

Hispanics Used to Be on the Wrong Side of a 'Digital Divide' — Is This Still True?

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Early in the digital era, Hispanics lagged significantly in internet access, but that's changed mainly due to smartphone adoption. These days, Hispanics are avid users of social media and digital video — though they do lag behind in having home broadband.

We forecast that 81.8% of US Hispanics will be internet users in 2019, slightly lower than the 86.0% for the total population. Hispanics are in line with the US average for smartphone (where they were early adopters) and tablet penetration.

Digital Usage of US Hispanics vs. Total Consumers, 2019

% of population

Internet users

Hispanics* 81.8%

Total consumers 86.0%

Smartphone users

Hispanics* 71.7%

Total consumers 70.5%

Tablet users

Hispanics* 52.0%

Total consumers 52.9%

Note: individuals of any age who use the internet from any location via any device at least once per month; individuals of any age who own at least one smartphone and use the smartphone(s) at least once per month; individuals of any age who use a tablet at least once per month; *can be of any race

Source: eMarketer, March 2019

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While no longer above-average in smartphone ownership, Hispanics do heavily rely on the device. A June 2019 Pew report (based on January-February polling) said Hispanics are more likely than adults in general to be smartphone-only internet users, at 25% vs. 17%. The corollary is that Hispanics underindex for having home broadband.

US Adults Who Have Home Broadband, by Race/Ethnicity, Feb 2019

% of population

White 79%

Black 66%

Hispanic 61%

Total 73%

Source: Pew Research Center, "Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2019," June 13, 2019

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The time Hispanics (and people in general) spend using their smartphones keeps rising. According to a report from Nielsen, Hispanic adults spent a daily average of 3 hours, 9 minutes using apps and the web via a smartphone in Q1 2019. But many consumers, regardless of ethnicity, spend tons of time using their smartphones. So, Hispanics' time on smartphones isn't outstandingly large.

Daily Time Spent on Smartphone and Tablet Apps/Sites by US Adults, by Race/Ethnicity, Q1 2019

hrs:mins

	Smartphone	Tablet
Black	3:26	0:49
Asian	3:11	0:51
Hispanic	3:09	0:45
Total	3:01	0:50

Note: ages 18+

Source: Nielsen, "Total Audience Report: Q1 2019," July 1, 2019

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Smart speakers also have a following among Hispanics. Q3 2018 data from research firm Kantar showed that about one in four Hispanics had a smart speaker in their home, according to Valeria Piaggio, senior vice president and head of identity and inclusion insights for the firm's consulting division. Accurate voice recognition has been a limiting factor—one that has confounded Piaggio's own household. "But assuming developers can get through algorithmic bias and be truly inclusive as they innovate and grant access to all consumers—for example, adding languages and dialects—voice-activated technologies will be big among Hispanics," she said.

For more on the US Hispanic population, read our latest report.

Report by Mark Dolliver Aug 21, 2019

US Hispanics 2019

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