

Cuban Minnesota

This brief is about Cuban people as a people with a country and a Minnesota community the building will mash into Mexican — or into Puerto Rican — if you let it. This is not Mexican. It is not interchangeable with Puerto Rican. Puerto Rican is U.S. citizenship under the Jones Act (1917). Cuban is not that file. 1959, Mariel (1980), 1994 balseros, and later streams are not one exile story. Spanish is Caribbean Spanish, not Mexican.

History and place

Origins and the Founding of a People

Cuban peoplehood is older than 1959 and older than Miami. An island in the Caribbean; Spanish colonial rule; African enslavement; Chinese contract labor; a republic; a revolution. White Cuban, Afro-Cuban, mixed. Mestizaje narratives do not erase Black Cuba. Shared Spanish is not shared culture with Mexico. Shared Caribbean is not shared culture with Puerto Rico.

History for the meeting

What people brought: Caribbean Spanish, kinship, Catholic and Afro-Cuban religious practice, professional and trade skill, and a living memory of a state that some fled and some still argue. What they met in Minnesota: an English form, one Latino module, often one interpreter labeled Spanish, a Mexican default, and a Miami picture that is not this map.

What people brought

History is literacy for the desk. It is not a speech you give the family. Do not start with a cigar, a classic car, or a 1959 tourism sentence.

The Geography of Cuba and Cuban Minnesota

Homeland is not one neighborhood in Havana. Havana, Oriente, central provinces — region, color, and some speech shift. Confirm the place if they name it. Do not referee in a waiver meeting. Listen.

Homeland

The U.S. map is Florida first — Miami-Dade as the large community — then New Jersey, New York, and elsewhere. Minnesota is not Miami. Do not import Little Havana onto a Hennepin County lobby.

Minnesota

In Minnesota: Twin Cities 67.3 percent; Greater Minnesota 32.7 percent — not an afterthought. Do not assume Minneapolis. Do not assume the person in front of you has been to Cuba.

Minnesota and Cuban History

Minnesota holds a Cuban community large enough for a Compass profile — about 9,406 (ACS 2019–2023) — and large enough that this department will meet it on waivers, child welfare, health care, cash,

food, aging, and employment. Greater Minnesota is 32.7 percent. Do not write this people as a Minneapolis anecdote. Do not write it as a Miami satellite.

Places

Places, not a blob: Twin Cities; inner-ring suburbs; Greater Minnesota towns. Do not assume Minneapolis. Do not assume the person in front of you has been downtown, or to Havana.

Partners

Partners: parishes families name; civic groups this family names; CLUES is a Latino door, not a Cuban community. CECLC is a department door, not the whole. Pay the partner this household actually uses.

Cuban staff are not unpaid interpreters and not the community. Identity is not a staffing plan. Hispanic Heritage Month is not consultation. You are a guest. It does not make you the expert.

Culture and everyday life

People, place, and perspective

This brief is about Cuban people as a people with a country and a Minnesota community the building will mash into Mexican — or into Puerto Rican — if you let it. This is not Mexican. It is not interchangeable with Puerto Rican. Puerto Rican is U.S. citizenship under the Jones Act (1917). Cuban is not that file. 1959, Mariel (1980), 1994 balseros, and later streams are not one exile story. Spanish is Caribbean Spanish, not Mexican.

Who this is

A full mosaic is not a stereotype. A stereotype is when this page becomes the person in the lobby. Paternalism is one Latino blob, one “Spanish interpreter,” a 1959 speech you give a U.S.-born twenty-year-old, and collecting status because you learned the word Mariel.

Who this is not

Minnesota Compass (ACS 2019–2023) puts Cuban ancestry near 9,406. About 67.3 percent Twin Cities, about 32.7 percent Greater Minnesota — not an afterthought. About 34.1 percent age 17 or younger; about 8.9 percent 65+. About 21.9 percent foreign-born — which means a large share was born here. Language other than English (age 5+) 39.3 percent; English less than “very well” 11.4 percent. Poverty 10.5 percent. Owner 45.0 percent. Disability 21.5 percent. Date the number you use. Do not invent a cause. A rate is not the person.

The diversity inside this people is the point. A 1960s exile elder, a Mariel arrival, a 1994 balsero, a later-stream parent, a U.S.-born nurse, an Afro-Cuban student, a Greater Minnesota household, a person who left 1959 politics and still shows up at a parish — share a people and do not share a Tuesday.

How to read this

Always defer to the person in front of you. This page is a hypothesis you still test on this family.

1959, Mariel, 1994, Later — Not One Exile Story

If 1975 is the foundational event of Vietnamese Minnesota, Cuban Minnesota does not get one year that covers the lobby. It gets a stack, and you will misread the room if you pick the wrong one.

Foundational events

1959—early 1960s: revolution, first-wave exile — often more connected, more already professional. That is a stream, not a virtue ranking. Freedom Flights. Mariel 1980 — a different class mix, a stigma that still sits in some rooms. 1994 balseros. Wet foot/dry foot ended January 2017. Later irregular arrivals via other countries. U.S.-born children in every stream.

Who you meet

Cuban Adjustment Act (1966) is literacy for the desk: a path some people can use after a year of presence. It is not a speech. It is not permission to collect status you do not need. It is not Puerto Rican citizenship.

The desk in 2026 meets a third-generation English-dominant adult, an elder who needs Caribbean Spanish, and last year's arrival. Compass foreign-born 21.9 percent (ACS 2019–2023) is the dated share — not “everyone is an exile.” 1959 is literacy. It is not a speech you give the family.

Family

Family is not one size. Some households look nuclear on an English form and still carry obligation to a parent who does not read the form. Some are extended. Compass: average household size about 2.84. Ask who should be in the room.

Who is in the household

Mixed-status is structure for some later streams. Do not collect status you do not need. Do not treat unmatched last names or a missing SSN as fraud until you have a reason. First-wave households may be U.S. citizens for decades. Later streams may not be. You do not know from the name.

Who speaks

Hour caps and “natural supports” language can dump unpaid work onto women in that network and call it culture.

Minnesota law still stands. Domestic violence is not culture. You follow mandated reporting. You still see a family. Do not use a child as interpreter.

Cuban — not Mexican, not Puerto Rican, not one exile

To be Cuban in Minnesota is to be placed in a U.S. checkbox that holds Mexican as the default and Miami as the picture. There is a peoplehood here the mash deletes: an island, Caribbean Spanish, Afro-Cuban histories, 1959 memory for some and a history class for others, Mariel stigma, later streams, U.S.-born lives.

In this state

Puerto Rican is citizenship. Cuban is not that file. Mexican Spanish is not this Spanish. White Cuban, Afro-Cuban, mixed — colorism inside this page is real. Afro-Cuban people exist — ask, do not mash them into historic African American, and do not bleach them into a first-wave exile story.

You do not referee 1959. You do not put a revolution on a case note as color. You meet a household.

This guide is a working orientation. Individual variation always supersedes group generalization. Always defer to this family.

Core Concepts

Not Mexican. Not Puerto Rican as a synonym. The first grammar. If you open a Mexican default or run a citizenship script copied from Puerto Rico, you do not have a household yet.

Streams are not one exile

1959, Mariel, 1994, later. Ask. Do not give a U.S.-born adult a 1959 speech.

Caribbean Spanish

Book qualified Spanish AND ask.

Two surnames

Dropping the second invents a person.

Cuban Adjustment Act as literacy, not a reason to collect status. Do not collect status you do not need.

Colorism

White Cuban is not the whole. Afro-Cuban is not a footnote. Parish and, in some rooms, Afro-Cuban religion: do not exoticize, and do not make clergy the case plan unless they asked.

Religion

Catholic majority in many streams — not all. Protestant churches live here. Santería / Regla de Ocha and related Afro-Cuban practice live in some rooms. Do not exoticize. Do not treat an orisha as folklore, as witchcraft, or as a risk score. None is also a Tuesday. Ask.

Streams

Do not make a priest or a santero the case plan unless this family asked. Do not BCC one parish and call it consultation.

Practice

Holy Week, funeral obligation, and feast days some families name can collide with your calendar. You still keep medical and legal time. You name the conflict.

Help that looks like a report is not help. Religious framing of disability, mental health, or gender can sit next to a fierce wish for services. You can hold both.

Greetings

Handshake is common in many rooms. Follow this room. A slight nod with an elder is safer than a hard first-name hello you assume is warmth. Some streams greet familiars with a cheek kiss — do not initiate because a training slide said Latinos are tactile.

Titles

Titles until invited. Use the last name you were given — and remember there may be two. Usted versus tú: some Caribbean rooms move to tú faster; some elders do not. A qualified interpreter matches register. You do not correct it.

This room

Elders first. Greet the people in the room, not only the English speaker.

Do not import Somali right-hand rules or the Black nod onto this page. Cross-gender touch: follow this room.

Naming Conventions

Two surnames is the default in much of Spanish-language naming: apellido paterno then apellido materno. A U.S. database that keeps one surname invents a person. That invented name then follows them through MHCP, child welfare, and school. It is a gate.

How to file

Ask how to file. Ask how to say it. Pronounce it. Do not drop accents as a joke. Given names may be Spanish, English, or both. Ask.

Women may or may not take a husband's surname in U.S. records. Children may carry two surnames that do not match a parent's U.S. "last name" field. That is not fraud until you have a reason.

Do not treat unmatched last names in a household as a fraud flag by default.

Dates of Significance

1 January 1959 — the revolution / the exile, depending on the room. In many Cuban American rooms this is grief and politics. It is not a party. Do not put a slogan on a case note. Do not celebrate or condemn in the file. Listen if they name it.

Calendar

Independence 20 May appears in some exile calendars. 10 October. Ask. Hispanic Heritage Month is a U.S. poster, not this people.

Calendar clicks are literacy for scheduling. They are not community engagement and not a day off the work. Do not put "Latino holiday" on a case note.

Etiquette

Hospitality: food, drink, time. Accepting a little is courtesy. You still keep medical and legal clocks.

In the home

Titles and elders. Shoes: follow the household. Do not photograph an altar — Catholic or Afro-Cuban. Do not ask an elder to explain the revolution as entertainment.

Time

Punctuality: social time can run long. Work, clinic, and court time should be treated as on time. Do not write a “Latino time” joke in a case note.

Relationship may precede a signature. That is not permission to skip a notice. Ask whether they agree with the plan. Do not take a smile as consent.

Language and Communication — the CLAS gate

This is the CLAS Spanish line — and Spanish is not the people. Caribbean Spanish is not Mexican Spanish and not Andean Spanish. Book a qualified Spanish interpreter AND ask this household. Register matters.

Language

Compass (ACS 2019–2023): among those 5 and older, 39.3 percent speak a language other than English; 11.4 percent speak English less than “very well”; English only 60.7 percent. Date the number. A large U.S.-born share is English-dominant. The elder may not be. Do not skip the interpreter because Compass LEP looks modest.

Do not use a child as interpreter. Do not make a Cuban coworker the interpreter. A short English yes may be exhaustion or courtesy. Ask whether they agree. Do not take a smile as consent.

LGBTQ

Queer and trans Cuban Minnesotans exist. Conservative parish and family climates can mean silence or exile. Island history includes persecution and later legal change. That is literacy, not a speech, and not this household’s Tuesday unless they name it.

This person

Staff duty: use the name they use. Do not out them to an elder or a parish as cultural humility. Minnesota’s Human Rights Act still applies.

Afro-Cuban queer people exist inside this page. Do not mash them into the historic African American LGBTQ chapter, and do not bleach them. Do not use this chapter to raid a household.

Hair, Dress, and Body

There is no Cuban uniform. Second generation looks like Minnesota. Guayabera and white at some public events are not a daily costume, and not yours to request for a Heritage Month photo.

Dress

Colorism and hair texture are real. White Cuban, Afro-Cuban, mixed. Afro-Cuban hair is not the CROWN Act chapter copied over — and you still do not touch, still do not police. Do not rank race off skin or hair in

a case note.

Do not ask if they “still wear the costume.” Ask the person, with gender match if they want it.

Music

Not one playlist. Son, salsa, rumba, timba, trova — origin names the sound. A Mexican default playlist in a Cuban waiting room is the mash in speakers.

Variation

A festival stage is not engagement. A playlist is not language access. A rumba or a liturgy is not staff entertainment.

Knowing that music is public life will not write the waiver. It will stop you from treating one Heritage Month speaker as the community.

Sports

Baseball has prestige in many Cuban streams. Soccer and ordinary school sport show up in the second generation. Do not assume the kid plays. Do not make sport the only excellence you can see.

Not the whole person

Leagues are social infrastructure. They are not language access and not a case plan.

A baseball sticker is not proof the elder reads English.

Literature

Spanish-language literature is world literature. Martí is literacy for the desk, not a prompt to quote in the lobby. This is not a people without letters. That fact does not mean the person in the lobby can read your form.

Literacy in the lobby

You do not need a novel. You need the language this person reads. Print Spanish from Spain, Mexico, or a machine translation is not automatically this household's Caribbean Spanish.

CLAS is qualified language, not Google and not a child.

Art

Afro-Cuban visual and ritual art, diaspora work, public music culture. Do not put a santo on a Heritage Month table and call it this people. Do not exoticize.

Guest

Guest, not researcher. A museum visit is optional professional development. It is not consultation.

Heritage Month that mashes this with Mexican papel picado has already mashed the adjacent peoples.

Revolution, Adjustment, and the State

1959, the U.S. embargo as structure some families name, Mariel, 1994, wet foot/dry foot ended 2017, Cuban Adjustment Act 1966, and later enforcement climate for some arrivals — that is the political stack. A DHS badge is not automatically help.

The badge

Do not use 1959 as a personality. Do not ask a person to narrate a raft or a revolution for your professional development. Do not collect status you do not need. Cuban Adjustment Act is literacy: a path some people can use. It is not Puerto Rican citizenship. It is not a reason to run an ICE script on visit one.

Mandated reporting still exists. So does the duty not to treat a whole people as a deportation score or a 1959 loyalty test.

Adjacent Peoples — Do Not Mash

Not Mexican. Mexican Minnesota is the largest Latino origin in this state and a Minnesota harm when it becomes the only file. Not Puerto Rican as a synonym. Puerto Rican is U.S. citizenship. Do not run that script here, and do not run an immigration script as if Cuban were Mexican.

Adjacent doors

Not Dominican mash. Not “Caribbean” as one interpreter. Not Somali. Not historic African American. Afro-Cuban people exist — ask, do not mash them into the African American CI because both are Black, and do not bleach them into a first-wave exile story.

Open the people CI that matches this household. Open /ci/latino as the umbrella. Never one Latino module.

Counts, Dated

Minnesota Compass, ACS 2019–2023, Cuban cultural community: about 9,406; Twin Cities 67.3%; Greater Minnesota 32.7%; age 17 or younger 34.1%; 65+ 8.9%; foreign-born 21.9%; language other than English (age 5+) 39.3%; English less than “very well” 11.4%; English only 60.7%; high school or higher (25+) 82.2%; bachelor’s or higher 33.3%; median household income about \$90,000 (2022 dollars, averaged); poverty 10.5%; owner-occupied 45.0%; renter-occupied 55.0%; average household size 2.84; uninsured 4.3%; disability 21.5%.

Counts

Date Compass. Do not invent a cause for disability 21.5 percent. Do not invent a stream count (1959 vs Mariel vs 1994 vs later). Do not copy Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Colombian numbers onto this page.

What the count is not

Foreign-born 21.9 percent is not “everyone is an exile.” Language and child-as-interpreter are gates. A rate is not the person.

Doors and Sources

Minnesota Compass Cuban profile (ACS 2019–2023). CLUES is a Latino door, not this people and not the whole state. Parishes and civic groups this family names. CECLC is a department door, not the community.

Public doors

CLAS Spanish is on the five. Spanish is not one Spanish. Open /ci/latino as the umbrella. Open this for a Cuban household. Open the Puerto Rican CI if this household is Puerto Rican.

Learn on your own time

Learn on your own time. Do not make a Cuban colleague your unpaid tutor. Do not BCC CLUES and call it consultation. Pay partners. Report back. Hispanic Heritage Month is not the work.

Services, opportunity, and participation

Education

Compass (ACS 2019–2023): among Cuban Minnesotans 25 and older, about 82.2 percent high school or higher; about 33.3 percent bachelor's or higher. Date Compass. Streams differ: first-wave professional memory is not Mariel and is not last year's arrival. About 21.9 percent of the community is foreign-born. A large share of children are U.S.-born. The IEP still has to reach the parent who does not read it.

School and language

A parent who speaks fluent Spanish and limited English is not illiterate. The English-only form is the gate. Do not skip the interpreter because a 1959 story said professional, and do not assume illiteracy because the stream is later.

Do not use a child as interpreter. Do not treat a college student as proof the waiver household needs no interpreter.

Other Considerations — unvarnished, not Minnesota Nice

Unvarnished, because Minnesota Nice is how a room that treats everyone the same deletes facts. ERGs may fact-check this page. They do not get a veto because a fact is hard to say.

Named harms

1959 intra-community politics still split some rooms — flag, exile, later arrivals who did not come as anti-communist heroes. You do not referee. You do not put it on a case note as color. Mariel stigma is a named harm. It is not a risk score.

Colorism is real. White Cuban default will talk over Afro-Cuban if you let it. ICE and enforcement climate is structure for some later streams. Do not collect status you do not need. Cuban Adjustment Act is literacy, not a reason to collect status.

Compass disability 21.5 percent (ACS 2019–2023). Date it. Do not invent a cause. Do not skip screening.

LGBTQ Cubans exist. You use the name. You do not out someone to kin and call it culture. Domestic violence is not culture. You follow mandated reporting.

Health

Compass (ACS 2019–2023): about 4.3 percent without health insurance; disability 21.5 percent among

those for whom status is determined, 20.7 percent under 65. Date them. Do not invent a cause for the disability figure. Do not invent a PTSD rate. Uninsured looking low is not “no health gate.”

Access

Believe reported pain. Do not skip screening. Do not fold this history into Tuskegee or into a generic “immigrant mistrust” slide. Streams differ: an elder of 1961 and a 2022 arrival do not share a clinic story.

Gender match may be requested in maternal and intimate care. Offer it. Do not use a child as interpreter in a health encounter. Colorism in the clinic is a named harm if staff treat Afro-Cuban as a different file.

Work, Markets, and Government

Professional, trades, small business, service, public employment. Compass owner-occupied 45.0 percent — more renter than some neighboring spines. Median household income about \$90,000 is an average, not this kitchen table. Streams differ.

Work

Cuban staff exist inside DHS and counties. They are not unpaid interpreters and not “the community.” Identity is not a staffing plan.

Staff

Relationship may precede a signature. That is not permission to skip a notice. An English eList comment period is not how this community was reached.

Remittance to kin on the island is obligation for many, not a disposable luxury — and still not an immigration script.

Health-care and Human-service Encounters

Caribbean Spanish. Book qualified Spanish AND ask. Do not use a child as interpreter. Do not make staff the interpreter. Who is in the room. Gender match in maternal and intimate care if they want it. Two surnames.

Language

Streams are not one exile. Do not give a U.S.-born adult a 1959 clinical story. Disability 21.5 percent is dated Compass — do not skip screening, do not invent a cause. Enforcement climate for some later arrivals: skipped appointments are pattern. Do not collect status you do not need.

The meeting

Believe reported pain. Colorism in the clinic is a harm. Mandated reporting still exists. You follow the law. You still see a family.

Connections to human services

Workplace culture and service delivery are both candidates.

Language: CLAS Spanish is not one Spanish. Caribbean Spanish is not a Mexican interpreter accent test. A child as interpreter is a closed door and a harm. Gender match may be requested in maternal and

intimate care. A large U.S.-born share is not “no interpreter” for the elder.

Names: two surnames. The database that keeps one invents a person. Unmatched last names are not fraud by default.

SSN on the first screen, hour caps, and exception processes without language are not culturally neutral. Cuban Adjustment Act is literacy, not a reason to collect status you do not need. Puerto Rican is citizenship — do not copy that script here, and do not run an ICE script as if Cuban were Mexican.

Child welfare and disability: Compass disability 21.5 percent is dated — do not skip screening, do not invent a cause. Help-seeking that becomes a report is part of why people wait. Mandated reporting still exists. Domestic violence is not culture. You follow law.

Enforcement climate for some later streams: people skip clinic when a relative can be moved. That is not noncompliance.

Notices and comment: an eList and an English PDF is not how this community was reached. Greater Minnesota is 32.7 percent — a Minneapolis default is a gate.

Workforce: Cuban staff are not the interpreter pool and not the community. Staff are colleagues, not the curriculum. Do not treat them.

Mexican default and one-exile mash are gates. Disaggregate or you invented a people.

Legislation, funding, rule: you cannot advocate for a channel you will not study. This cultural intelligence exists so the 40% has a household in it — not a paternalistic program designed in a building that never learned that 1959 is not the person in the lobby.

Continue the connection

- **Equity Analysis Toolkit** — program page </learn/equity-toolkit>
- **Community engagement and connections** — program page </learn/community-connections>
- **Learning and resources** — program page </learn>