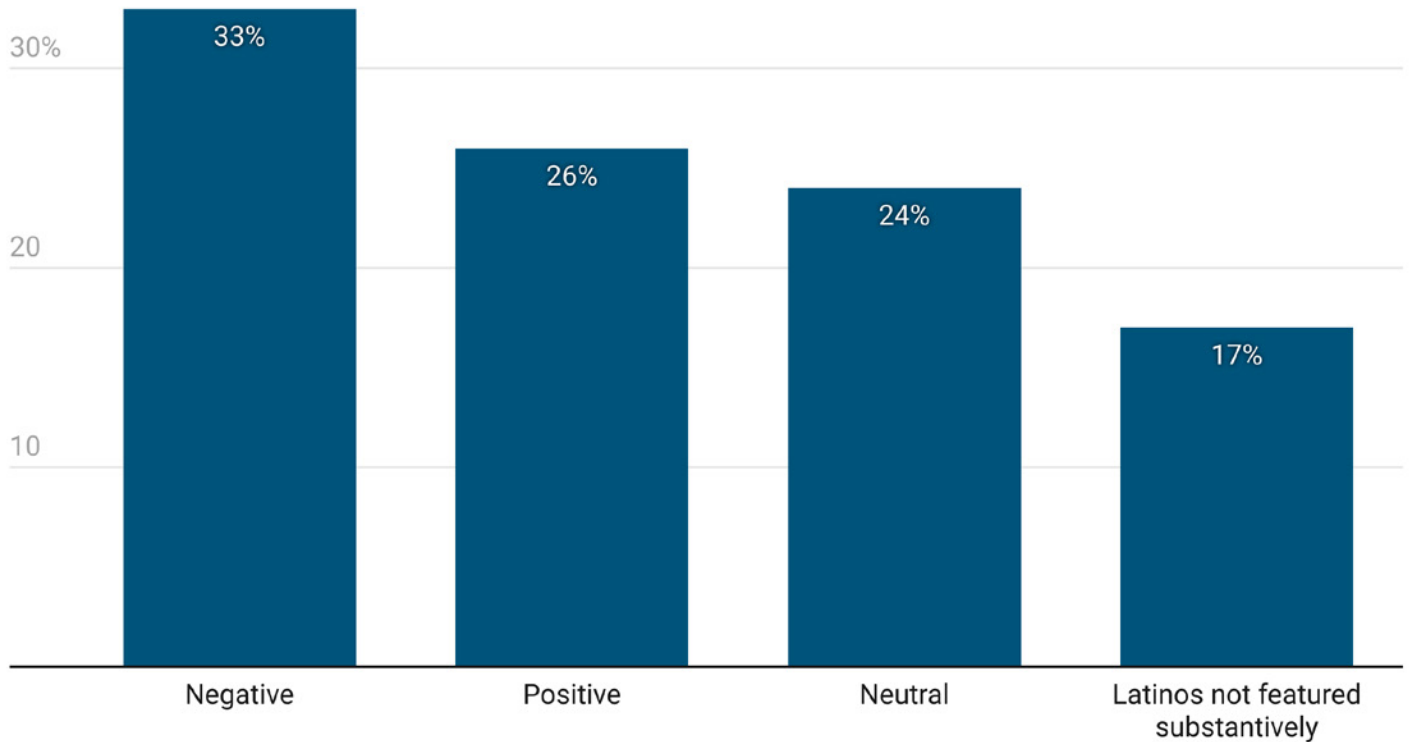
Note: Articles that mention Latinos earlier in the text are assigned a higher score. We use this as an estimate for the centrality of Latinos to the content of the story.

Source: Representative sample of U.S. English-language newspaper articles published March 2020 to October 2023 using a search of “Latino” or “Hispanic” AND “COVID*” in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* archive.

When Portrayed, Latinos are Often Portrayed Negatively

Finding 6. A third of the articles written about U.S. Latinos depict them in a negative or unflattering light (Figure 6). Additionally, another 17 percent of news articles did not substantively portray Latinos but only referred to them in a table or demographic breakdowns of COVID-19 infections or COVID-19 vaccination uptake. In total, half of the articles referencing Latinos either depicted them in a negative light or did not substantively portray them.

Figure 6. Portrayal of Latinos in the U.S. During COVID, March 2020 to October 2023



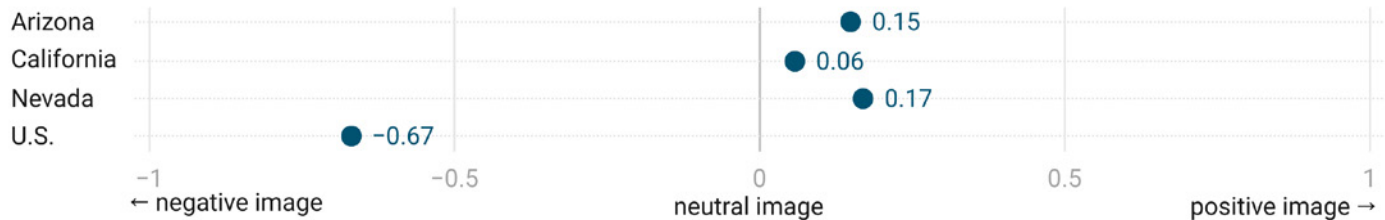
Note: Community image for each news article was scored by an individual reader and classified as Negative (-1), Neutral (0), or Positive (+1).

Source: Representative samples of 1,000 U.S. English-language newspaper articles published March 2020 to October 2023 using a search of “Latino” AND “COVID*” in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* archive.



Finding 7. Nevada journalists portray Latinos the most positively, but national portrayals tilt negative (Figure 7). Nevada’s community image score was the highest among the states studied at .17, followed by Arizona’s at 0.15, and California at 0.06. This suggests that in all three states analyzed, journalists tended to present Latinos in a neutral to slightly positive manner. In contrast, U.S. journalists overall portray Latinos negatively, with a community image score of -0.67.

Figure 7. Average Latino Community Image, March 2020 to October 2023



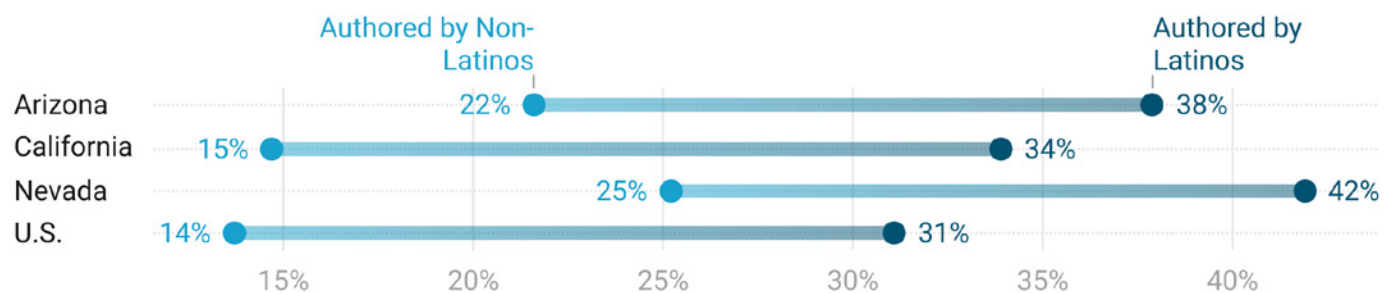
Note: Community image for each news article was scored by an individual reader and classified as Negative (-1), Neutral (0), or Positive (+1).

Source: Representative samples of U.S. English-language newspaper articles published March 2020 to October 2023 using a search of “Latino” AND “COVID*” in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* archive.

Latino Journalists Cite More Latino Sources, Feature Latinos Earlier, and Portray Latinos More Positively

Finding 8. Latino journalists are more likely to feature Latino sources (Figure 8). In the U.S. overall, Latino journalists were over twice as likely to feature Latinos as sources of information, expertise, or testimony than their non-Latino peers (31 percent and 14 percent, respectively). The impact of Latino journalists was largest in California, where Latino writers were 19 percentage points more likely to feature Latino voices than non-Latino writers.

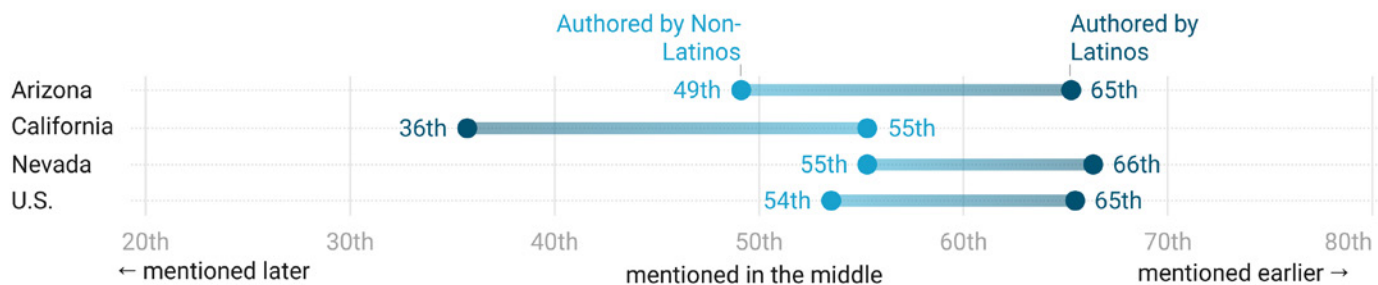
Figure 8. Average Share of Latino Sources Cited by Author Ethnicity, March 2020 to October 2023



Source: Analyses of representative samples of English-language daily newspaper articles published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023, containing the terms “COVID*” and “Latino,” searched in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources.

Finding 9. Latino journalists tend to weave Latinos into articles sooner. On average, Latino journalists first mentioned Latinos in the first third of the story. Non-Latino journalists, however, were more likely to first mention Latinos in the middle of a news story (Figure 9). California was the only exception, where Latino journalists were more likely to first mention Latinos three-quarters into their story (compared to halfway through the story for non-Latino journalists).

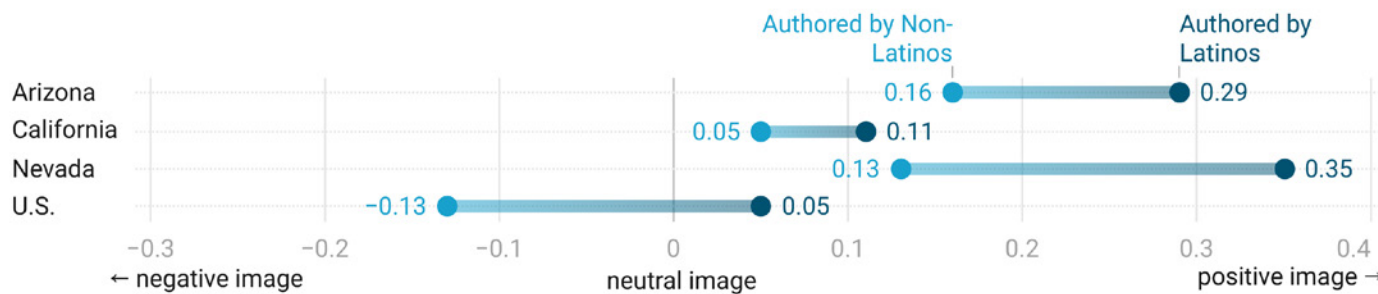
Figure 9. Median Percentile of First Mention of Latinos in Newspaper Articles by Author Ethnicity, March 2020 to October 2023



Source: Analyses of representative samples of English-language daily newspaper articles published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023, containing the terms “COVID*” and “Latino,” searched in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources.

Finding 10. Latino journalists generally depict Latinos more positively than non-Latino journalists (Figure 10). In the U.S. overall, the average Latino community image was slightly negative when written by non-Latino journalists but slightly positive when written by Latino journalists. Similarly, in Arizona, California, and Nevada, the average community Latino image score doubles when stories were written by a Latino author (compared to a non-Latino author).

Figure 10. Average Latino Community Image in Newspaper Articles by Author Ethnicity, March 2020 to October 2023



Note: Community image for each news article was scored by an individual reader and classified as Negative (-1), Neutral (0), or Positive (+1).

Source: Analyses of representative samples of English-language daily newspaper articles published in the United States from March 2020 to October 2023, containing the terms “COVID*” and “Latino,” searched in Newsbank Inc.’s *Access World News* full-text database of news sources.

Recommendations for Journalists and Newsrooms

It remains clear that Latino media representation—and the stories told about them—have lasting consequences for public perception, civic inclusion, and policy outcomes. We offer the following recommendations to improve the accuracy, depth, and fairness of news coverage about Latinos and the communities in which they live, work, and contribute, with varying degrees of structural change. By advancing more representative and thoughtful storytelling, we take a meaningful step toward a more inclusive and responsive democracy.

For Journalists

- 1. Broaden sources and expand expertise included in stories.** According to our analysis, over 80 percent of articles that mentioned both COVID and Latinos did not include a single Latino source. While sources can (and should) include public officials like policymakers, government representatives, and academics, community members can also provide expertise from their lived experiences. Researchers and other experts may also have personal backgrounds that shape their data interpretation approaches.²³ Journalists can partner with community-based organizations and other trusted intermediaries to feature underrepresented voices, like those of Latino immigrants, youth, and local leaders.
- 2. Use asset language when reporting on U.S. Latinos.** When news articles feature Latinos prominently, they tend to be portrayed negatively. To improve the Latino community image, journalists should avoid deficit language—or defining a community by their problems—in reporting how Latinos understand and are uniquely impacted by an issue or concern.²⁴ Additionally, when possible, journalists should offer solutions to the challenges Latinos face in their experiences of life in the U.S.²⁵ Journalists should also emphasize the strengths, aspirations, and contributions of Latinos when discussing their challenges. For example, identifying a Latino immigrant who does not have legal authorization to be in the United States as an “illegal immigrant” results in a very different image than referring to them as someone who is “undocumented.” Journalists can shape better and more accurate images of Latino communities by framing their writing inclusively.²⁶
- 3. Provide context, not just contrast.** When presenting data on Latinos—and how their experiences differ from other groups—journalists should also offer historical and policy context to give a holistic understanding of the issue at hand. Without the necessary context, readers may interpret differences in a way that reinforces negative stereotypes or individualizes systemic challenges.²⁷ For example, when reporting on Latinos’ elevated COVID-19 exposure and unemployment during the pandemic, it is important to note Latino overrepresentation in essential occupations, limited ability to work remotely, and the significant barriers they face in accessing healthcare.²⁸ By embedding historical and policy context into daily reporting, journalists deepen public understanding and create the conditions for improved civic dialogue and policy.



For Newsrooms

- 1. Increase Latino representation in newsrooms through targeted recruitment and fellowship programs.** Although our findings highlight that Latino writers are more likely to center Latino voices and portray Latinos positively, less than 10 percent of all U.S. journalists are Latino.²⁹ To ensure Latino communities are well-represented and portrayed appropriately, digital news organizations and newspapers should increase the targeted recruitment of Latino journalists by:
 - a. partnering with Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) and community colleges to recruit Latino journalists,
 - b. offering internships, fellowships, and early-career programs explicitly aimed at supporting Latino students and graduates, and
 - c. connecting with affinity organizations like the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) to post job listings and network.
- 2. Ensure Latino voices are well-represented in key editorial and executive positions.** Beyond increasing the number of Latino journalists, newsrooms must also ensure that Latino journalists have the power to shape narratives and ensure that the communities they serve are well-represented. However, few newsroom decision-makers are Latino. In 2023, Latinos held just 4.5 percent of executive editor, managing editor, and presidential roles in the 22 largest U.S. newsrooms; additionally, only 9.4 percent of managing editors at major digital newsrooms were Latino.³⁰ News organizations can start by assessing the share of Latinos in key editorial leadership roles (e.g., assigning editor, managing editor, and executive editor) and using parity with the Latino population share in their local community as a target benchmark. Newsroom leaders should also include Latino voices in editorial decisions and planning—not just when covering Latino communities—and create mentorship programs to pair junior Latino staff with senior mentors and offer clear pathways to promotion. As the Latino Donor Collaborative notes:

“[d]iverse leadership is not just about numerical parity; it is about ensuring that news organizations reflect the narratives, perspectives, and interests of the diverse communities that they serve, accurately representing and advocating for these communities at every level of decision-making.”³¹
- 3. Create data collection systems to track the diversity of voices included in articles.** One possibility is to start by collecting author demographics for all opinion pieces submitted to newspapers—including editorials, guest columns, and letters to the editor. Opinion articles invite outside authors to voice their perspectives and serve as forums to influence policymakers and other key stakeholders. Because they do not require substantial changes in staffing, working towards more diversity in opinion article authorship could be a more attainable path towards parity.³² In addition to reporting authors’ demographics, news organizations should also report the acceptance or rejection status of submitted pieces. More broadly, we challenge editors to achieve parity between the share of articles written that mention Latinos and the share of Latinos who reside in their locale or subscription geography.
- 4. Actively partner with and contract Latino-centric, Latino-owned, and Latino-led newsrooms.** Despite initial investments in Latino coverage following periods of public pressure, progress has been fleeting as many major outlets failed to sustain those efforts.³³ Mainstream newsrooms must move beyond temporary pledges and indirect support via affinity groups and directly partner with **Latino-centric, Latino-owned, and Latino-led media outlets** already producing high-quality, community-rooted journalism. These outlets—such as *Latino Rebels*, *Caló News*, and *The Latino Newsletter*—have built the relationships and credibility necessary to tell nuanced, culturally competent stories, often with limited resources and little external recognition.

To create lasting impact, national and regional newsrooms must stop treating Latino-led journalism as secondary and instead fund, contract, and credit Latino-centric, Latino-owned, and Latino-led media organizations as collaborators. Newsrooms can also support organizations like the Latino Media Consortium, which is investing in expanding Latino-owned digital media and community storytelling. Strengthening these collaborations is not only a matter of fairness—it is essential to building a media ecosystem that reflects and serves the full diversity of American public life.

Conclusion

Our analysis found persistent underrepresentation of Latinos in local newspaper coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic—a period when Latinos were disproportionately affected in nearly every aspect of public health and economic life. More than half of the time when Latinos were mentioned in articles, they were more likely to be framed in a negative light or not portrayed substantively than to be framed positively. However, we also found that coverage authored by Latino journalists made a significant difference: articles with Latino authors were more likely to cite Latino sources, introduce Latinos earlier in the narrative, and portray Latino communities in a more positive light.

These findings underscore the need to increase the number of Latino journalists and expand their influence within editorial decision-making. News organizations of all sizes should prioritize the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Latino talent, while also tracking the diversity of their content and sources. Non-Latino journalists can include more Latino sources in their work and craft narratives that portray Latinos fairly and accurately.




As with other institutions central to democratic life, the press must be held accountable not only for who it reaches, but for the voices it amplifies. A more representative media landscape—and by extension, more representative news narratives—is essential to ensuring that all communities are seen, heard, and accurately reflected in the stories that define public discourse.





Endnotes

- 1 Taemin Ahn, Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, Nick Gonzalez, and Sonja Diaz, *Unseen and Unheard: The Underrepresentation of Latino Voices and Stories in the Los Angeles Times Opinion and Editorials Section* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute, December 2021), [available online](#).
- 2 U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Hispanic Workers Are Underrepresented in the Media, and More Data Are Needed for Federal Enforcement Efforts*, (Washington, D.C.: September 2022), [available online](#).
- 3 Denise Ramos-Vega, Mariah Bonilla, Hector De Leon, Alan B. Rivera, and Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, *Still Unseen and Unheard? A Follow-Up Evaluation of Latino Representation in the Los Angeles Times Opinion and Editorials Section* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, June 2023), [available online](#).
- 4 This expert issues brief draws on a larger report published by the ASU Center for Latina/os and American Political Research (CLAPR). For more details, see Francisco I. Pedraza, Andrea Borbon, Gabriela Aros, Dianna Gallardo, Zoey Paredes, and Christopher Yearout, *Local Newspaper Coverage and Latinos During COVID-19* (Tempe, Arizona: ASU CLAPR, October 2024).
- 5 The search of local newspaper articles did not include phrases capturing national origin or descent (e.g. “Mexican immigrants” or “Spanish-speaking communities”). In our search of the Access World News local newspaper archives, we found that using a country’s proper name or demonym for a national origin as part of a search criteria added news articles about happenings outside of the United States.
- 6 Heather Silber Mohamed and Emily F. Parris, “‘Bad Hombres?’ An Examination of Identities in U.S. Media Coverage of Immigration,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 46, Iss. 1 (2020): pp. 158-176, [available online](#); Hector Rendon, “News Media Representation: Audience Perceptions of News Frames About Latinxs and Hispanics,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol. 101, Issue 1 (December 21, 2023), [available online](#).
- 7 Catherine Happer and Greg Philo, “The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change,” *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 1, no. 5 (2013): 321-336, [available online](#).
- 8 Karthik Sheshadri and Munindar P. Singh, “The Public and Legislative Impact of Hyperconcentrated Topic News,” *Sciences Advances* Vol. 5, Iss. 8 (August 28, 2019), [available online](#).
- 9 Ahn et al., *Unseen and Unheard*.
- 10 Mingxiao Sui and Paul Newly, “Latino Portrayals in Local News Media: Underrepresentation, Negative Stereotypes, and Institutional Predictors of Coverage,” *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 46, no. 3 (2017): 273-94, [available online](#).
- 11 U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Hispanic Workers Are Underrepresented in the Media, and More Data Are Needed for Federal Enforcement Efforts*.
- 12 Ramos-Vega et al., *Still Unseen and Unheard? A Follow-Up Evaluation of Latino Representation in the Los Angeles Times Opinion and Editorials Section*.
- 13 Global and U.S. agencies declared the pandemic over on May 11, 2023. By extending our analysis to a few months after the pandemic, we can also capture any ensuing media narratives or stories that may have tried to tell the pandemic’s full story.
- 14 Ryan Zamarripa and Lorena Roque, *Latinos Face Disproportionate Health and Economic Impacts from COVID-19* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, March 5, 2021), [available online](#).
- 15 Kassandra Hernández, Diana Garcia, Paula Nazario, Michael Ríos, and Rodrigo Domínguez-Villegas, *Latinas Exiting the Workforce* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, June 14, 2021), [available online](#).
- 16 Misael Galdámez, Charlotte Kesteven, and Aaron Melaas, *In a Vulnerable State: Hispanic Essential Workers in California* (Santa Monica, CA: Milken Institute, 2020), [available online](#).

- 17 Rosario Majano, Alberto Murillo, Misael Galdámez, and Arturo Vargas-Bustamante, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Latinos, 3 Years In: Trends in Health Outcomes and Vaccinations in the U.S., California, and Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023), [available online](#).
- 18 With respect to national news outlets, *Access World News* only features USA Today and CQ Roll Call.
- 19 The search of local newspaper articles did not include phrases capturing national origin or descent (e.g. “Mexican immigrants” or “Spanish-speaking communities”). In our search of the *Access World News* local newspaper archives, we found that using a country’s proper name or demonym for a national origin as part of a search criteria added news articles about happenings outside of the United States.
- 20 Each sample contained a different number of articles because each state had a different number of unique articles (ie. non-repeated articles). The Arizona sample included 656 articles, the California sample included 442 articles, Nevada included 404 articles, and the U.S. included 1,000 articles.
- 21 We created a scale between 0 and 100, calculating for each article the point at which the mention of Latino appeared. We standardized the score against the total number of words in the regular body of text of the newspaper article. For each article, we then tracked the total number of words in a news article (t) and the point at which the first “Latino” appeared in the text (p) We used t and p to estimate c, the group centrality score.
- 22 Although our national data for non-Hispanic whites suggests that they may be undercovered (15 percent of all articles mentioned whites vs. a 58% population share), sociologists have demonstrated that across all sectors of life and culture in America, whiteness need not be mentioned explicitly to be centered. By contrast, groups occupying less privileged positions in racial hierarchies may need specific recognition in news stories in order to direct readers to features of their lived experiences. For this reason, we excluded non-Hispanic whites from our analysis in this brief. For more detail, see Paula Rothenberg, *Invisible Privilege: A Memoir About Race, Class, and Gender* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, March 2000) and Monica McDermott, *Whiteness in America* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, August 2020).
- 23 Kim García, Sarah Pérez-Sanz, Pamela Mejía, and Heather Gehlert, *Elevating Latino Experiences and Voices in News About Racial Equity* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group and UnidosUS, April 2023), [available online](#).
- 24 UT Austin’s Center for Media Engagement’s [Solidarity Journalism Initiative](#) offers additional guidance on incorporating the voices of underrepresented communities. See Anita Varma, “Solidarity Reporting Guide,” *UT Austin Center for Media Engagement*, November 10, 2021, [available online](#).
- 25 García et al., *Elevating Latino Experiences and Voices in News About Racial Equity*.
- 26 For more information on inclusive framing of individuals and communities, see Oregon Health and Science University, “Inclusive Language Guide,” Accessed June 2025, [available online](#).
- 27 Race Forward, *Race Reporting Guide* (Washington, DC: Race Forward, 2015), [available online](#).
- 28 Majano et al., *The Impact of COVID-19 on Latinos, 3 Years In*.
- 29 Emily Tomasik and Jeffrey Gottfried, “U.S. Journalists’ Beats Vary Widely by Gender and Other Factors,” *Pew Research Center*, April 4, 2023, [available online](#).
- 30 The Latino Donor Collaborative, *The 2023 LDC-NAHJ U.S. Latinos in Journalism Report* (Beverly Hills, CA: The Latino Donor Collaborative, September 2023), [available online](#).
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Ahn et al., *Unseen and Unheard*.
- 33 UCLA Latina Futures 2050 Lab, “Statement from UCLA Latina Futures 2050 Lab on the Los Angeles Times Layoffs,” January 23, 2024, [available online](#).

-  [uclalppi](https://www.instagram.com/uclalppi)
-  [uclalatio](https://www.linkedin.com/company/uclalatio)
-  [UCLAlatino](https://twitter.com/UCLAlatino)
-  [UCLAlatino](https://www.facebook.com/UCLAlatino)
-  latino@luskin.ucla.edu

UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute

-  [asu_clapr](https://www.instagram.com/asu_clapr)
-  clapr@exchange.asu.edu

ASU Center for Latina/os and
American Politics Research
Arizona State University