

The Mysterious Case of a Long Latino Life

14 NOVEMBER / 2018



¿Sabías que? Latinos live longer than other groups in the U.S. And they live longer than almost anyone? (Yes, I am talking about you, Comadre!)

According to the Population Reference Bureau, a non-profit organization that specializes in demographics, Latinos outlive non-Latino whites by 3 years on average.

In 2014, life expectancy at birth for the U.S. Hispanic population was 81.8 years, compared with 78.8 years for the U.S. non-Hispanic white population. If you are a Latina, you are expected to live to be over 83 years of age, compared to 81 years of age for a non-Hispanic white women.

¡Imagínate! In spite of Latinos having lower income and less education than other groups in this country, we still live longer! (Strong Stuff!)

Scientists sometimes call this life expectancy mystery the “Latino Health Paradox.”

Here are some of the clues that researchers think may solve the mysterious case of Latino longevity:

One reason that scientists think Latinos may live longer is that we don't smoke as much as our white and black brothers and sisters. Latinas tend to smoke less than other groups and we tend to quit earlier. Since lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths in this country, and we're not smoking as much as others, we're not dying of lung cancer at the same rate. That's good news!

What to do: If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quit.

Another reason that Latinos might live longer is that many of us are immigrants, and immigrants come into this country with better health, better eating habits and more physically active than the folks who already live here. It is only after we spend a lifetime in the States that we start losing our grip on our good health.

What to do: ¡Eat like your Abuelos! Go back to your traditional foods. ¡Qué vivan los healthy tacos! Y ¡Qué viva la 'Mediterranean diet!'

Follow the De Las Mías [9 Steps to Healthy Living](#). Use the [De Las Mías app](#) to get healthy and stay on track. Check out our healthy lifestyle checklist in the app! It works, but only if you use it!

A third reason why we might be so tough and resilient has to do with our familias and our comunidad. Dr. Ortega, a researcher at UCLA Center for Latino Health, tells us that our mental health takes a turn for the worse as we lose our family and community connections. This is especially true for our teenagers as they become more Americanized. Hanging on to our cultura, our values, our families and our community makes us stronger and can help our children be more resilient.

Through ongoing research, we are learning that there is a direct link between [long-term stress and health](#). We now know that having social and family support is key to managing stress and that means better mental health, for ourselves and our children.

What to do: Hang on to your familias for dear life! Keep on nurturing your familias, vecinos, comadres y compadres as if your health depended on it, because apparently it does!

What scientists call the "Latino Health Paradox" is a wonderful mystery that we should embrace and promote in ourselves. Be proud of it, Comadres! We are a resilient, hardworking, healthy people and we need to make the most of this gift.

Ask yourselves:

- What can I do to keep this mystery alive and well in myself and my familia?

- How can I preserve this gift that has been handed down to me by my ancestors?

And give thanks for the Latino Health Paradox!

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Check out the [De Las Mias app](#). It's free and ready for download in the Google Play Store. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram [@delasmiaslife](#).

Sources:

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