



Oscar Ortega / Nuestra Voz

# Hispanic Media Today

Serving Bilingual and Bicultural  
Audiences in the Digital Age

BY JESSICA RETIS

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## **About the Author**

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### *About Our Cover Photo*

*"Nuestra Voz" show is part of the progressive Spanish Language Programming at the alternative and non-commercial radio station "KPFK Pacifica Radio 90.7 FM Los Angeles." Nuestra Voz (Our Voice) has been on air for more than 16 years, and it has always provided a voice to the Latino community in SoCal, as well as throughout Latin America.*

*Photo credit: Oscar Ortega, Photojournalist / Nuestra Voz*

# Introduction

For more than two centuries, Spanish-language and bilingual Hispanic<sup>1</sup> media have grown and changed alongside the growing communities they serve. Originally an advocate for immigrants marginalized by discriminatory political, linguistic, and cultural policies, Spanish-language media today serve growing communities of Latinx people born in the United States and abroad, educated in English, and speaking Spanish at home. To meet the specific information and communication needs of a diverse set of communities, the Spanish-language media landscape is broad and heterogeneous in its patterns of production, distribution, and consumption.

Written in five parts, this report surveys the history of U.S. Spanish-language newspapers, radio, and television; provides an overview of the general challenges of Hispanic media in the convergence and digital era; and assesses current trends and news media practices that might influence the future of this rapidly evolving sector. The first part of this report surveys the history of Spanish-language newspapers. The second part summarizes the main events in the history of Spanish-language radio. The third presents an overview of the origins and current trends of Spanish-language television. The fourth section examines the challenges of Hispanic media in the convergence and digital era. Current trends and news media practices are assessed in the final section of the report.

## **STATE OF HISPANIC MEDIA: TAKEAWAYS**

- Following rapid growth in the 1990s and 2000s, Hispanic daily newspapers have seen more than a 10 percent decline in circulation over the past five years, consistent with other media sectors.
- Amidst a digital divide across language, age, and immigrant status, a number of bilingual and English-language digital media for younger Latinx audiences have emerged over the past 10 years.
- As more Hispanic Americans become bilingual, Spanish-language media companies are increasing their English-language offerings, while English-language media offer Spanish-language content.

# Hispanic Newspapers in the United States

## THE EVOLUTION OF SPANISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Spanish-language media in the United States trace their origins to the founding of *El Misisipí*, a four-page biweekly and bilingual newspaper, in New Orleans in 1808.<sup>2</sup> The publication closed by 1810, but by 1900, more than 100 Spanish-language newspapers were being published in the Southwest. In these early years, Spanish-language publications served three roles:<sup>3</sup>

- As institutions of social control through the English-language papers that owned them, such as the launching of *La Estrella de Los Angeles* by the *Los Angeles Star* in 1851.
- As institutions of activism that exposed and denounced the oppression that their readers faced, such as *El Clamor Público*, *El Eco del Pacífico*, and *La Crónica* and their reporting and commentary on the exploitation of Hispanic workers, attacks against Spanish-speaking Californians, and the lynching of Hispanic men in Texas.
- As reflections of Chicano life, not only recording events, interests, and thoughts of Hispanic communities, but also asserting the importance of a strong cultural identity and warning against assimilation, as seen in publications such as Los Angeles's *La Crónica* in 1877 and El Paso's *El Monitor* in 1897.

The arrival of immigrants from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Spain in the early twentieth century led to the launch of over 200 newspapers, a dozen of them circulating daily. Spanish-language newspapers in the western United States were concentrated in California, predominantly in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego. Others, however, were founded across the Southwest, concentrated in El Paso, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, San Antonio, and Brownsville. On the East Coast, Spanish-language newspapers were concentrated in New York, Miami, and Tampa, propelled by the large numbers of Cuban and Puerto Rican workers in those cities. Among the Spanish-language papers founded were *La Prensa* in El Paso in 1913 (ceased in 1963), *La Opinión* in Los Angeles in 1926, *El Diario de Nueva York* in 1947, and *Diario las Américas* in 1953. Most of them are still published today.<sup>4</sup>

The second half of the twentieth century saw influxes of new immigrants from Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Colombia, and Argentina. In addition, while California, Texas, Florida, and New York remained central locations for Spanish-speaking immigrants, the late twentieth century saw the diffusion of Spanish speakers

throughout the United States, particularly in Chicago and Washington, D.C. Spanish-language publications were established in both cities, as well as in Reno, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, Oklahoma City, Washington State, and Kansas. But at the same time, Spanish-language media in Southwest border towns, such as El Paso, began to decline, and Spanish press began to concentrate in major urban centers such as Austin, Houston, and Dallas.<sup>5</sup>

During these years, several mainstream English-language daily newspapers also developed Spanish-language sections. Some entrepreneurs launched new publications, while others promoted fusions or acquisitions of competitors. In Texas, *The Laredo Morning Times*, *El Heraldo de Brownsville*, *El Fronterizo* and *El Continental*, for example, were produced by Compañía Periodística del Sol of Ciudad Juarez, while in Chicago, *El Mexicano* and *El Mañana* were launched to serve Spanish readers. Yet the most significant changes took place on the East Coast, especially in New York and Miami. In 1963, O. Roy Chalk, then owner of *El Diario*, bought *La Prensa* and transformed it into what is now known as *El Diario La Prensa* of New York, which was sold to the Gannett Company in 1981. In 1976, *The Miami Herald* created a Spanish-language insert, *El Nuevo Herald*. It gained popularity quite rapidly among Hispanic readers and began to publish independently in 1988.<sup>6</sup>

## THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER AUDIENCE

The mid-1990s to early 2000s saw stunning growth of Hispanic newspapers, a reflection of the significant growth of Hispanic populations during this time.<sup>7</sup> Circulation of Spanish-language newspapers more than tripled, whereas English-language newspapers experienced an 11 percent decline.<sup>8</sup> The circulation of Hispanic publications grew to a total of 1.7 million during this time.<sup>9</sup> Although media outlets serving Spanish-speaking populations proliferated, they did not necessarily increase new local reporting capacity. In many communities, the loss of accountability from dwindling local reporting was becoming evident.<sup>10</sup>

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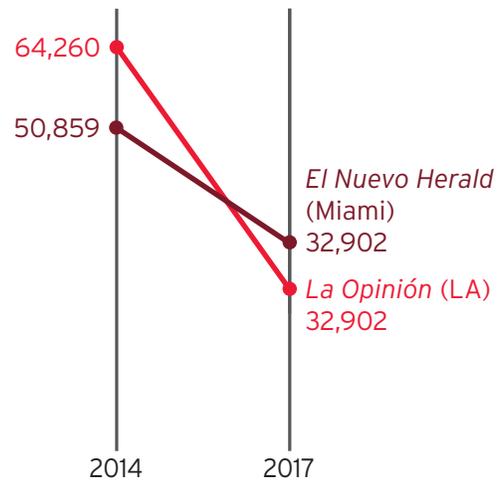
In more recent years, the audience for Spanish-language newspapers has been declining. Between 2014 and 2017, the average Monday-Friday circulation of Spanish-language newspapers declined markedly for the top daily papers for which recent data were available.<sup>11</sup>

Like the larger news media industry, the Spanish-language press has faced the transition to the digital era, while simultaneously experiencing the consolidation of news media conglomerates. A recent study assessing the performance of Spanish-language digital news highlighted the many difficulties Spanish-language and bilingual media encountered when reporting, producing, and disseminating news online.

Despite the lack of publicly available Spanish-language media lists, a report identified Spanish-language digital media outlets in 39 states, of which at least 63 percent offered some form of bilingual digital media. A total of 321 were mapped. But after auditing identified sites and removing those with nonresponsive or unavailable sites, those devoted to selling advertising, those that hadn't updated content, and those without indexed pages, only 163 Latinx digital media sites were identified. Of those, most lagged behind their English-media counterparts in their online presence. Only 23 offered any sort of search function, and only six had a mobile app. RSS feeds were uncommon, and the vast majority didn't offer a newsletter. However, the majority, 78 percent, offered the ability to share content through social media, and an even larger majority, 83 percent, have a presence on Facebook or Twitter.<sup>12</sup>

In short, Spanish-language publications have struggled in recent years, along with the rest of mainstream media. Print circulation at daily newspapers has declined. In 2016, circulation declined around 11 percent for the top three Hispanic daily newspapers, while the average decline for the top 20 Hispanic weeklies and semiweeklies didn't go beyond 5 percent. According to a 2016 Pew report, the digital space presented better prospects for these dailies in 2015; two of these three saw average monthly unique visitors increase from the fourth quarter of 2014 to the fourth quarter of 2015. These increases were largely driven by mobile traffic, because Hispanics are more likely to lack access to a broadband connection at home and use other options to go online.<sup>13</sup>

### The largest Hispanic daily newspapers have seen substantive declines in average circulation.



Source: Pew Research Center, State of News Media 2018

# Hispanic Radio in the United States

## THE EVOLUTION OF SPANISH-LANGUAGE RADIO IN THE UNITED STATES

Spanish-language radio programming began in the late 1920s in Texas and California, as San Antonio's KONO and Los Angeles's KFNB started the brokerage system that allowed radio announcers, often Hispanic immigrants, to purchase blocks of radio time and then resell them to other announcers and performers. Because most radio owners would sell their odd hours for Spanish programming, putting it in economic and cultural marginality, Spanish-language producers started interacting with local ethnic entrepreneurs. As a result, ethnic store owners and immigrant cultural and political organizations furnished advertising revenues to maintain Spanish-language production on air.<sup>14</sup>

The brokering system expanded Spanish-language radio programming to audiences throughout California, the Southwest, the South, and the Northeast. By the 1940s, these broadcasts provided 264 total hours of programming each week, with mainly music programming followed by news, talk, and dramas. News content focused primarily on foreign countries, and Mexican musicians and actors would perform entertainment radio content.<sup>15</sup>

Some early Spanish-language programming on U.S. radio stations provided not only entertainment but also information and political advocacy, which was particularly important for temporary agricultural immigrants who crossed the border on regular basis and started building transnational life experiences. One early broadcaster, Pedro Gonzalez, used his programs to create the first listener-sponsored radio program in California and to alert Mexican immigrant listeners to impending raids by federal authorities during a massive deportation wave in the mid-1930s. Later, Raoul Cortez founded KCOR in San Antonio after convincing the FCC that a Spanish-language radio station would be useful in inspiring Spanish-speaking Americans to support the war effort during World War II. Licensed in 1946, soon after the war, KCOR was the first Spanish-language broadcast station in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Broadcast content also made its way to the United States from stations inside Mexico. Mexican broadcaster Emilio Azcárraga transmitted music from Mexican XEW *La Voz de América* (The Voice of America) to a radio station in Los Angeles, among other U.S. cities, and owned several radio stations along the U.S.-Mexico border. In the 1950s, while most foreign language radio began a steady decline, Spanish-language weekly hours doubled through the interaction of immigration and language patterns.<sup>17</sup>

The increasing flow of Spanish speakers during the following decades reinforced the growth of audiences for Latinx broadcast media, and as the popularity of Spanish-language radio rose in the 1960s, advertisers began to realize the potential of Hispanic consumers. Several corporations started investing in, and reaping the benefits of, narrowcasting to the influential market of native or bilingual Spanish speakers. Around two-thirds of all foreign broadcasts were in Spanish, and by 1966, more than 300 radio stations were broadcasting in Spanish in

the United States, with a renewed emphasis on music programming. During the 1970s and 1980s, the broker system changed into improved marketing and programming strategies. Caballero Spanish Media, Katz Hispanic Radio and Spanish Broadcasting System were the first corporations to consolidate their presence in the Latinx airwaves. In 1979, a Gallup study showed that 58 percent of Hispanics between 18 and 34 and 65 percent of both the 35 to 49 and 50+ age groups listened to Spanish-language radio each weekday.<sup>18</sup>

The use of Spanish became confined to private rather than public spaces through language-exclusion policies in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Spanish-language radio emerged as a crucial actor in Spanish-language communication, media, and information practices at home.<sup>20</sup> Anglo entrepreneurs did eventually turn their attention to these media outlets, but mainly when their audiences became a growing group of consumers and potential clients with a considerable purchasing power. Their treatment of this growing community consolidated Latinx people more as consumers<sup>21</sup> rather than citizens.<sup>22</sup> Advertising time sold on major Spanish-language radio stations continues to cost less than many English-language radio stations with lower ratings. This disparity in revenue between English- and Spanish-language radio demonstrated an entrenched ethnic and linguistic bias.<sup>23</sup> “Without an audience measurement that takes into account a more linguistically and racially diverse leadership, U.S. radio continues to falsely cast itself as English-dominant in language without regard to the thriving immigrant and Spanish-dominant transformation of U.S. radio.”<sup>24</sup>

While private industry has played a considerable role in the growth of Hispanic and Latinx media in the United States, public and community media have played an especially important role in Hispanic activism against discrimination, racism, and exploitation. Similar to the trend of Latinx theater movements, Spanish-language and bilingual community radio projects were founded mainly in rural areas with a majority presence of Latinx workers and students. Founded in 1973 in Santa Rosa, California, KBBF-FM was the first bilingual community radio station operated by Chicanos, followed by KDNA-FM in Yakima, Washington, in 1979, and KSJV-FM in Fresno, California, in 1980. However, these bilingual, bicultural, and community-driven radio stations have faced financial, bureaucratic, and political struggles, often a reflection of the broader political climate.<sup>25</sup>

**“...public and community media have played an especially important role in Hispanic activism against discrimination, racism, and exploitation”**

During the first National Spanish Speaking Radio Seminar in Washington, D.C., in 1972, participants disclosed the disparities in media usage among their listeners, discussed the best approaches to communication, and decided to work toward gaining more access to radio stations, particularly in rural areas. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was criticized for the lack of minority representation and the need to involve professionals from underserved communities in production and decision-making positions. As a result, CPB set up training programs to prepare minorities, and training grants were used by Spanish-language community radio stations to help train farm workers to act as business managers. The National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB), established in 1975 amid the rapid growth of community radio stations, also began to serve as a resource for diverse communities interested in establishing their own radio stations. NFCB utilized CPB funds to organize the first-ever Minority Producer’s Conference in 1982 to bring more people of color into public radio.<sup>26</sup>



*Ricardo Hernandez (left) and Lili Lopez-Sunn (Center) are part of the long-term volunteer producers, hosts, and reporters at "Nuestra Voz," which airs every Thursday on 90.7 FM Los Angeles from 8:30 PM-10:00 PM. "Nuestra Voz" consist of three different segments of 30 minutes each that covers Local and International Affairs, Arts and Culture, and Health and Education.*

*Photo credit: Oscar Ortega, Photojournalist / Nuestra Voz*

Funding for public broadcasting has been a considerable challenge for Spanish-language community stations. Federal funding is the most difficult to tap due to the lengthy application requirements. Additionally, tracking and measuring listeners is almost impossible if a station relies mainly on volunteer work. Securing philanthropic funds has also proved challenging, not only for the reasons addressed above but also because the availability of grants depends on the economic and political climate.<sup>27</sup> Support from listeners themselves has also been difficult to garner because the majority of Spanish-language community radio stations achieved limited results when implementing membership dues or listening pledges. Thus, unable to secure initial funding to penetrate urban markets, most bilingual community radio stations have systematically been shut out of urban centers. And while their role within rural areas has been instrumental in sustaining politically minded Hispanic communities, this division means that commercial radio reigns in cities, which are home to large Hispanic populations. However, one source of pivotal funding for Spanish-language community radio has been the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), which supports stations by obtaining FCC noncommercial education licenses.<sup>28</sup> Although religious broadcasters such as CCHD do not focus on news, many offer other public affairs programming tied to issues of concern for their audience.<sup>29</sup>

Like its English-language counterparts, Spanish-language commercial radio has seen some consolidation of the industry. During the 1970s, seven station groups owned Spanish-language radio stations throughout the United States. The largest of these, the National Spanish Language Network, owned 26 stations. Today, five radio groups own the nation's commercial Spanish-language stations, with the largest, Univision, owning 74 stations.<sup>30</sup>

## THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE RADIO AUDIENCE

Radio is particularly important to the Hispanic community. Radio listenership is higher among Hispanic consumers than among any other ethnic group.<sup>31</sup> Ninety-five percent of Hispanic consumers tune into the radio in an average week. There are, however, differences in the format preferences of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Latinx listeners. Among Spanish speakers, the top five most popular formats are all music, led by Mexican Regional and Spanish contemporary, while news/talk is the fourth most popular format among English speakers.<sup>32</sup> Yet it's worth noting that news/talk is the preferred format of only approximately 7 percent of English-speaking Hispanics, and many music stations offer news programming, sometimes through local reporting, through the news departments of their owners, or through news service companies such as Spanish Information Service (SIS), United Press International (UPI), Radio Centro Group, Noticiero Latinx by Radio Bilingüe, or Enfoque Latinx in KPFK.<sup>33</sup>

One potential reason for this difference is the extremely limited availability of Spanish-language news/talk stations. There are 31 stations with primarily Spanish news format in the United States. Around a third of them are located in Florida, with six in Miami-Dade County alone. And these stations have seen declines in revenue in recent years. Between 2008 and 2015, the revenue for these Spanish news-format stations has declined by 17 percent. The revenues of Univision, who owns one-third of these stations, dropped by 9 percent by 2015.<sup>34</sup>

# Hispanic Television in the United States

Over the past five decades, Spanish-language television in the United States has grown in diverse ways: from a Mexican commercial monopoly to a diverse ownership structure, combining domestic and foreign capital; from a regional distribution design to the promotion of national and international patterns; from broadcasting programs produced exclusively in Mexico and Puerto Rico to promoting international collaborations or incorporating local and regional productions; from broadcasting exclusively in Spanish to diversifying for bilingual and English-dominant Latinx speakers; from broadcasting in analogue version to embracing cable, satellite, and digital platforms.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout this half of a century, Hispanic television has undergone a profound transformation from its origins as a U.S. minority media to its competitive niche in the general U.S. TV market today. Hispanic TV has also become a space of self-representation, providing information on Latinx communities' interest on issues such as immigration, politics, health, education, and culture. It has also become a source of information and entertainment produced for and imported from Latin American countries, particularly since the emergence of the cable broadcasting system. Fifty years ago, Spanish-language television did not receive the attention of commercial mainstream media investors and advertisers. But similar to Spanish-language radio, the growing Latinx audience during the late 1980s and the 1990s resulted in remarkable interest on investing in Latinx television, particularly when the overall Spanish-language TV audience growth surpassed that of the U.S. mainstream media. In 2010, for example, the number of U.S. Latinx households with TV sets increased by 3.1 percent, three times more than all households in the U.S. general market, and television advertising grew 10 percent, doubling the bounce that network TV overall received.<sup>36</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION OF SPANISH-LANGUAGE TELEVISION IN THE UNITED STATES

In its early years, U.S. media enterprises did not conceive the Hispanic broadcast industry as a prominent commercial niche. They were not convinced of either buying foreign programs or investing in broadcasting slots in Spanish. Consequently, the origins of Spanish broadcast in the United States are traced to Mexico in 1954, when Emilio Azcárraga founded *Teleprogramas de México* (Teleprograms of Mexico) with the objective of exporting programs to other Latin American countries. After founding KCOR-FM in 1947, Raoul Cortez founded KCOR-TV in San Antonio in 1955, eventually selling it to Azcárraga and Emilio Nicolas. Azcárraga and Nicolas eventually went on to purchase stations in Los Angeles and New Jersey, and they created the Spanish International Network to sell and distribute Spanish-language programming to TV stations in the United States and abroad. To avoid FCC rules limiting the percentage of stations owned by foreign investors, Azcárraga entered partnerships with station owners throughout the United States who were already U.S. citizens, resulting in an expansion to San Antonio, New York, Miami, and Fresno. These new

stations formed the Spanish International Communications Corporation (SICC) in 1972 and eventually expanded to Florida, San Francisco, and Chicago. Initially relying on Televisa in Mexico for financial support, SICC went on to use Televisa for programming, using satellites to import telenovelas to Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. In July 1986, a partnership between Hallmark Cards and Televisa acquired SICC, rebranding it as Univision.<sup>37</sup>

Univision's main competitor, Telemundo, also emerged in the mid-1950s. In 1954, Angel Ramos, owner of *El Mundo* newspaper, founded Telemundo (WKAQ-TV) in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He also started the first radio station in the U.S. territory, WKAQ, *Radio El Mundo*. During the 1970s and 1980s, the station was branded Telemundo Canal 2 and became one of the most important producers of telenovelas. Ramos sold the station in 1983, and the new owner, John Blair & Company, used the station to create NetSpan alongside WNJU in New Jersey and KSTS in San Jose in 1984. The following year, NetSpan became the second largest Spanish-language television network in the United States when it acquired KVEA in Los Angeles. In 1987, Reliance Group Holding purchased the Telemundo brand and became Blair Broadcasting, which included WSCV in Miami, WKAQ-TV in Puerto Rico, and WNJU in New York. That same year, NetSpan changed its name to Telemundo and purchased stations in Houston, San Antonio, San Francisco, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Washington, D.C.<sup>38</sup>

In 1988, Univision began producing nationally broadcast programming including *Noticiero Univision*. That same year, Telemundo began broadcasting a national newscast *Noticiero Telemundo* CNN, a news program produced by CNN in Atlanta for Telemundo. In the mid-1990s, Telemundo launched 24-hour news production in partnership with Arter of Argentina, Antena 3 of Spain, and Reuters, which afterwards was sold to CBS and relaunched as *Telemundo Internacional*.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Hispanic population in the United States not only doubled in size but also became much more diverse, resulting in changes for Spanish-language television in the country. First, Azcárraga along with Gustavo Cisneros and Jerry Perenchio bought Univision from Hallmark in 1992, forming Univision Communications. The new company reduced part of its Miami staff and began carrying productions from Televisa, also owned by Azcárraga, and Venevision in Venezuela. CNN launched its 24-hour Spanish-language news channel and began broadcasting in Latin America and Spain in 1997. Further growth and diversification led to a repositioning strategy in 2011 that incorporated a new logo and slogan: CNÑ, "*Vive la noticia*" ("live the news"). In 1995, Telemundo opened its first studio on the West Coast, and three years later, Liberty Media and Sony Pictures Entertainment purchased the network. This acquisition proved the growing interest of U.S. mainstream media corporations in Spanish-language audiences and marked the entry of one of the major entertainment companies into the Hispanic market, leading to a major revamping of stations' programming and bringing to the forefront questions of purpose and intention on the part of the American investors.<sup>40</sup>

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Beginning in the 1990s, the growth of the Latinx population in the United States became the largest contributor to demographic growth in the country overall. At the same time, Spanish became a less commonly used language among second- and third-generation U.S.-born Hispanics. In response to this, Hispanic TV has begun to expand programming to attract English-dominant Hispanic audiences. Additionally, the growth and diversification of Latinx populations in the United States, as well as the commercial success of Univision and Telemundo, fostered the emergence of a new competitor network, Azteca America, in 2001. Azteca America expanded its geographic coverage from 18 percent of designated market areas in 2001 to 89 percent in 2008 by building affiliations with low-power TV stations. In 2008, Azteca America's largest partner, Pappas Telecasting, announced its stations were disaffiliating from Azteca America, and in 2009, the network canceled its national newscast. However, it began airing a national newscast produced by the Hispanic News Network again in 2011.<sup>41</sup>

The early twenty-first century has brought considerable change and growth to both Telemundo and Univision. Telemundo launched a bilingual network, mun2, to appeal to younger Latinx viewers, and in 2002, NBC purchased Telemundo, expanding the network's focus on original programming and rebranding mun2 as NBC Universo. Local Telemundo affiliate stations in larger markets began to produce morning newscasts as well. In that same year, Univision expanded its local television operations to stations in Puerto Rico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Univision also created Telefuturo, now known as UniMás to attract Latinx viewers between ages 18 and 34. Univision also acquired Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation to launch Univision Radio in 2002.<sup>42</sup>

The expansion of Spanish-language television in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries wasn't limited to Univision and Telemundo. Smaller independent Hispanic television networks emerged during this time including HTVN, LATV, LAT TV, and Mexicanal. Today, LATV and Mexicanal are still in operation. Public and noncommercial media such as V-me emerged to offer Spanish-language offerings during this period, initially through partnerships between American public broadcasters and Spanish-language TV producers but now as standalone channels.<sup>43</sup> Futuro Media Group, a multicultural multimedia nonprofit organization, began producing *Latino USA*, an English-language NPR news program, in 1993.<sup>44</sup> Other noncommercial networks launched during this time frame, including Alma Vision, Fe TV, La Familia Network (Christian programming), La Familia Cosmovisión (family and religious programming), Inmigrante TV (political news and immigration), Latele Novela Network (soap operas), and Caribe Vision. Additionally, building on channels established in Latin America, religious cable and satellite channels such as the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) began offering Spanish-language content on sister channels.<sup>45</sup>

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As the range of Spanish-language television programming expanded, so did the Spanish-language audience and associated spending on advertising. In 2010, Univision became the fifth largest U.S. broadcast network in terms of prime-time audience share and, in fact, was the only one of the top five that saw positive growth in its audience. Telemundo's audience also grew, reaching 93 percent of Hispanic households. By 2010, Azteca America had grown to 80 affiliates in 52 markets, giving it the fourth highest reach to Hispanic households. It also created Azteca Stations Group, which operates digital stations in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, and Chicago, as well as two high-power stations in Dallas and Houston in partnership with Una Vez Más Holdings.<sup>46</sup>

Since 2010, English-language news organizations have tried to increase their Spanish-language offerings in a number of ways. CNN and Fox News both launched Spanish-language projects covering Latinx issues on their websites, and CNN Latino also included an eight-hour service block of news and entertainment in Spanish. However, CNN Latino ended in 2014, and Fox News Latino ended in 2016. There were also projects to produce English-language content for Latinx audiences. NBC Latino was launched in 2012 and lasted only a year. Fusion, a joint venture between Disney/ABC and Univision, launched in 2013 as an English-language extension of Univision. The channel's premier news offering, *America with Jorge Ramos*, was hosted by *Noticiero Univision's* anchor, but this daily show was scaled back to weekly in 2014. In 2016, Disney sold its stake in Fusion to Univision, and following Gizmodo Media Group's merger with Univision in 2017, Fusion relaunched its digital presence to Splinter while production related to the TV channel remained at Fusion and was branded as Fusion TV.<sup>47</sup>

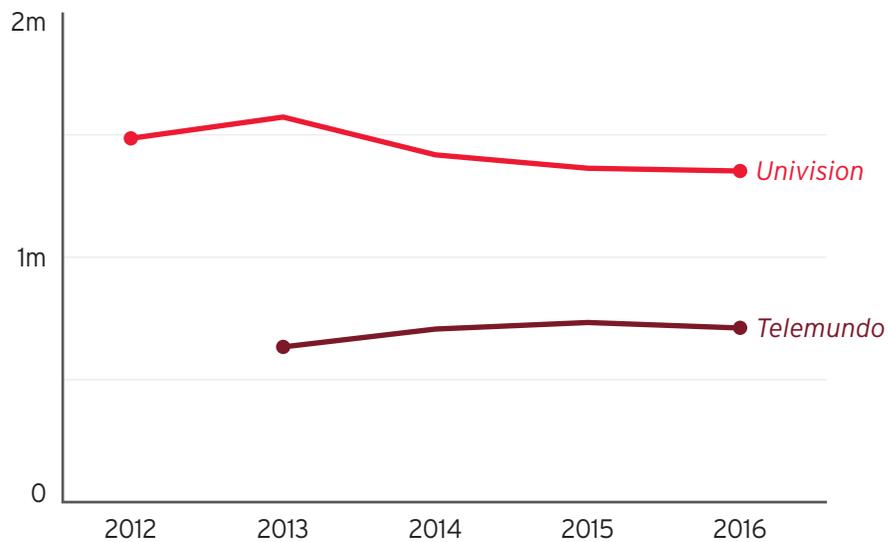
Much of this consolidation has occurred through control over content creation as opposed to production and distribution. Minority ownership of media is assumed to be better oriented and more sensitive toward the needs of the ethnic audiences they serve, but minority ownership of the media in the United States has a bleak history despite several

policy initiatives to spur growth in the sector.<sup>48</sup> The concept of news diversity is often equated with providing an alternative to the mainstream narrative. But many of these outlets function as other profit-oriented U.S. mainstream media, with similar corporate structures and expansion patterns, and do not always meet the expectation of alternative programming.<sup>49</sup> And although there are a number of Spanish immigrant media targeting Spanish-language speakers, some of them tend to have an international focus based on their readership's country of origin, with less coverage that is relevant to domestic audiences.<sup>50</sup>

## THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE NEWS AUDIENCE

Currently, five conglomerates dominate the Spanish-language TV landscape: UniMás, Univision, Telemundo, MundoMax, and LATV.<sup>51</sup> Univision and Telemundo remain the two key providers of news for Spanish speakers in the United States. *Noticiero Univision* has the largest viewership among all Spanish-language national news programs with almost 1.8 million in 2016, although its viewership has declined, peaking in 2013. *Al Rojo Vivo* boasted the largest viewership among Telemundo's national news programs with 1 million in 2016. The average viewership for Univision's news programming declined across all programs between 2012 and 2016, peaking at approximately 1.6 million viewers in 2013, while Telemundo's has held steady.<sup>52</sup>

### Viewership of Spanish-language news programming stayed relatively consistent between 2012 and 2016.



Source: Pew Research Center, *State of News Media 2018*

# Hispanic Media in the Digital Era

## HISPANIC DIGITAL MEDIA

The expansion of digital and social media has created space for new formats and platforms for Hispanic media producers. On the one hand, we can find the work of New America Media or Huffington Post Voces. On the other hand, unfortunately, both no longer produce new content. Organizations such as the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and the National Association of Latinx Independent Producers (NALIP) have worked to support the development of Latinx professionals. NPR has incorporated the work of *Latino USA*, an English-language podcast directed by María Hinojosa and *Radio Ambulante*, a Spanish-language podcast produced by Daniel Alarcón.<sup>53</sup> Futuro Media Group, the independent nonprofit organization that produces *Latino USA*, also produces *America By the Numbers*, a half-hour TV series for PBS that examines how America’s growing multicultural population is influencing every aspect of contemporary life.<sup>54</sup>

In the last decade, we have also seen the launching and growth of diverse multimedia projects for Hispanic millennials. *Remezcla*, a site devoted to new Latin art and culture, was launched in 2008.<sup>55</sup> *Mitú*, a site devoted to what they call “‘the 200%’ - youth who are 100% American and 100% Latino,”<sup>56</sup> first launched on YouTube in 2012.<sup>57</sup> Univision launched *Flama*, a comedy and culture network, in 2014,<sup>58</sup> and BuzzFeed launched the Facebook and YouTube channel *Pero Like* in 2016.<sup>59</sup> These sites share one notable feature: All are English-language sites. In recent decades Latinx media became important instruments not only for targeting new or recently arrived Spanish speakers but also for targeting bilingual and English-dominant Latinx groups, particularly younger generations. And in fact, English is the preferred language for online content for Hispanic Americans age 18 and up.<sup>60</sup>

### HISPANIC LANGUAGE PREFERENCES BY MEDIA TYPE (FOR AGES 18 AND UP)

	READING	TV	RADIO	ONLINE
Only in English	37.9%	31.6%	26.8%	44.4%
Mostly in English, but some Spanish	26.1%	31.4%	29.6%	19.9%
Mostly in Spanish, but some English	14.8%	16.6%	18.5%	9.1%
Only in Spanish	17.5%	13.3%	17.5%	13.9%
In some other language	0.3%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%

Source: *Hispanic Fact Pack 2017*

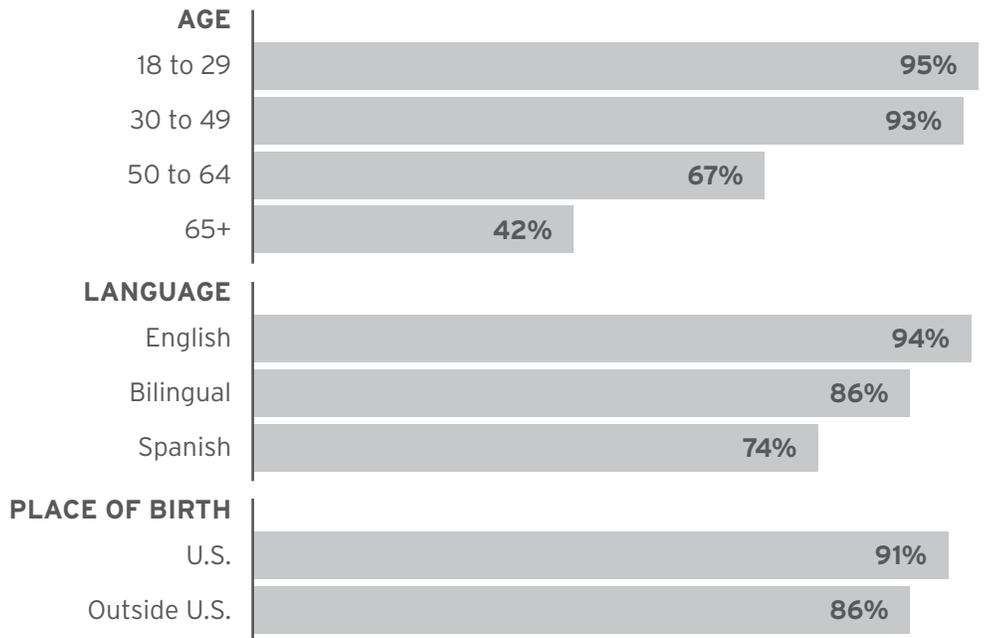
## THIS HISPANIC DIGITAL AUDIENCE

The growing presence of Latinx-oriented media online reflects the changing use of media among U.S. Hispanics. In 2006, the internet was the fourth most-used source of news among U.S. Hispanics, behind television, radio, and newspapers. In that year, 37 percent of U.S. Hispanics said they got news from the internet. By 2012, with 56 percent of Latinx Americans using the internet for news, it was the second most-used news source behind television. By 2016, the internet was right behind television as the most-used news source among Hispanic Americans, with 74 percent reporting they use the internet for news, compared to 79 percent who use television.<sup>61</sup>

Behind this trend lie significant divides across generations, language use, and immigrant status. More than 90 percent of Hispanics under 50 use the Internet, compared to 67 percent for those 50 to 64 and 42 percent for those 65 and over. Ninety-four percent of U.S. Latinxs who speak primarily English use the Internet, compared to 86 percent of those who are bilingual and 74 percent of those who speak primarily Spanish. And U.S.-born Latinxs are more likely to use the Internet than foreign-born Latinxs.<sup>62</sup> The chart below summarizes these gaps.

### There remain significant gaps in internet usage among Hispanic Americans.

*Percent of Hispanic Americans saying they use the internet:*



Source: Pew Research Center, 2016

# Challenges and Recommendations

In every case, there are lessons and models from the past we can draw on and underresourced current efforts that could be expanded and deserve greater support. In addition to supporting each of these important interventions, funders and investors should continue to provide critical operating resources to Spanish-language media and invest in helping them develop and design new revenue models for a more sustainable future.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Despite the tremendous growth of Spanish-language and bilingual media in the United States, Hispanic media face several key challenges. First, there is limited archiving of Spanish-language media in almost any format, and there are few resources for even knowing how many Hispanic media outlets there are and what the true reach of Spanish-language media is. This puts Hispanic media at a disadvantage in terms of not only research but also the ability of journalists and audiences to return to stories for follow-up or for sharing. In sum, there is a crucial need for a data bank that could collect and archive Spanish-language content being produced and distributed locally, regionally, and nationally.

Second, as in other media sectors, Hispanic media is facing significant financial challenges. In interviews with several Hispanic journalists, frustration about having to do more with fewer resources was a recurring theme. Year by year, they have witnessed the shrinking of their newsrooms, if they have not already been laid off. Most of them expressed their frustration that quality has been replaced by quantity. There is a specific and crucial need for funding and supporting investigative journalism projects done by Hispanic journalists for Hispanic communities.

Third, the complex diversity of the Hispanic population in the United States presents a peculiar challenge for Hispanic journalists. The histories and cultures of Hispanic Americans can differ significantly from region to region. Although Hispanic journalists know the culture of their families' countries of origin, as well as their local communities in the United States, the growing mobility of job opportunities also demands a rapid adaptation to local audiences different from their own history and culture. Organizations and resources that can help Hispanic journalists learn and engage with new communities is a vital need for supporting Spanish-language news across the nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **FUND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AMERICAN-BORN SPANISH-LANGUAGE JOURNALISTS**

Until recently, most professionals working in Spanish-language broadcast, print, and online newsrooms have been born and educated abroad, mostly in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Increasingly, new initiatives are being launched by journalism programs seeking to prepare bilingual and bicultural journalists. These young journalism students need opportunities for entering the job market. Funds for projects that facilitate their transition from journalism schools to newsrooms can highly benefit both Hispanic media and Hispanic communities. The new, demanding convergence journalism and multimedia production trends are also affecting the preparedness of Hispanic media professionals. Surveys of Latinx journalists have found that 42 percent reported downsizing or cutbacks in staff hours at work, and more than 75 percent say they have been asked to do more with less resources.<sup>63</sup> And 40 percent are concerned about job security.<sup>64</sup> Funding and support for digital workshops and social media seminars can help Hispanic media professionals become more prepared in this competitive job market.

Examples of current and former projects include: Spanish-language journalism programs and trainings at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York, Florida International University, The Knight Center for Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, California State University Northridge, Arizona State University, University of Texas at El Paso, and others.

### **PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CITIZEN OVERSIGHT OF HISPANIC MEDIA TO BE A COMMUNITY RESOURCE AGAINST HATE**

The changes taking place within the Spanish-language and Latinx-oriented media have happened in parallel to the demographic shifts in the country and a corresponding rise of anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic sentiment. Spanish-language media are important resources for information and self-representation and can be an important resource for pushing back against anti-immigrant narratives that pervade some mainstream media.

Based on the idea of the “Veeduría Ciudadana”<sup>65</sup> (citizen oversight) in some Latin American countries, support for an organization that conducts media monitoring, citizen consultations, and public discussion of media content would result in great benefits for Hispanic audiences and would improve Hispanic media programming in addressing these concerns.

Examples of current and former citizen-oversight projects include: The National Association of Hispanic Journalists’ Parity Project, which worked in more than 50 cities to combine citizen advisory boards, internship programs, and more to “increase the representation of Latinos in newsrooms and improve news coverage of the nation’s Latino community.” Currently, groups like The National Hispanic Media Coalition, Color of Change and the Media Action Grassroots Network monitor media and bring citizen voices to bear newsrooms and media companies.

## **ESTABLISH A BILINGUAL NEWS PORTAL TO TRANSLATE AND BRIDGE DIVIDES ACROSS COMMUNITIES**

As mentioned above, there is a critical need for the archiving of Spanish-language news across all media. However, with changes in the evolving language use among American Hispanics, and with the shrinking of newsrooms and their resources, there is a growing need for linguistic and cultural translations between Hispanic and mainstream media to ensure that the information needs of Spanish speakers can be met, regardless of language barriers. A news aggregator portal that could curate and translate online content for bilingual audiences would serve as a bridge across diverse communities.

Examples of current and former translation projects include: Voices of NY at the Center for Community and Ethnic Media, which curates and translates reporting from across the city’s community and ethnic publications. New America Media used to do some of this before recently closing its doors. Alhambra Source is a local newsroom reporting and translating stories in three languages for the community around Alhambra in Los Angeles County, California.

# Endnotes

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