

Sociologists: Latinos lacking in English skills face more risk of violent crime

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LSU Professor Edward Shihadeh and Ph.D. candidate Raymond Barranco recently published a study titled "Latino Immigration, Economic Deprivation and Violence: Regional Differences in the Effect of Linguistic Isolation" in the journal *Homicide Studies*.

The researchers found that when Latinos in the United States lack English language capability, they are far more likely to be murdered. But this link between English language proficiency and victimization exists only in places where Latinos have settled recently – in places that the authors term "new Latino destinations." In these new outposts throughout the United States, Latinos live outside of the protective shell of old and established Latino immigrant communities in the Southwest, Florida, New York and Chicago, where Spanish is common and English is not necessary for routine tasks.

But in new destinations, English non-fluency is a serious hindrance and leads to a cultural and social [isolation](#) that greatly increases the rates at which Latinos are murdered. The authors of the study identify several reasons for this effect in new destinations:

1. Latino migrants who are linguistically isolated are less able to grasp important cultural subtleties critical for their personal safety, like the cues that differentiate good areas from bad.
2. Because non-English speakers are less able to engage the formal economy, they carry large sums of cash instead, making them "walking

ATMs" and easy prey for would-be robbers and other violent offenders.

3. Potential offenders themselves are further emboldened because non-English speaking Latinos are reluctant or unable to report the crime to formal authorities.

4. A large influx of Spanish-only speakers may generate hostility among the local, English-only constituency.

Provided by Louisiana State University

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