

Understanding Afro-Latinos/as' Housing Challenges: A Comprehensive Study of Gaining Homeownership in the United States

©Isreal Mallard

The African Institution, Washington DC, USA



Abstract

Although the Hispanic/Latino population is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, and rapidly becoming a driving force in the United States housing market, many Hispanic households in the United States face barriers to homeownership. Disproportionately, the United States housing market challenges occur not only in the Hispanic/Latino community, but particularly in Afro-Latino households. Despite Afro-Latinos/as having higher educational attainment rates and labor market participation, they experience more barriers to homeownership. Afro-Latino homeownership is hindered by a unique combination of systemic racism, historical exclusion, and economic disparities that affect both Black and Hispanic communities. This paper aims to examine and explain the historical and systematic social and economic factors that have caused the disparities in the United States housing market within the Afro-Latino community. Also, the paper seeks to address the historical and systematic social and economic factors through policy initiatives to help dissolve the barriers that have made homeownership challenging for Afro-Latinos/as in the United States.

Keywords: Affordability, Afro-Latinos/as, Hispanic, Historical Barriers, Homeownership, Latinos/as

Introduction

Today, one in five people in the United States identifies as Hispanic or Latino/a, totaling 68 million individuals and representing 20 percent of the population (US Census Bureau, 2024). Hispanic youths make up an especially significant share. Currently, 19.6 million Latinos/as are under the age of 18, comprising 26.9 percent of the nation's youths (US Census Bureau, 2024). The United States Hispanic population is also the fastest-growing demographic segment. Over the past decade, it has grown by 12.7 million people, accounting for 59.9 percent of total United States population growth (US Census Bureau 2014, 2024). This sustained growth is driving housing demand, strengthening the labor force, and contributing to broader economic activity. Population growth among Hispanics is occurring nationwide and across every state. While the largest increases over the last ten years were recorded in states with historically large Hispanic

communities, including Texas (+2.2 million), Florida (+1.9 million), and California (+1.1 million), growth is not limited to these established markets. Some of the fastest growth rates are occurring in traditionally less diverse states such as North Dakota (+93.3 percent), Tennessee (+75.9 percent), and Kentucky (+74.0 percent) (US Census Bureau 2014, 2024). Not a single state experienced a decline in its Hispanic population, either in absolute terms or growth rate, over the last decade.

In addition to the population growth among Latinos/as, specifically in 2019, there were an estimated 2.2 million Afro-Latinos/as in the United States, nearly 1% of the total United States population. As a share of the Latino population, Afro-Latinos/as represent 4% of United States Latinos/as and have doubled over the last two decades. From 2000 to 2019, the Afro-Latino population in the United States grew by 120.8%, almost twice the growth rate for non-Black Latinos over the same period (US Census Bureau, 2020). The Afro-Latino population in the United States has grown at nearly twice the rate of non-Black Latinos since the beginning of the century, and University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) research reveals complex social inequalities faced by Afro-Latino people who are both ethnically Latino and racially Black. Despite having higher educational attainment than non-Black Latinos/as, Afro-Latinos/as face worse outcomes in key areas including income and homeownership (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023).

This paper underscores the many challenges that many Afro-Latinos/as face in comparison to other groups in gaining access to homeownership in the United States. While Afro-Latinos/as have lower homeownership rates compared to other groups, 40.6% for Afro-Latinos/as versus 54% for non-Black Latinos/as, those who are homeowners have higher home values than non-Black Latinos/as and the United States population overall, averaging \$210,000 versus \$200,000 (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). Afro-Latinos/as who do not own a home often live in higher rates of poverty as researchers found that Afro-Latinos/as have higher poverty rates. In 2019, Afro-Latinos/as experienced a poverty rate of 23%, three percentage points higher than the poverty rate of non-Black Latinos/as and the overall United States population. As of 2019, the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was 41.8 percent, significantly lower than the overall Hispanic average, with even lower rates observed for households of Dominican or Honduran descent (Census.gov, 2020). Since Latinos/as especially Afro-Latinos/as are much less represented in the housing market compared to non-Afro-Latinos/as and Black Americans, they are often overlooked as a major policy resolution in both the Latino community as well as in the Black community in the United States. So why do Afro-Latinos/as have lower homeownership rates compared to non-Afro-Latinos/as well as Black Americans in the United States? Are there social and economic factors that lead to these challenges? If so, what are the systemic social and economic factors that have led to Afro-Latinos/as' lacking access to homeownership in the United States? To what extent are Afro-Latinos/as' homeownership represented in the housing market in the United States compared to that of other Latinos/as? If social and economic factors play a key role in the Afro-Latino community's access to the United States housing market, what resolutions can help change the barriers that homeownership? In this paper, a qualitative descriptive case study research method and the Lockean Theory of Homeownership are used to probe these questions.

Also, in this article, I argue that historical and systemic social and economic exclusion, and particularly historical racism, has contributed to the lack of access to homeownership for Afro-Latinos/as in the United States housing market. This paper provides and explains the historical and systematic barriers that prohibited Afro-Latinos/as from gaining access to

homeownership in the United States which include issues such as higher mortgage denial rates, income and employment disparities, and costly financing, as well as many other factors that the Afro-Latino community faces today.

Historical Barriers to Homeownership: A Brief Background

Latino homeownership rates have consistently increased over the last seven years, due in part to decreases in poverty rates, gains in educational attainment, and a growing young population. The median age for Hispanic/Latino people is 30, the lowest among non-Hispanic/Latino White, Black and Asian people approaching home-buying age (National League of Cities, 2022). The Urban Institute projects this growth to continue, estimating that 70 percent of new homeowners between 2020 and 2040 will be Hispanic; however, gains may not be even within the Hispanic/Latino population (Urban Institute, 2025). In 2019, the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was 41.8 percent, while Hispanic/Latinx people of Guatemalan, Dominican and Honduran descent had a homeownership rate below 32 percent (National League of Cities, 2022).

Although, the Afro-Latino population in the United States has grown at nearly twice the rate of non-Black Latinos/as since the beginning of the century, UCLA research reveals complex social inequalities faced by Afro-Latinos/as, people who are both ethnically Latino and racially Black. Despite having higher educational attainment than non-Black Latinos/as, Afro-Latinos/as face worse outcomes in key areas, including income and homeownership (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). Therefore, I explore the historical and systemic barriers Afro-Latinos/as face, which have caused their lower homeownership rates compared to non-Afro-Latinos/as as well as other groups in the United States. Also, I examine the challenging social and economic factors that many Afro-Latinos/as face when attempting to gain access to homeownership in today's United States housing market.

Historical and Systemic Barriers

To begin with, both Latino and Afro-Latino households have faced historical systemic financial, and structural barriers to homeownership that contribute to a homeownership rate consistently lower than that of White households in the United States (National Fair Housing Alliance Report, 2025). These key barriers include income and employment disparities, costly financing as well as a lack of inherited wealth for down payments, limited access to traditional credit, and higher mortgage denial rates due to debt-to-income ratios. These core barriers for Afro-Latino and Latino homeownership in the United States started with systemic discrimination. These forms of disparities are both social and economical, and are rooted in a history of redlining and ongoing discrimination in the lending process. The legacy of federal redlining, primarily through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps established in the 1930s, continues to act as a primary driver of the homeownership and wealth gaps for Afro-Latino families today (National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2024).

Although the Fair Housing Act outlawed the aforementioned practice in 1968, its structural impact on property values and neighborhood investment remains deeply “baked in Redlining and Segregation. After decades of federal practices like redlining denied mortgages in neighborhoods where people of color lived, the legacy still impacts property values and disinvestment today” (National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2024, 1). In addition, both “restrictive covenants and appraisal bias” have been systemic anchors that have historically and

currently restrict the growth of Afro-Latino homeownership and intergenerational wealth. Historical deed restrictions once legally barred Black and Asian families from owning property in certain areas, thereby limiting their ability to build generational wealth while appraisal bias generated a form of discrimination that allowed homes in predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods to be frequently appraised at lower values than similar homes in White neighborhoods, making it harder to build equity or refinance (Pittsburg Courier, 2024).

Before these forms of discrimination were ruled unenforceable in 1948 and later outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, restrictive covenants were legally binding “deed restrictions” that prevented homeowners from selling or renting to non-White families. Moreover, other systematic barriers were used, such as the “eExplicit exclusion” which in this case caused many covenants specifically targeting those of “African blood” or “Moorish” descent, directly blocking Afro-Latinos/as. In the Southwest and California, these agreements frequently barred Mexican Americans and other Latino groups from White-dominated areas, forcing them into lower-income neighborhoods (Emory Law Journal, 2021). And many invisible barriers exist even when not named explicitly; economic requirements like minimum house prices or square footage were used to circumvent race-based restrictions, effectively excluding Latino and Black families (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2022).

Covenants such as “permanent impact” “ran with the land,” meaning that they remained in deeds permanently. While illegal today, many historical deeds still contain this language, serving as a reminder of why many current high-value neighborhoods remain predominantly White (NPR, Morning Edition, 2021). Other social and economic challenging factors that many Afro-Latinos/as face when attempting to gain access to homeownership in today’s United States housing market are financial and credit obstacles. Afro-Latino families often have significantly less liquid wealth to cover down payments and closing costs. The racial wealth gap is one of the most persistent hurdles for Afro-Latino families, as decades of systemic exclusion have left them with far less liquid capital for upfront homebuying costs. While homeownership is often touted as the primary way to build wealth, the lack of initial wealth frequently prevents families from ever entering the market (Urban Wire, 2022). For instance, as of 2022, the median wealth for White households was roughly \$285,000, while the median wealth for Hispanic households was about \$62,000 and Black households about \$44,000. Afro-Latino families often sit at the intersection of these two lower-wealth groups. Also, lower income and wealth levels, often resulting from generational wealth gaps, prevent many Afro-Latino households from affording homes, even when they possess similar education levels as their White peers (Brookings, 2024).

Furthermore, Black and Latino applicants faced higher denial rates and were more likely to be offered high cost “subprime” loans than White applicants with similar financial profiles. Data from 2024 and 2025 continued to show a significant division in mortgage outcomes, whereby Afro-Latino, Black and Latino applicants are denied more frequently and pay more for credit than White applicants with similar financial profiles (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2025). Afro-Latino and Latino buyers also have higher mortgage denial rates than their White counterparts and the top denial reasons include debt-to-income ratios, poor credit history, and insufficient collateral which lead to higher underwriting and mortgage denial rates (UCLA, 2023).

There are now new forms of barriers instead of historical discrimination practices. Systematic barriers now exist that include traditional credit models which may not account for non-traditional financial histories (like rent or utility payments). This new form of systematic barriers to homeownership disproportionately affects communities of color which may be

unbanked or have limited credit history. Traditional credit models often act as a barrier for Afro-Latino and other communities of color by failing to capture financial responsibility outside of debt-based history. Since these populations are disproportionately unbanked or have “thin” credit files, they are often excluded from prime mortgage rates despite a history of on-time rent and utility payments (Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, 2024).

Traditional scoring relies heavily on credit cards and established loans, which many Afro-Latino families may not use at the same rate as White households, and this disproportionate impact serves as a great disadvantage to the Afro-Latino community. Approximately 40% of Latinos/as and 46% of Black Americans use non-traditional financial services (like check cashers), which do not typically report positive behavior to credit bureaus and this credit history constraints lock Afro-Latinos/as out of the United States housing market because Latino and Black households often have lower credit scores due to historic wealth disparities and lack of mainstream credit access, or because their credit information is not adequately captured by traditional scoring models (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2012).

Moreover, down payment and closing costs socially and economically challenge many Afro-Latinos/as when attempting to gain access to homeownership in today’s United States housing market. The lack of accumulated wealth and high down-payment requirements act as the most significant barrier to homeownership often cited alongside high housing costs. The combined weight of down-payment and closing costs remains the most significant obstacle to Afro-Latino homeownership. While many believe that they need 20% down, even the standard 3% to 5% for a first-time homebuyer is often unattainable due to a lack of accumulated wealth and inherited capital (National League of Cities, 2024), while White families are much more likely to receive an inheritance or family gift for a down payment. For most Afro-Latino buyers, these funds must be saved entirely from income—a slow process in a high-rent market because most do not have the upfront money which leads to the dual barrier regarding the savings gap and higher fees.

On average, Hispanic and Black borrowers often pay \$250–\$270 more in loan fees at closing than White borrowers with similar financial profiles (Urban Institute, 2025). These historic barriers and systematic complex web of factors capture how these issues are not just isolated hurdles; they are a compounding cycle. When the combination of social and economic factors such as the lack of inherited wealth (a result of redlining and covenants) with modern-day appraisal bias and credit scoring inequities, we see exactly why there is roughly a 10% gap between Afro-Latino and the general Latino homeownership persists. This generates a distinct “gap within a gap” when compared to other major demographic groups as of early 2026. While homeownership data for Afro-Latinos/as are often grouped within broader “Hispanic” or “Black” categories, specialized research reveals a consistent “intra-group gap”; and while the overall Latino homeownership rate is approximately 48.5% to 49%, the rate for Afro-Latinos/as specifically is significantly lower, typically hovering around 41.8% (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2025). In addition, White (Non-Hispanic) households range from 73.8% to 74.2%. This represents a nearly 32-percentage-point gap compared to Afro-Latino households.

Finally, 63% of Asian households have the highest rate among communities of color, sitting roughly 21 points higher than those of Afro-Latinos. All Hispanic/Latino households range between 48.7% and 49%. Even within their own broad ethnic category, Afro-Latinos/as trail by approximately 7-8 percentage points. Lastly, Black/African American households range between 44.7% and 46.5%, while Afro-Latino rates are often slightly lower than or comparable to the general Black homeownership rates which remain the lowest than those of any major

racial category (National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The Lockean Theory of Homeownership is used with the research methodology described in the next section to ground this research paper. The theory argues that private property is a natural right. Locke posited that individuals own themselves and their labor. Consequently, by mixing personal labor with unowned natural resources, a person legitimately transforms that resource into their own private property (Locke, 1690). This theory establishes that ownership is a natural right born from mixing labor with natural resources. When this theory is applied to today's United States real estate, however, this framework uncovers profound systemic failures. For Afro-Latinos/as, the intersection of racial and ethnic discrimination breaks Locke's core tenets—the presumption of self-ownership, the fairness of the labor-reward loop, and the Lockean Proviso.” Locke's model assumes a meritocratic baseline: hard work directly yields property ownership (Berger, 2017). Afro-Latino workers participate robustly in the labor market but face a dual layer of wage disparity impacted by both the Black-White and Latino-White wage gaps. Since income directly dictates the ability to save for down-payments and secure competitive interest rates, the Lockean formula fails. The labor is mixed, but the property acquisition is blocked by systemic economic friction. Locke's famous constraint—the “Lockean Proviso”—mandates that individual property accumulation is only valid if “enough and as good” is left in common for others. The history of United States urban development routinely violated this rule through exclusionary practices (Munshi, 2022).

In addition, in the mid-20th-Century, government maps systematically restricted mortgage access in Black and Latino neighborhoods. By hoarding prime real estate and resources for suburban White developments, the housing market failed to leave “enough and as good” for communities of color. Afro-Latinos/as disproportionately reside in expensive, hyper-segregated urban centers like New York, Miami, and Boston. In these environments, institutional buyers and gentrification rapidly exhaust the supply of affordable entry-level homes, freezing working-class minorities out of the market (UnidosUS, 2019).

Enlightenment-era property philosophy often conflated agricultural “improvement” of land with civilization, a rationale historically used to justify the dispossession of non-White populations. Legal scholars note that American property law adopted this bias, baking in an assumption that certain racial groups possessed a higher capacity to care for and value property (Murray, 1999). And for Afro-Latinos/as, this legacy manifests as compounded discrimination with homes in majority-Black or Latino neighborhoods are consistently undervalued compared to identical homes in White neighborhoods. Locke introduced money as a tool to prevent “spoilage,” allowing individuals to store the value of their labor indefinitely. In modern America, housing acts as the primary vehicle for this wealth preservation. Nevertheless, Afro-Latino homeowners see their equity diluted through predatory market dynamics. Also, Locke viewed property as something to be passed down securely to ensure family stability. Due to structural barriers, older Hispanic and Black homeowners are significantly less likely to have formal wills or estate plans. Thus, when a homeowner passes away without a will, the property becomes heirs' property (or tangled title). Since the title is split fragmentedly among all heirs, descendants cannot easily access home equity loans, qualify for disaster relief, or sell the property cleanly. This frequently leads to forced partition sales, stripping Afro-Latino families of generational wealth and returning the property to the commercial market (Morales, Sheckler and Molinsky,

2025).

Research Methodology

A qualitative descriptive case study methodology method is the primary approach utilized to ground the analysis of the data collected for this study because words are emphasized. It is also the primary methodological approach because of the “What is?” type questions that undergird the research. The approach is employed to illustrate facts focusing on a single or specific nature of a phenomenon and, thus, a phenomenon being studied is carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset (Bangura et al., 1999).

Also, it was imperative that descriptive quantitative analysis be secondarily used to augment the qualitative analysis because the collection and analysis of numerical data helped to identify the systemic social and economic factors that have caused barriers for Afro-Latinos/as to gain access to homeownership in the United States. These patterns assist in suggesting cause-and-effect relationships as well as can be applied to a much broader population. Quantifying homeownership disparities for Afro-Latinos/as in the United States housing market requires an intersectional methodology that disaggregates broad "Hispanic" data. Researchers must combine large-scale national datasets with localized variables to control for the compounding effects of race, nativity, and systemic inequities on housing accumulation and wealth (Urban Institute, 2023). Also quantitative research on Afro-Latinos/as in the United States housing market relies on parsing large, public datasets to isolate intersectional identities. Since standard housing data often flatten the Latino experience into a single ethnic category, quantitative models must use a two-pronged identity isolation method to separate Afro-Latino data points from those of their non-Black Latino counterparts.

Analysis and Discussion

As discussed in the previous sections, the Afro-Latino population in the United States has grown at nearly twice the rate of non-Black Latinos/as since the beginning of the century. Despite having higher educational attainment than non-Black Latinos/as, Afro-Latinos/as, however, face worse outcomes in key areas, including income and homeownership. As also mentioned, both Latino and Afro-Latino households have faced systemic, financial, and structural barriers to the housing market that have contributed to a homeownership rate consistently lower than that of White. The key barriers included income and employment disparities, costly financing, as well as a lack of inherited wealth for down-payments, limited access to traditional credit, and higher mortgage denial rates due to debt-to-income ratios. To better understand not only the social, racial and economic factors that Afro-Latinos/as have faced in the United States housing market, as well as the historical and systematic barriers they faced toward homeownership in the United States, I also analyze and discuss the current data available to better understand the challenges Afro-Latinos/as face to gain homeownership in the United States today. I aim to use historical data to tease out nuances and complexities of gaining access to homeownership in the today's United States housing market for Afro-Latinos/as

In 2025, Hispanics saw a net gain of 441,000 owner-households, reaching a record high of 10.2 million Hispanic owner-households (US Census Bureau, 2025). This was the largest gain of any racial or ethnic demographic and the largest single-year increase for Hispanics since the United States Census Bureau began collecting this data in 1975. The surge in Hispanic owner-

households accounted for all United States homeownership growth in 2025, offsetting declines in other demographic segments. At the same time, Hispanics added over one million new households, accounting for nearly all (92.6 percent) of national household growth, a primary indicator of future homeownership activity (US Census Bureau, 2025). Today, with a median age of 31, Hispanics are the youngest ethnic and racial demographic, with many aging into prime household formation and homebuying years. The median Hispanic household income reached \$72,574 in 2024, reflecting a 4.5 percent increase from the previous year. Also, Hispanic household income has risen steadily in recent years, in line with overall national income trends. Nonetheless, income levels have varied significantly based on markets. States and territories with the highest Hispanic household incomes include the District of Columbia (\$121,094), New Hampshire (\$106,222), and Alaska (\$92,697) (US Census Bureau, 2024).

In addition, educational attainment among Hispanics continues to rise. In 2024, 8.7 million Hispanic adults over the age of 25 held a Bachelor's degree or higher, representing an 8.5 percent year-over-year increase. Today, more than one in five Latinos/as are college-educated. This trend is even more pronounced among Latinas, whose rate of college attainment has more than quadrupled over the last 20 years. Currently, 23.9 percent of Latinas hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2024). Rising income and education levels are expanding greater purchasing power and strengthening economic contributions to the United States economy. The United States Latino gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of Hispanic economic output, now stands at \$4.1 trillion. If United States Latinos/as were considered a country, their economy would rank fifth in the world (US Latino GDP Report, 2025). Yet, despite gains, Hispanic homeowners often still face barriers like higher mortgage denial rates, lower credit scores, and reliance on alternative income sources, which disproportionately affect Black and Afro-Latino households.

According to the Urban Institute, Hispanic/Latino homeownership rates have consistently increased over the last seven years, due in part to decreases in poverty rates, gains in educational attainment, and a young population. The median age for Hispanic/Latino people is 31, the lowest among non-Hispanic/Latino White, Black and Asian people, approaching homebuying age. Nevertheless, in 2019, the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was 41.8 percent while Hispanic/Latino people of Guatemalan, Dominican and Honduran descent had a homeownership rate below 32 percent (National League of Cities, 2022). Latinos as a community educational attainment rate has increased; however, studies show that Afro-Latino education rates exceed their non-Black Latino counterparts: 26% of Afro-Latinas completed a college degree, compared with 18% of non-Black Latinas; 20% of Afro-Latinos completed a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 15% of non-Black Latino men (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). Yet, while Afro-Latinos/as have lower homeownership rates compared to other groups, 40.6% for Afro-Latinos/as versus 54% for non-Black Latinos/as, and those who do own have higher home values than non-Black Latinos/as and the United States population overall—\$210,000 versus \$200,000. Researchers found that Afro-Latinos/as have higher poverty rates (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023).

In addition, in 2019, Afro-Latinos/as experienced a poverty rate of 23%, three percentage points higher than the poverty rate of non-Black Latinos/as and the overall United States population (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). Therefore, the following questions remains: If Latinos/as are gaining more access to homeownership in 2025, why is there a decrease in homeownership among Afro-Latinos/as even when they attain more educational achievements? And what challenges do they face as a community compared to their non-Afro-

Latino counterparts?

Delimitations of the Research

While the data related specifically to Afro-Latino access to homeownership in the United States housing market are still considerably scarce since 2019, I had to rely on the most accurate data available. In 2019, the data showed a 41.8% homeownership rate, with lower rates among certain Caribbean/Central American subgroups, and a general 51% overall Latino rate compared to 72% for non-Hispanic Whites. These data collected date to 2019, which is another reason why this study is imperative to researching the barriers Afro-Latinos/as face when trying to gain access to homeownership in the United States. In 2019, there were 2.2 million Afro-Latinos/as in the United States, nearly 1% of the total United States population. As a share of the Latino population, Afro-Latinos/as represent 4% of United States Latinos/as and have doubled over the last two decades. From 2000 to 2019, the Afro-Latin population in the United States grew by 120.8%, almost twice the growth rate for non-Black Latinos/as over the same period (US Census Bureau, 2020).

As stated previously, in 2019, there were 2.2 million Afro-Latinos/as in the United States, a 121% increase from 2000. Afro-Latinos/as grew at almost twice the rate of non-Black Latinos/as over the same period. Afro-Latinos/as have higher education levels than non-Black Latinas: 26% of Afro-Latinas completed a college degree, compared to 18% of non-Black Latinas. Similarly, 20% of Afro-Latinas completed a Bachelor's degree or more, compared to 15% of non-Black Latino men (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). Consistent with previous research, Afro-Latinas have higher education levels than other major racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, Afro-Latinos/as were more likely to have completed college education than other groups. When looking at educational attainment by gender, for instance, 26.2% of Afro-Latinas completed a college degree compared to just 17.5% of non-Black Latinas. Additionally, 20.1% of Afro-Latino men completed a bachelor's degree or more, compared to only 14.6% of non-Black Latinos men (Holder and Aja, 2021).

Similarly, Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos have high labor force participation levels. In 2019, Afro-Latinas had the highest labor force participation rate of all women observed (68.3%), almost eight percentage points higher than that of non-Black Latinas (60.8%) and nine percentage points higher than the rate for women overall (59%). Relatedly, Afro-Latinos had a higher labor force participation rate than men overall (79.5% vs. 72.1%) but slightly lower than that of non-Black Latinos (81.7%) (Holder and Aja, 2021). Turning to wages, both Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos have slightly higher wages than non-Black Latinas and Latinos. In 2019, for instance, Afro-Latinas averaged \$16.70 an hour, more than \$1 higher than the wage for non-Black Latinas (\$15.40). This wage difference was much smaller for Afro-Latinos, who only earned 50 cents more per hour than non-Black Latinos (\$18.80 vs. \$18.30). Despite earning higher wages than their respective non-Black Latina/o groups, Afro-Latinas and Afro-Latinos earned less than the average United States worker in 2019. Afro-Latinas still earn slightly higher wages than non-Black Latinas. In 2019, college-educated Afro-Latinas averaged \$25 an hour, \$1 more than non-Black Latinas (\$23.90). Nonetheless, the story does not hold for college-educated Afro-Latinos, who earn more than \$1 less on average than non-Black Latino men (\$27.40 vs. \$28.80, respectively).

Likewise, Afro-Latino household incomes and poverty rates do not reflect their educational attainment rates. Non-Latino Black and Afro-Latino households have the lowest

median incomes of the groups analyzed here. In 2019, Afro-Latinx households had a median household income of \$47,400, almost \$15,000 less than the United States median income and roughly \$5,000 less than that of non-Black Latino households (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023).

As of 2019, the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was 41.8 percent, significantly lower than the overall Hispanic average, with even lower rates observed for households of Dominican or Honduran descent. Although Afro-Latinos/as have low homeownership rates compared to other groups (40.6% for Afro-Latinxs vs. 54% for non-Black Latinos), those who own have higher home values than non-Black Latinos/as and the United States overall (Holder and Aja, 2021). Despite Afro-Latinxs' higher educational attainment rates and labor market participation, they experience anti-Blackness in the economy and society. Their outcomes, especially in household incomes and homeownership, are tied to those of the non-Hispanic Black community (Acevedo-Garcia, 2019).

As explained previously, many historical barriers and systematic social and economic factors have played a role in undermining Afro-Latinos/as' access to homeownership in the United States, and recent research has also demonstrated that Afro-Latinos/as must navigate anti-Blackness, colorism, and discrimination in education and lending systems, especially when applying for home loans (LPPI, 20219). Afro-Latino mortgage applicants, for instance, are more likely to experience denial or receive a high-cost loan than other Latino groups, but less likely than non-Latino Black applicants (Loya, 2022). As a result of discriminatory lending practices, Afro-Latinos/as are less likely to own a home. The analysis here reflects this finding. In 2019, Afro-Latinos/as were the least likely to own their homes compared to other major ethnic groups. Only 40.1% of Afro-Latinos/as lived in an owned home, compared to 53.7% of non-Black Latinos/as and 69.1% of all Americans.

Nonetheless, Afro-Latinos/as' median home value was higher than the average at \$210,000, compared to \$200,000 for non-Black Latinos/as and other United States homeowners (LPPI, 2019). In addition, Afro-Latino homeownership issues reside at a complex intersection of racial and ethnic disparities. While the broader Latino community has seen consistent homeownership growth, Afro-Latinos/as often face additional, unique barriers that result in significantly lower ownership rates than their non-Black Latino peers (UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute, 2023). For example, Afro-Latinos are more likely to experience a "double disparity" in ownership rates. Research highlights a stark gap when Latino data are disaggregated by race. In 2019, the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was approximately 41.8%, notably lower than the broader Latino population's rate of 51% and far below the 72% for non-Hispanic White residents, thereby generating lower ownership rates. In comparison to other groups, this rate aligns more closely with the 41.7% national homeownership rate for Black households, suggesting that racialized barriers impact Afro-Latinos/as similarly to the African American community.

Moreover, Afro-Latinos often deal with more financial and credit obstacles which include a combination of lower average incomes and systemic credit access issues. A significant number of Black and Latino applicants face mortgage denial rates nearly double those of White applicants (21% and 17%, respectively, vs. 11% for Whites). When approved, these borrowers are more likely to receive high-cost loans with higher interest rates and fees, costing an average of \$4,200 more than the life of the loan. In addition, high debt-to-income ratios and student loan debts are cited as primary reasons for mortgage denials, with 42% of Black and 23% of Hispanic buyers carrying student debts compared to only 15% of White buyers (National Association of

Realtors, 2025).

Also, systemic issues continue to prevent Afro-Latino families from building and sustaining housing wealth. Many homes in predominantly Black or Latino neighborhoods are frequently undervalued or appraised below contract price, limiting the ability to build equity or refinance. Furthermore, many homeowners of color are less likely to sustain homeownership long-term. Less than half of low-income homeowners of color remain owners four years after their purchase, often due to higher foreclosure rates and less “liquid wealth” to handle emergencies. To boot, research conducted by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute (2023) suggests that the creditworthiness of Black and Latino applicants is not valued equally, with high-credit-score applicants sometimes denied at twice the rate of White applicants with similar scores.

Finally, according to the Urban Institute (2025), many Afro-Latino communities are concentrated in high-cost markets like New York and California, where rising home prices and limited inventory make entry-level homeownership particularly difficult. For instance, in 2019, while California and Texas had historically had the largest Latino populations, Afro-Latinos/as were primarily concentrated along the Atlantic Seaboard. In Massachusetts, for instance, 13.2% of Latinos identify as Afro-Latinos/as, the highest share of any state; Pennsylvania (11.7%), New York (10.7%), Washington DC (10.5%), and New Hampshire (9.8%) round out the five states and territory with the largest Afro-Latino populations. In absolute terms, the largest number of Afro-Latinos/as lives in New York (397,000), followed by California (237,000) and Florida (232,000). Similar to the state-level findings, cities in the Northeast and along the East Coast have the greatest concentrations of Afro-Latinxs. Among large metropolitan statistical areas, Boston, MA, has the largest proportion of Afro-Latinos/as at 15.3% of its Latino population, followed by Virginia Beach, VA; Pittsburgh, PA; Rochester, NY; and Buffalo, NY. Notably, cities with large proportions of self-identifying Afro-Latino residents also tend to have large Black populations. In most cities presented here, the Black population share is larger than the Latino population share (LPPI, 2019). Despite recent gains, Hispanic/Latino homeownership rates still trail those of the non-Hispanic White population.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To summarize, according to the United States Census Bureau (2025), the Hispanic population is the fastest-growing demographic segment in the United States. The Hispanics/Latino community has grown by 12.7 million people, accounting for 59.9 percent of total United States population growth over the past decade. Also, the Hispanic/Latino population is one of the fastest growing and rapidly becoming a driving force in the United States housing market due to the population growth since the early 2000s. The Latino community homeownership rates have consistently increased over the last seven years, due in part to decreases in poverty rates, gains in educational attainment, and a young population. The median age for Hispanic/Latino people is 30, the lowest among non-Hispanic/Latino White, Black, and Asian people approaching home-buying age. As noted earlier, The Urban Institute (2025) projects this growth to continue, estimating that 70 percent of new homeowners between 2020 and 2040 will be Hispanic; however, gains may not be even within the Hispanic/Latino population. As data are still being collected on Afro-Latino homeownership in the United States, researchers can only rely on data from 2019 which suggest that the Afro-Latino homeownership rate was 41.8 percent while Hispanic/Latino people of Guatemalan, Dominican and Honduran descent had a homeownership rate below 32 percent.

The low percentages and indicators are in part due to historical racism in the United States housing market as Latino, particularly Afro-Latino, households have faced systemic, financial and structural barriers to homeownership that contribute to a homeownership rate consistently lower than that of White households. As aforementioned, some of the key barriers included income and employment disparities, costly financing as well as a lack of inherited wealth for down payments, limited access to traditional credit, and higher mortgage denial rates due to debt-to-income ratios. Therefore, what approaches can be offered to address the historical and systematic barriers Afro-Latinos face in the United States housing market in order to ensure equal access to homeownership? In this rest of this section, policy recommendations are offered to address the systematic barriers that disenfranchise Afro-Latinos/as from gaining homeownership in the United States. These policy recommendations are not limited to United States and are highly recommended to countries with populations of Afro-Latinos/as, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To begin with, researchers and policymakers must deepen their understanding of the nuances and simultaneity of race, ethnicity, and ancestry, as well as their relationship to social inequalities because being Black and Latino are not mutually exclusive. In order to help overcome the difficulties Afro-Latinos/as experience in society, whether in housing, lending systems, or in the labor force, it begins with recognizing how their position in society shapes their experiences of inequality, especially when compared to non-Black Latinos/as. The need to understand how Afro-Latino experiences differ from those of non-Black Latinos/as will only grow in priority for legislators as more Afro-Latinos/as enter voting age and shape policy and election outcomes. The ability to be critically conscious of one's social location in systems of power at both individual and structural levels is the first step toward building bridges of understanding with others with different experiences.

Therefore, local, state and federal lawmakers should work to pass legislation that support programs that expand access to credit. Implementing outreach programs that increase trust in credit institutions should be paired with pushes to reform lending standards in order to accommodate Hispanic/Latino applicants. Establishing tools to better measure the incomes of self-employed workers, adjusting credit history requirements, and allowing alternative identification could significantly increase credit access for Hispanic/Latino people, especially new immigrants. Mortgage application and assets-building workshops can also decrease barriers to entry for Hispanic/Latino residents who have less experience with credit systems (National League of Cities, 2022).

Next, lawmakers should work to pass more laws to establish or expand down-payment assistance programs and provide financial counseling and asset-building resources. Down-payment assistance programs will help to overcome a common barrier to homeownership for many Hispanic/Latino applicants. Many cities have existing down-payment assistance programs; expanding these programs through partnerships with lenders and targeted outreach in collaboration with community organizations can help to make these programs more accessible. Workshops should include Spanish language support and assistance in navigating city and community resources, helping to dispel myths surrounding the homeownership process as program participants generate plans to build toward homeownership. I therefore recommend a holistic approach to the home-buying process which will establish a more equitable system before, during and after securing a mortgage.

Thus, increasing support for small dollar mortgage loan programs is imperative. It is a pervasive myth that homes of lower value are riskier investments for mortgages, but recent

analysis from the Urban Institute (2025) shows that these buyers have comparable credit scores and their mortgages have similar loan-to-value ratios to more valuable properties. As homes in Black and Latino neighborhoods are already devalued, this barrier to entry to homeownership disproportionately affects Black and Latino buyers, especially those who are first-time buyers. Reduce uneven costs of mortgages for Black and Latino homeowners. Generating a rate-and-term refinancing option would help more households reduce monthly mortgage costs and lower the barrier to homeownership. Again, extend credit and down-payment assistance to borrowers impacted by discriminatory housing and lending practices. Historical and ongoing policies such as redlining, restrictive covenants, “steering,” and others have extracted wealth from Black and Latino neighborhoods for generations.

In closing, while it is not enough to simply extend credit based on redlining maps drawn in the New Deal Era, past injustices must be redressed by helping to develop areas left behind by racist policies. Adopt credit scoring practices with less discriminatory impacts. The current metrics of credit scoring do not account for regular payments from rent and utilities; instead, they prioritize loan and credit card payments. Expanding notions of credit-building can dispel the myth that Black and Afro-Latino homeowners are risky investments. Increase diversity in the appraisal profession. According to the Urban Institute (2025), nearly 9 in 10 property appraisers are white, while 2% are Black.

References

- Aiken, C., Reina, V. J., and Culhane, D. P. (2021). Understanding low-income Hispanic housing challenges and the use of housing and homelessness assistance. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/vol23num2/ch7.pdf>
- Acevedo-Garcia, D. (2019). Reflections on a comparative perspective within the United States. In Ingrid, G. E. and Steil, J. P. (eds). *The Dream Revisited*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Austin, S. (2024). How traditional credit scoring can be a barrier for many consumers. *Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City*. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/ten/how-traditional-credit-scoring-can-be-a-barrier-for-many-consumers/>
- Bangura, A. K., Obando, J. A., Munene, I. I. and Shisanya, C., eds. (1999). *Conducting research and mentoring students in Africa: CODESRIA College of Mentors handbook*. Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA Publications.
- Berger, B. (2017). Race to property: Racial distortions of property law, 1634 to today. *UConn Digital Commons*. https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/law_papers/625/
- Cohen, A. (2022). Barriers, existing practices & recommendations in housing for Hispanic, Latinx/Latino(a) Residents. *National League of Cities*. <https://www.nlc.org/article/2022/10/28/barriers-existing-practices-recommendations-in-housing-for-hispanic-latinx-latino-a-residents/>
- Dickerson, A. M. (2021). Systemic racism and housing. *Emory Law Journal*. <https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/elj/vol70/iss7/5/>
- Fu, S. (May 26, 2022). Three reasons why expanding access to homeownership alone won't close the racial wealth gap. *Urban Wire*. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/three-reasons-why-expanding-access-homeownership-alone-wont-close-racial-wealth-gap>
- Goldsmith, D. and Onuaja, S. (2024). Narrowing the racial wealth divide: Supporting the homeownership journey. *National League of Cities*.

- <https://www.nlc.org/article/2024/04/09/narrowing-the-racial-wealth-divide-supporting-the-homeownership-journey/>
- Hamilton, D. et al. (2025). U.S. Latino GDP Report. https://blogs.callutheran.edu/cerf/files/2025/04/2025_USLatinoGDP_FINAL.pdf
- Haywood, J. M. (2017). Latino spaces have always been the most violent: Afro-Latino collegians' perceptions of colorism and Latino intragroup marginalization. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30(8), 759–82.
- Hernández, K. T. (August 2022). *Racial Innocence: Unmasking Latino Anti-black bias and the struggle for equality*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Holder, M. and Aja, A. A. (2021). *Afro-Latinos in the U.S. economy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Irizarry, Y., Monk, E. P. and Cobb, R. J. (2022). Race-shifting in the United States: Latinxs, skin tone, and ethnoracial alignments. *National Institutes of Health*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38152393/>
- Loya, J. (2022). Racial stratification among Latinos in the mortgage market. *Race and Social Problems*. 14(1), 39-52.
- LaVeist-Ramos et al. (2011). Are black Hispanics black or Hispanic? Exploring disparities at the intersection of race and ethnicity. <https://pure.johnshopkins.edu/en/publications/are-black-hispanics-black-or-hispanic-exploring-disparities-at-th-3/>
- Locke, J. (1980 [1690]). *Second treatise of government* (C. B. Macpherson, ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc.
- Logan, J. R. (2003). How race counts for Hispanic Americans. *Eric*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED479962>
- Massey, D. S. and Denton N. A. (January 1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mehrotra, A. and Ratcliffe J. (2025). An updated research agenda for Latino homeownership: Using data and evidence to inform solutions. *Urban Institute*. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/An_Updated_Research_Agenda_for_Latino_Homeownership.pdf
- Miguel, M. (June, 2023). American dream deferred: the effects of credit worthiness on mortgage access for racialized minorities in Los Angeles County. *UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute*. <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/american-dream-deferred/>
- Morales, P., Scheckler, S, Molinsky, J. (2025) Havard University: Cumulative Disadvantage in Hispanic Homeownership: Barriers to Passing Housing Equity to the Next Generation
- Murray, C. (1999) John Locke's theory of property, and the dispossession of indigenous peoples in the settler-colony. *American Indian Law Journal*. <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/ailj/vol10/iss1/4/>
- Munshi, S. (2022). Dispossession: An American property law tradition. *The Georgetown Law Journal*. <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/georgetown-law-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2022/08/Munshi-Dispossession.pdf>
- National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals. (2024). State of Hispanic homeownership report. <https://nahrep.org/downloads/2024-state-of-hispanic-homeownership-report.pdf>
- National Association of Realtors. (2025). Snapshot of race and home buying in America. <https://cms.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025-snapshot-of-race-and-home-buying-in-america-03-17-2025.pdf>

- National Community Reinvestment Coalition. (May 2024). Decades of disinvestment: Historic redlining and mortgage lending since 1981. <https://ncrc.org/decades-of-disinvestment/>
- National Fair Housing Alliance. (March 29, 2022). Devalued, denied, and disrespected: How home appraisal bias and discrimination are hurting homeowners and communities of color. <https://democrats-financialservices.house.gov/events/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=409150>
- National Fair Housing Alliance. (2025). <https://nationalfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2025-NFHA-Fair-Housing-Trends-Report.pdf>
- Perry, A. M., Stephens, H. and Donoghoe, M. (January 9, 2024). Black wealth is increasing, but so is the racial wealth gap. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/black-wealth-is-increasing-but-so-is-the-racial-wealth-gap/>
- Pittsburg Courier. (2024). Property is power: How racist laws stole Black wealth through homeownership. <https://newpittsburghcourier.com/2024/09/30/property-is-power-how-racist-laws-stole-black-wealth-through-homeownership/>
- Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). (2019). Accuracy of the data (2015-2019). https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/pums/accuracy/2015_2019AccuracyPUMS.pdf
- Ray, R., Perry, A. M., Harshbarger, D., Elizondo, S. and Gibbons, A. (2021). Homeownership, racial segregation, and policy solutions to racial wealth equity. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/homeownership-racial-segregation-and-policies-for-racial-wealth-equity/>
- Rice L. and Swesnik, D. (2012). Discriminatory effects of credit scoring on communities of color. *National Fair Housing Alliance*. <https://nationalfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NFHA-credit-scoring-paper-for-Suffolk-NCLC-symposium-submitted-to-Suffolk-Law.pdf>
- The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute. (April 2023). Centering black Latinidad: A profile of the U.S. Afro-Latinx population and complex inequalities. <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/centering-black-latinidad/>
- Thompson, C. W., Kim, C., Moore N., Popescu, R. and Ruff C. (November 2021). Racial covenants, a relic of the past, are still on the books across the country. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/17/1049052531/racial-covenants-housing-discrimination>
- UnidosUS (2019) The state of and barriers to, Latino homeownership. https://unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/unidosus_statement_stateminorityhomeownership.pdf
- US Census Bureau. (2025). Current population survey/housing vacancy survey. <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/histtabs.html>
- US Census Bureau. (2024). ACS demographic and housing estimates. American Community Survey. ACS 1-year estimates data profiles. Table DP05. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2024.DP05>
- US Census Bureau. (2024). Selected population profile in the United States: American Community Survey. ACS 1-year estimates selected population profiles. Table S0201.
- US Census Bureau. (2014 and 2024). ACS demographic and housing estimates. American Community Survey. ACS 1-year estimates data profiles. Table DP05.
- US Census Bureau. (2024). Median household income in the past 12 Months. American Community Survey. ACS 1-year estimates detailed tables. Table B19013I.
- US Census Bureau. (2024). Sex by educational attainment for the population 25 years and over. American Community Survey. ACS 1-year estimates detailed tables. Table C15002

- UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute. (April 20, 2023). UCLA report paints complex picture of inequality among growing Afro-Latino population in U.S. <https://latino.ucla.edu/press/ucla-report-paints-complex-picture-of-inequality-among-growing-afro-latinx-population-in-u-s/>
- Zon, J. (October 26, 2022). A mosaic, nor a monolith: A profile of the U.S. Latino population, 2000-2020. *University of California Los Angeles Latino Policy and Politics Institute*. <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/latino-population-2000-2020/>