

TOWARD A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE

The Trends and Challenges Facing America's Latino Children



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The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC, serving all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country. It has state and regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Phoenix, and San Antonio.

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FOREWORD

Latino children have been central to the work of NCLR and our Affiliates for the past half century. We were early pioneers of programs in Migrant Head Start, insistent that schools be held accountable for ensuring quality education for all students, fierce advocates for children's health coverage, and supporters of deferred action for undocumented childhood arrivals. Through all of this, NCLR has been at the forefront of national and state-level efforts to protect children and ensure that Hispanic youth have the same chance at a successful future as all other children.

Now, more than ever, our nation must maintain and enhance its investments in Latino children. As this report shows, the growth of the Hispanic child population in the United States over the past 15 years has been unprecedented, contributing significantly to increasing diversity in schools, across neighborhoods, within institutions, and, in the longer term, at the polls. In just one generation, nearly one in three children in the United States will be Latino. The report shows that inequities can be reduced with the right policies and programs, and that we are headed in the right direction in a number of instances. Indeed, the positive trends reported here occurred as a result of targeted policies that have aimed to advance the well-being of children—whether that be improved health coverage, better schools and more accountability in our education system, or dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

The report also shows that we have a long way to go to reduce remaining gaps and negative trends. Problems such as generational poverty, discrimination, bigotry and demonization, and other factors impede the positive development of young children of color and can potentially have a detrimental impact on the overall integration of Latino communities. We can and must do better.

The data in the report help us see where we have been and where we are going. NCLR knows what a tremendous asset Latino kids are for America, how resilient they are and what strengths they and their families have when given the chance. From the Hispanic toddler who learned important developmental and language skills through Head Start to the DACA recipient who was able to fulfill her dream of going to college and find a great job—we know that given the right support, our nation's Hispanic children can be central players in our nation's future workforce and society. We urge our readers to use the information provided here to join us in building a more equitable future for all American children.



Janet Murguía
NCLR President and CEO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rapid demographic change is transforming the landscape of America in exciting and challenging ways. In 2014, more than half (50.2%) of children younger than age five in the United States were non-White, offering a gauge of the nation's future racial and ethnic composition. The Latino child population has played a central part in this shifting tide—indeed, without the rapid growth of this particular group, America's overall child population would be in decline. Today, one-quarter of all youth under age 18 is Hispanic, a proportion that will increase to nearly one-third within a generation. The vast majority (95%) of America's 18.2 million Latino children are U.S. citizens, and they will soon be our country's workers, voters, and leaders. Now more than ever, investing in the well-being of these youth is an investment in our country's future.

This report, an update of the 2010 publication *America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends*, provides a comprehensive overview of national and state-level trends in the characteristics and well-being of Hispanic children over the past 15 years, covering 27 key indicators in the areas of demography, citizenship, family structure, poverty, housing, health, education, and juvenile justice. The report, and its companion web-based data tool the Latino Kids Data Explorer,* allow us to track changing outcomes in Latino child well-being since the year 2000. We compare the circumstances of Latino children with those of White and Black children, analyzing regional differences as well as variations between first-, second- and third-generation Latino youth.

The report tells the story of a Latino demographic that is evolving and maturing at different rates throughout the country. The year 2008 is a useful baseline for parts of our analysis: that year marked the midpoint of the recession, a period that had a disproportionate impact on the economic well-being of Latinos, many of whom lost jobs, homes, and income. But the years following 2008 have also been marked by new legislation, policies, and programs that have contributed to progress in other areas of Latino child well-being. We identify several areas of improvement in outcomes over the past years, but also point to some significant remaining inequities, as well as new challenges, which will require solutions informed by solid data. Some of the key trends highlighted in the report are the following:

- **The number of Latino children increased sharply between 2000 and 2015, while the number of White and Black youth declined. Latinos make up a large and growing share of students in U.S. public schools, most are U.S.-born, and while many are children of immigrant parents, an increasing share are third-generation or higher—children of U.S.-born Latinos.** The number of young Latinos increased by nearly 50% between 2000 and 2015, compared to a 14% and 4% decline in the number of White and Black children, respectively. Although many Latino children live in immigrant families, an increasing share is now third-generation or higher. While a large majority of Latino children (95%) are U.S. citizens, more than half (54%) currently live in immigrant families. In 2014, 6% of Latino children were first-generation U.S. residents, and 48% were second-generation (down from 9% and 49%, respectively, in

* See dataexplorer.nclr.org.

2008). The share of Latino youth who are third-generation or higher increased from 42% to 46% during that time, a trend that will continue in the future. The issues faced by first-, second-, and third-generation Latino children may be very different, a distinction that may become increasingly important as the share of third-generation youth grows.

- **The poverty rate among Latino children increased sharply during the recession and has yet to return to pre-recession levels. Despite slight declines in poverty and unaffordable housing over the past five years, there remain major economic disparities between Latino and White children, and Latino child poverty is double that of White children. Latino children often have parents who are working but earning too little to lift their families above poverty. In addition, affordable housing proves to be one of the most persistent and stubborn problem facing Latino families.** In 2014, 32% of Latino children were living in poverty, compared to 13% of White children and 38% of Black children; a full 62% of Hispanic youth were living in low-income families (below 200% of the federal poverty line), compared to 31% and 65% for White and Black families, respectively. Among low-income Latino children, 63% had at least one parent working year-round, a higher rate than all other racial or ethnic groups. Although the Latino child poverty rate has slightly decreased from a high in 2011-2012 (34%) it remains higher than the rate in 1999 (28%). In addition, while the share of Latino children living in unaffordable housing has dropped from 53% in 2008 to 46% in 2014, it is still substantially higher than the rate for White children (26%), but lower than the rate for Black children (49%).
- **There have been some important educational gains for Latino students in the past 15 years, in particular increased high school and maternal graduation rates; nonetheless, there are still significant educational and academic disparities between**

Latino and other students that begin in the early years, persist through high school and impact college readiness. A major success over the past decade has been the narrowing gap in high school graduation rates between White and Latino youth. In 2004, 67% of Latino students completed high school on time with a regular diploma, compared to 80% of Whites and 62% of Blacks. By 2013, 78% of Latino youth graduated on time, compared to 86% of Whites and 69% of Blacks. The share of Latino children living with mothers who graduated from high school has also risen sharply over the years, increasing from only 48% in 2000 to 64% in 2014; nonetheless, White and Black children remain more likely to live with mothers who are high school graduates (90% and 79%, respectively) than Latino children. Despite slight improvements for students from all racial/ethnic groups in academic achievement such as reading and math skills, more progress is needed in these areas for young Hispanics. Reading proficiency among eighth-grade Latino students (21%) is less than half the rate for White students (44%), though still higher than the rate for Black students (16%). Early childhood education programs are one way to improve these scores and promote school readiness. Although a healthy share of young children enrolled in Early Head Start are Latino (35%), Hispanic children are less likely than any other children to be enrolled in center-based child care.

- **There has been a sharp decline in the share of Latino children lacking health insurance. Nonetheless, Latino youth still lag behind other groups in health coverage, and continue to be significantly more likely to be at risk for some health outcomes such as obesity.** Implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and gains through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have led to a significant drop in the share of Latino children without health insurance, which decreased from 19% in 2008 to 10% in 2014; states such as Massachusetts and

New York, which have taken steps to expand coverage for children and parents, have nearly universal health coverage for young Latinos (98% and 96%, respectively). Despite these gains, Latino children still lag behind other groups, and the 2014 uninsurance rate for young Latinos (10%) was twice the rate for Black and White youth (5% each). In addition, health coverage does not immediately translate to improved health care or outcomes, as evidenced by other remaining health disparities. For example, a majority of Latino children—63%—still lack access to regular, high-quality care; moreover, the share of Latino youth ages 10–17 who are overweight or obese (40%), while slightly lower than for Black youth (42%), is much higher than for White children (26%).

- **The youth incarceration rate for all racial and ethnic groups has decreased over the past few years for all racial and ethnic groups, though it has declined more slowly for Latino youth.** Due to declines in juvenile arrest rates and other juvenile justice reforms and alternatives, the Latino youth incarceration rate dropped from 309 per 100,000 youth in 2006 to 173 per 100,000 in 2013 for Latinos. Incarceration rates in 2013 remained highest among Black youth and lowest among Whites (466 and 101 per 100,000). However, in states that have large Hispanic youth populations—such as California, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico—the actual numbers of Latino youth behind bars remains high. Nationwide, there were more than 12,000 Latino youth in residential placement facilities, mostly for nonviolent offenses.

While the report paints a comprehensive picture of Latino child well-being, it also shows that outcomes and trends are not uniform and vary across regions and states. States in the Southeast, for example, which have had newer influxes of immigrants over the past couple of decades, also have higher

rates of first- and second-generation Latinos; these also tend to be the states with the fastest-growing Latino child populations. Young Hispanics in these states tend to have worse educational and economic outcomes than those whose families have lived in the United States for several generations. On the other hand, Southeastern states also have much lower rates of childhood obesity than states in the Southwest, which have more third-generation youth. Obesity, among other negative outcomes, tends to increase with acculturation; these acculturation-related trends will be especially important to tackle as the third- and higher-generation sub-group grows across the nation.

Understanding how Latino children have been faring over time and across states can help us ensure that our nation—our schools, our clinics, our practitioners, and policy-makers—make the right decisions to support these children so that they may thrive and develop into healthy, productive adults. In order to keep up the momentum of positive trends and eliminate remaining disparities, we must develop targeted, comprehensive national and state-level approaches focused on policies and programs that have been shown to enhance children's lives across the different areas addressed here. In addition, a future-minded approach must anticipate and address new challenges that arise from these changes—for example, the fact that higher high school graduation rates for young Latinos has resulted in increased college enrollment, but low Latino college completion rates due to issues such as academic preparedness, as well as financial and cultural struggles. As we look toward the future, we must plan to build opportunity for our increasingly diverse child and youth population; all of America's children—our most cherished assets—deserve to develop and flourish in an environment of equity and hope.

For easy access to the data described in the report by state and year, please visit the NCLR Latino Kids Data Explorer at dataexplorer.nclr.org.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid demographic change is shaping the present and future landscape of our country, and Latino* children are central to this evolving national story. Between 2000 and 2015, the number of Latino children in the United States increased by 47%, making them one of the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population.¹ Today, there are more than 18 million Latino children under age 18 living in the United States, and 95% are U.S.-born citizens. Hispanic children and youth are our future workers, voters, parents, and taxpayers, and are critical to the health and well-being of our nation. Consequently, a solid investment in their well-being is an investment in our nation's future.

Over the past 15 years, Hispanic children and families have made some promising strides, as states around the nation have developed policies and systems that have helped to bolster Latino youth, families, and communities. In many parts of the country, improved outcomes in areas such as health, academic achievement, and economic well-being have resulted from local

and national policies and programs that help Latino children grow, learn, and live in positive, supportive environments.

Unfortunately, however, many Latino children continue to face unique and substantial challenges, which often vary widely depending on their generational status, citizenship, family structure, education, and English-language ability. In addition, there continue to be significant regional and state-level differences in the experiences of Latino children and families. Looking toward the future, it is imperative that our nation support federal and state policies that further reduce health, education, economic, and other disparities for Latino and all children.

This report, an update of the 2010 report *America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends*, provides an overview of national and state-level trends in the characteristics and well-being of Hispanic children.[†] The report, and its companion web data tool the *Latino Kids Data Explorer*,[‡] allow us to track trends in Latino child well-being over the past 15 years. We compare the circumstances of Latino children with those of White and Black children to identify disparities across

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

† In this report, "children" are classified as those under age 18; the terms "children" and "youth" are used interchangeably. Unless otherwise specified, the data presented for Whites and Blacks exclude persons of Hispanic origin. Most of the data in this report are derived from federal data sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the National Center for Health Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Estimates are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. Survey-based estimates are generally only presented for states with sizeable Latino populations or at the regional level in order to improve the reliability of the data.

NCLR's website includes an online version of this report as well as detailed state-level data tables for each of the variables presented here. The online data tables compare recent state-level trends among Latino, White, and Black youth. Data are presented in a series of Excel files and are available for download on www.nclr.org. The tables will be updated as new data become available.

‡ See dataexplorer.nclr.org.

racial and ethnic groups, and areas in need of improvement. The first section of the report covers basic demographic trends and the geographic distribution of the Latino youth population. The remaining five sections cover several areas of well-being and risk factors for Latino children and families: nativity status and citizenship, family structure and income, education and language, health, and juvenile justice. Data are shown at the national and state level, with a special focus on the four states with the largest Latino populations: California, Florida, New York, and Texas.*

Our goal in producing this report is to chart the progress of Hispanic children and to highlight areas of concern that must be addressed by our policies and programs in order to ensure the well-being of current and future generations. Today's "diversity explosion" will soon lead to an American landscape where no one racial or ethnic group is in the majority,² and by 2035—less than 20 years from now—one out of three children will be Latino. Attending to the needs of Latino children and families will lead not only to improved opportunities in Latino communities, but to the success of our entire nation.

LATINOS MAKE UP GROWING SHARE OF U.S. YOUTH POPULATION

Latinos are the largest minority group in the country, and their numbers are projected to continue increasing rapidly relative to Whites and Blacks in the coming decades. Latino children currently account for one-fourth (25%) of U.S. children under

age 18, and by 2050, they are projected to make up nearly one-third (32%) of the child population (see Figure 1). Whites, who currently make up 52% of the population under age 18, are projected to make up less than 50% of the child population by 2020, and may make up less than 40% of the population under age 18 by 2050.³

Black children made up 14% of the population younger than age 18 in 2015—slightly less than their share of the child population in 2000 (15%). Children in other racial and ethnic groups, which include American Indians/Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans, and children identifying as more than one race, continued to make up a smaller share of children than other groups in 2015 (10%), but their numbers are expected to increase rapidly in the coming decades with the growth of the Asian American and multiracial populations.

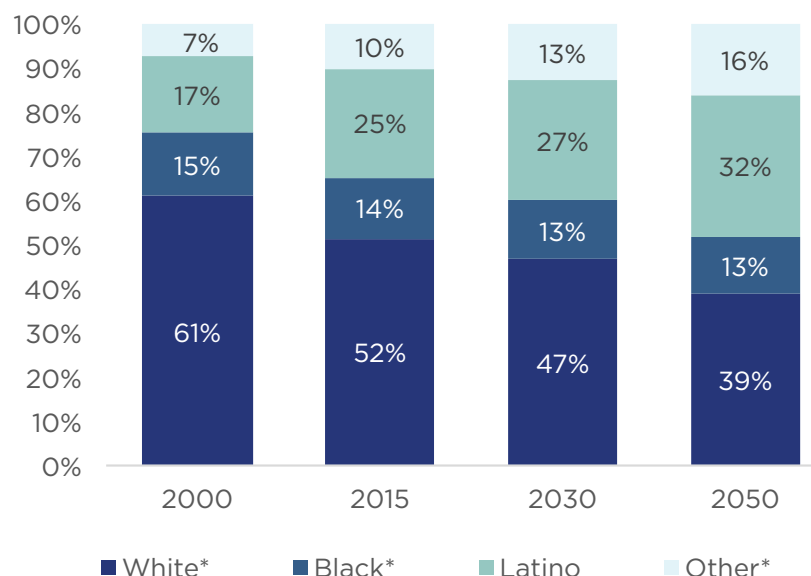
As of 2015, there were 18.2 million Latino youth living in the United States, compared to 10.2 million Black youth, 37.9 million White youth, and 7.4 million children in other racial and ethnic groups (see Table 1). The number of Latino children increased sharply between 2000 and 2015, while the number of White and Black youth declined. In fact, the total U.S. population under age 18 would have declined by 4.5 million between 2000 and 2015 without the increase in Latino children.

In percentage terms, the number of young Latinos increased by nearly 50% between 2000 and 2015, compared with a 14% decline in the number of White children and a 4% decline in the

* In this report, data for the District of Columbia are not compared with data for the 50 states. In addition, data for Puerto Rico are not reported here but are available in many of the data tables available for download at dataexplorer.nclr.org.

Figure 1

Distribution of Children by Race/Ethnicity, 2000, 2015, 2030, and 2050



*Non-Hispanic.

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2015 Population Estimates, and 2030 and 2050 Population Projections.

number of Black children. The number of children in other racial and ethnic groups increased by 39% during this period. The total population under age 18 increased by just 2% between 2000 and 2015, largely because population gains among Latino youth were offset by a corresponding decline among White youth.

The rapid growth of the Latino youth population can be attributed to two main factors. First, due to past immigration of Hispanics to the United States (primarily from Latin America

Table 1

Change in the Population Under Age 18, by Race/Ethnicity, 2000–2015

	2000 Population Under Age 18 (in thousands)	2015 Population Under Age 18 (in thousands)	Population Change (in thousands)	Percent Change
Total	72,294	73,645	1,351	1.9
Latino	12,342	18,150	5,808	47.1
White*	44,027	37,927	-6,100	-13.9
Black*	10,610	10,166	-444	-4.2
Other*	5,314	7,401	2,087	39.3

*Non-Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2015 Population Estimates.

and Mexico), a large number of Latinos are now in their prime childbearing years, compared to other racial and ethnic groups. In 2015, nearly one-third (32%) of the U.S. Latino population was under age 18, compared with one-fourth (25%) of Blacks and about one-fifth (19%) of Whites. The growing number of Latino children in the United States has contributed to a racial and ethnic gap between generations—a gap characterized by an aging White population, and a youth population that is increasingly Latino, Asian, or multiracial.

Second, although the fertility rate among Latinas has fallen sharply in recent years, from 2.7 births per woman in 2008 to 2.1 births per woman in 2014, the Latina fertility rate remains higher than the rate among non-Hispanic Black women (1.9) and non-Hispanic White women (1.8).⁴ In the United States, the overall replacement-level fertility, or the rate needed for a generation to replace itself, is around 2.1 births per woman.

The growth in the Latino youth population in the coming decades depends in part on future trends in international migration. Since the end of the 2007–2009 recession, there has been a decline in the number of Latin American and Mexican immigrants arriving in the United States. In recent years, the number of Mexican immigrants leaving the United States has exceeded the number of new arrivals.⁵ If this trend continues, it will slow racial and ethnic change in the United States in the coming decades.

However, immigration is not the primary factor driving Latino population growth in the United States. Even if U.S. borders were closed to all new immigrants, the number of Latino youth would continue to increase because of the young age structure of the Latino population, which creates population momentum through a large number of couples who are starting families. The rapid increase in the number of Latino families and their U.S.-born children have put the United States on a path to become majority-minority—a state in which the majority of the population is composed of minorities—within a generation.

Latino Youth Population Growing Fastest in South

Historically, the Latino population has been highly concentrated in the Southwest and West, and in a few metropolitan areas outside these regions, such as Chicago, Miami, and New York. Of the 18.2 million Latino children in the United States, 58% still lived in just four states in 2015: California, Florida, New York, and Texas. However, this represents a decline from 2000, when 65% of Latino youth lived in those four states. As of 2015, California had the largest population of Latino youth, with 4.7 million, followed by Texas (3.5 million), Florida (1.2 million), and New York (one million). Maine, Vermont, and West Virginia had the smallest populations of Latino youth, with fewer than 10,000 each.

California and New Mexico also stand out because they are the only two states where Latinos made up a majority of the population under age 18 in 2015, although Texas—at 49%—could soon pass this threshold.

Just three states—California, Florida, and Texas—accounted for 41% of the increase in the Latino youth population between 2000 and 2015. The rapid increase in Latino youth in these states reflect a combination of factors, including a rebounding economy that has fueled domestic and international migration to many Sun Belt states, and recent immigration trends that contributed to rapid population growth among first- and second-generation Latinos, especially from Mexico.⁶

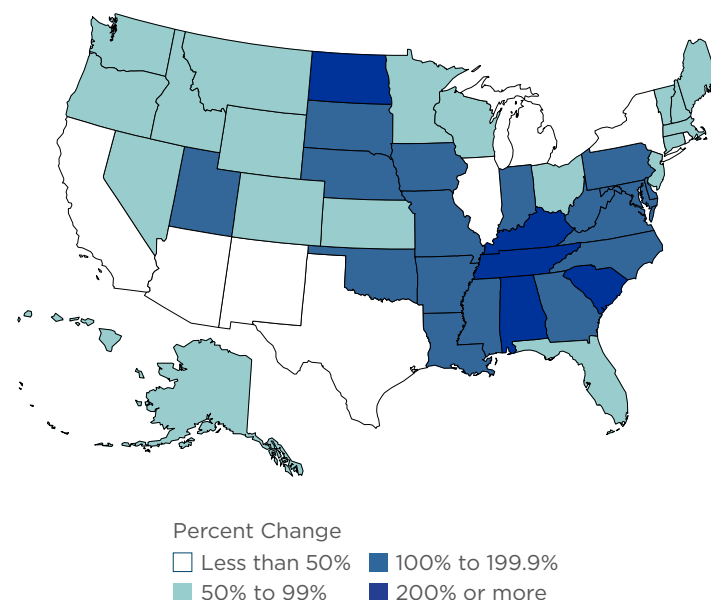
While Latino families and children remain highly concentrated in traditional “gateway” states, they are increasingly dispersing to other parts of the United States, especially the South.* Eight of the 10 states with the fastest-growing populations of Latino children between 2000 and 2015 were located in the South (see Map 1). The Latino youth population increased the fastest in South Carolina (242% increase) and Tennessee (241% increase) during this period. In contrast, states with more established Latino populations experienced much slower growth: Between 2000 and 2015, the number of Latino youth in New York and New Mexico increased by only 14%. California also exhibited relatively slow growth in the population of Latino children, at 17%.

LARGE AND GROWING SHARE OF LATINO CHILDREN ARE U.S.-BORN

A large majority of Latino children were born in the United States. In 2014, only 6% of Latino children were first-generation U.S. residents, down from 9% just six years earlier, in 2008. Between 2008 and 2014, the share of second-generation residents—those with one or more parents who are foreign-born—decreased slightly, from 49% to 48%. However, during this period, the share of Latino youth who were third- and higher-

Map 1

Change in Latino Population Under Age 18, 2000–2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2015 Population Estimates.

* In this report, states are grouped into four regions according to categories defined by the U.S. Census Bureau: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. We also make reference to some of the census divisions that subdivide the four regions: New England, Mid-Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific. For information about which states are included in each of these geographic areas, visit the Census Bureau's site at https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf.

generation U.S. residents increased by four percentage points (42% to 46%).* The number of Latino children with parents and grandparents who were born in the United States is expected to increase in the coming decades, bringing new opportunities—as well as challenges—to Latino families.

The issues faced by first- and second-generation Latino children may be very different from those confronting youth living in more established Latino communities. For example, Latino children whose families have lived in the United States for several generations face fewer economic and cultural barriers compared to those who arrived more recently. Indeed, third- and higher-generation Latinos in many respects come to resemble other native-born Americans over time.⁷ First- and second-generation Hispanic children, however, are more likely to be poor and live with parents who did not graduate from high school and have difficulty speaking English.⁸ Having an immigrant parent may hinder children's ability to access important benefits to which they are entitled, including education and health services. This is especially true for children of undocumented parents who may avoid contact with state or federal agencies out of fear that they

or their parents might be deported.⁹ These children often live in deep fear of permanent familial separation.¹⁰

The small subset of Latino youth who were born outside of the United States face additional challenges. Foreign-born Hispanic youth have higher poverty rates, are less likely to speak English well, have higher dropout rates, and are more likely to become teen parents, compared to second- and third-generation Latino youth.¹¹

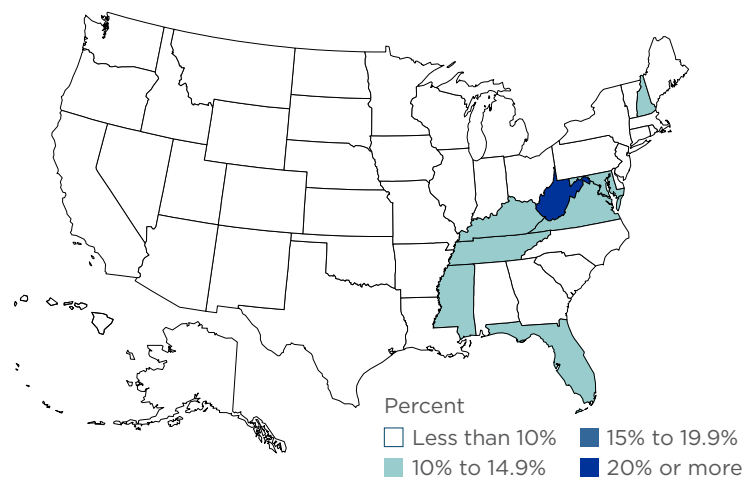
Yet research has also shown that acculturation brings its own problems, as third-generation Latino children fare much worse on certain indicators (health problems, exposure to violence, living in single-parent families) compared with first- and second-generation Latino youth.¹² Indeed, some research suggests that several important outcomes—such as school attendance, mental health, trust in institutions and others—reverse in a “U-turn” for third-generation Latino youth.¹³ These generational differences contribute to the disparities in the well-being of Latino children residing in different parts of the country, and have important implications for state policymakers trying to improve conditions for children.

* In this report, “first-generation” Latino youth refer to those who have immigrated to the United States from another country; “second-generation” refers to U.S.-born children with at least one immigrant parent; “third-generation” refers to U.S.-born children whose parents are also U.S.-born.

Map 2

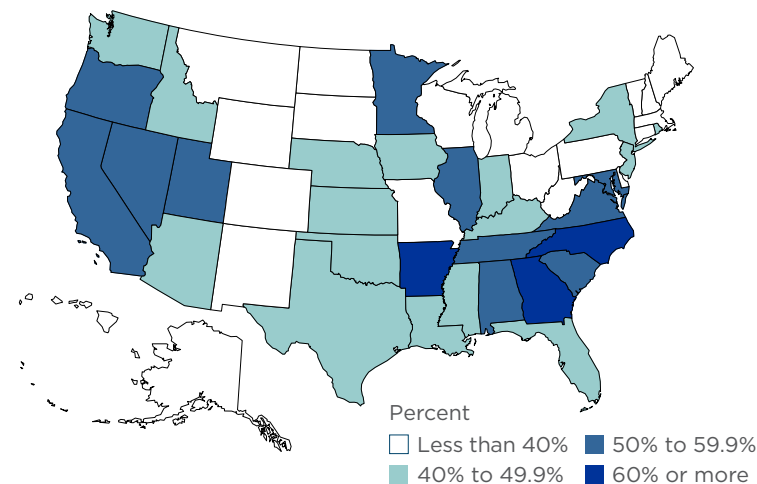
Generational Status of Latino Youth, 2014

A. First-Generation Latino Children



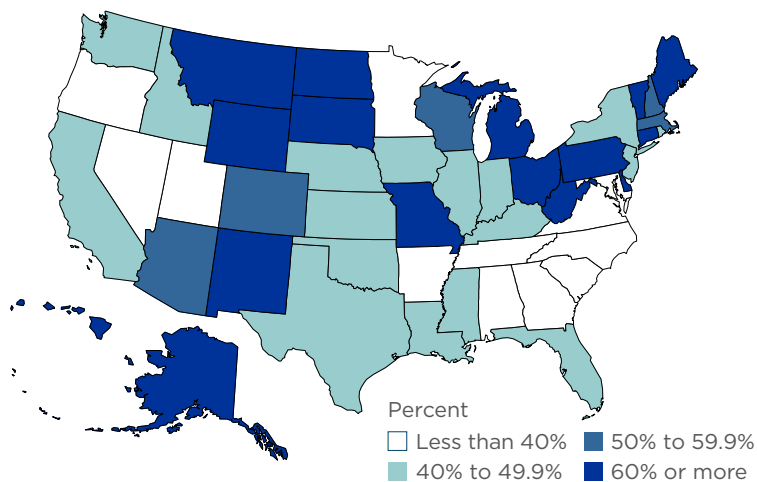
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

B. Second-Generation Latino Children



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

C. Third- and Higher-Generation Latino Children



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

First- and Second-Generation Latino Youth Concentrated in Southeastern United States

In 2014, states in parts of Appalachia, the Mid-Atlantic region, Florida, and New Hampshire had the highest proportions of first-generation Latino children (see Map 2). Second-generation Hispanic children were most highly concentrated in the Southeastern, Mid-Atlantic, and Western regions. Some of the parents of these youth arrived in the United States during the late 1990s to fill new jobs in commercial agriculture, poultry processing, and furniture manufacturing,¹⁴ while others began working in construction and service jobs associated with recent population and housing growth in the regions.

Third- and higher-generation Latino children had the highest concentrations in the Northeast and several states in the Northern Midwest and Mountain West regions. The Northeast includes many families and children from Puerto Rico who are U.S. citizens by birth.

These regional differences matter because they can help explain the diverse characteristics and policy needs of Latino youth living in different parts of the country. In general, first- and second-generation Latino youth have worse educational and economic outcomes than children whose families have lived in the United States for several generations. However, generational status is not always a good predictor of state-level outcomes. For example, Maryland has a much higher proportion of first- and second-generation Hispanic children (67%) compared with Connecticut (32%), yet Latino children in Maryland are more likely to live in married-couple families and are less likely to be poor, compared to Connecticut's Latino youth population.

Citizenship Rate for Latino Youth Approaches the Rate for White Children

One of the ways generational status affects outcomes for Latino children and families is through its close association with citizenship. In the United States, citizenship provides the right to vote and hold elected office, access to services provided through the federal government, the ability to travel freely to other countries, and protection from being deported.¹⁵ Citizenship is either conferred to persons who were born in the United States or acquired through the naturalization process.

In 2014, nearly all of the Latino youth residing in the United States (95%) were U.S. citizens. The citizenship rate among Latino youth has increased with the rising number of Latino children who were born in the United States. Between 2000 and 2014, there was a seven percentage-point increase in citizenship rates of Latino youth. While the citizenship rate among Latino youth remains lower than the rates for White children (99%) and Black youth (98%), this gap is rapidly closing.

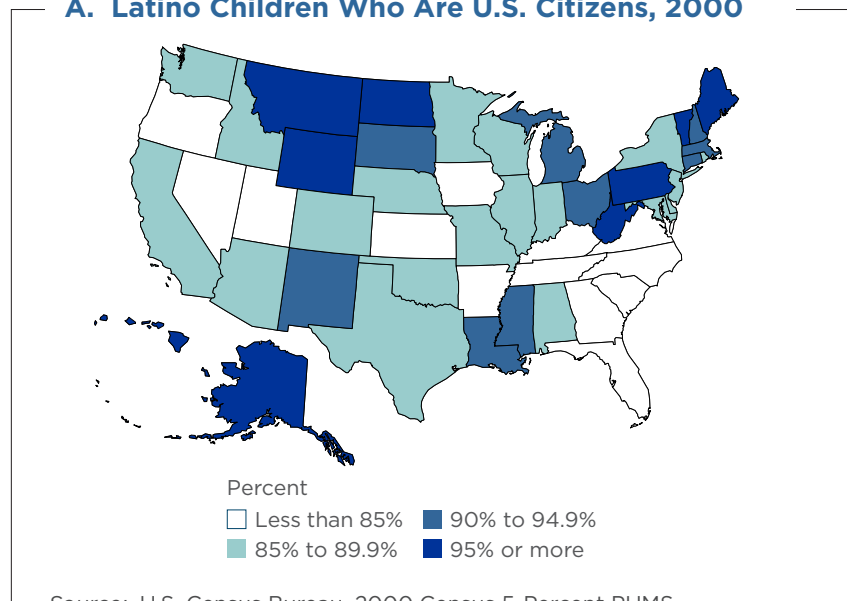
The citizenship rate has also increased among Latino adults ages 18 and older, but still lags behind the rate for Latino youth. In 2014, just over two-thirds (68%) of Latino adults were citizens. As a result, nearly one-third (32%) of Latino adults are ineligible to vote because they lack citizenship.¹⁶ Nonetheless, given that each year, approximately 878,000 Latino youth turn 18, it is estimated that the Latino child population may add close to 15.8 million new eligible voters by the year 2028.¹⁷

The rapid rise in citizenship rates has been striking, especially in parts of the South (see Map 3). The share of Latino children who are citizens increased in 45 of the 50 states between 2000 and 2015. The two states with the biggest gains were Georgia (20 percentage-point increase) and North Carolina (18-point increase). States with declines in citizenship rates among Latino youth included Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming—all states with relatively few Latino families and children.

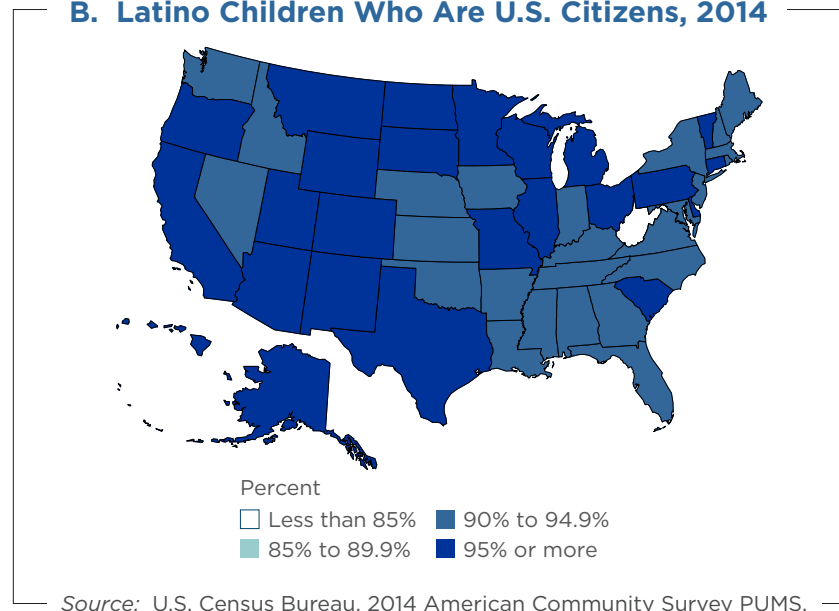
Map 3

Latino Youth Citizenship, 2000 and 2014

A. Latino Children Who Are U.S. Citizens, 2000



B. Latino Children Who Are U.S. Citizens, 2014



Even with the gains in Georgia and North Carolina, states in the South had the lowest rates of citizenship among Latino children in 2014. West Virginia, which has a relatively small Latino population, had the lowest citizenship rate among Latino youth, at 83%. By contrast, each of the other 49 states had a Latino youth citizenship rate of at least 90%.*

In certain states, such as Connecticut and Pennsylvania, high rates of citizenship reflect the large number of Latino families of Puerto Rican descent. More than half of Latinos in those two states reported being of Puerto Rican background in 2014, compared with 10% nationwide.¹⁸ Among the four states with Hispanic populations of one million or more, citizenship rates among Latino youth were highest in California (96%), New York (94%), and Texas (95%), while slightly lower in Florida (91%).

* In the District of Columbia, the citizenship rate for Latino youth was 80% in 2014.

More than Half of All Latino Children Live in Immigrant Families

Children who are first- and second-generation U.S. residents can be grouped together into a single category of “children in immigrant families.” In 2014, 9.7 million Latino children (54%) were either foreign-born or were born in the United States but lived in families in which one or more parents were foreign-born (see Figure 2). By comparison, only 14% of Black youth and 7% of White youth lived in immigrant families in 2014. It is important to note, however, that the share of Latino children living in immigrant families in 2014 was four percentage points lower than the level in 2000 (58%).

There is also a sizable and growing number of Latino children living in “mixed-nativity” families in which one parent is foreign-born while the other was born in the United States. In 2014, about 1.9 million Latino children (11%) lived in mixed-nativity families.¹⁹

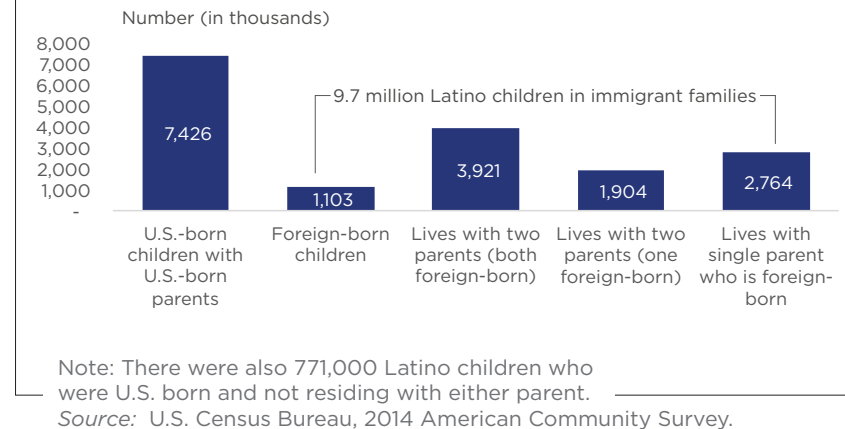
For children in immigrant families, parental education, English-language ability, and the circumstances of their migration to the United States—for example, as refugees, agricultural workers, engineers, or computer scientists—are important factors in children’s overall well-being and their chances for success in school and the job market.²⁰

Fewer Latino Children Living in Immigrant Families in California and Florida

Latino children in immigrant families are most highly concentrated in states in the Southeast and on the West Coast. In 2014, states with the highest proportions of Latino children in immigrant families included Georgia (74%), North Carolina (74%), and Arkansas (72%) (see Map 4). There

Figure 2

Family and Nativity Status of Latino Children in the United States, 2014



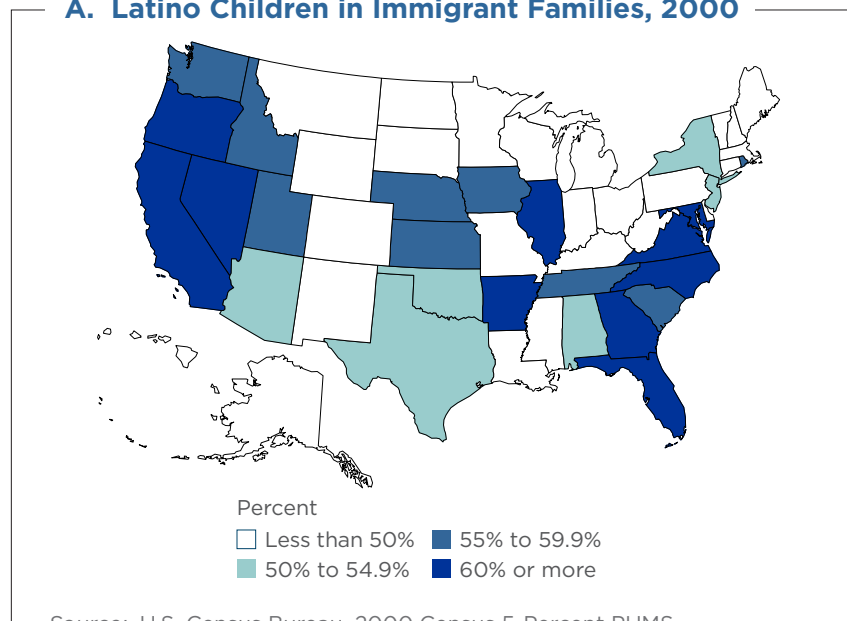
were relatively few Latino youth in immigrant families in the Northeast (which includes many Puerto Rican families who are U.S. citizens by birth), or in the Mountain West and Midwest.

Between 2000 and 2014, the national share of Latino children in immigrant families remained fairly steady, but there were 34 states where the proportion of children in immigrant families increased during this period. States with the biggest increases included Mississippi (18 percentage-point increase), New Hampshire (16-point increase), and Minnesota and Tennessee (11-point increases each). However, the rise in immigrant families in these states was largely offset by declines in California (10 percentage-point decrease) and Florida (nine-point decrease). Immigration to California, in particular, has slowed in recent years, resulting in a declining share of Latino youth in immigrant families.²¹

Map 4

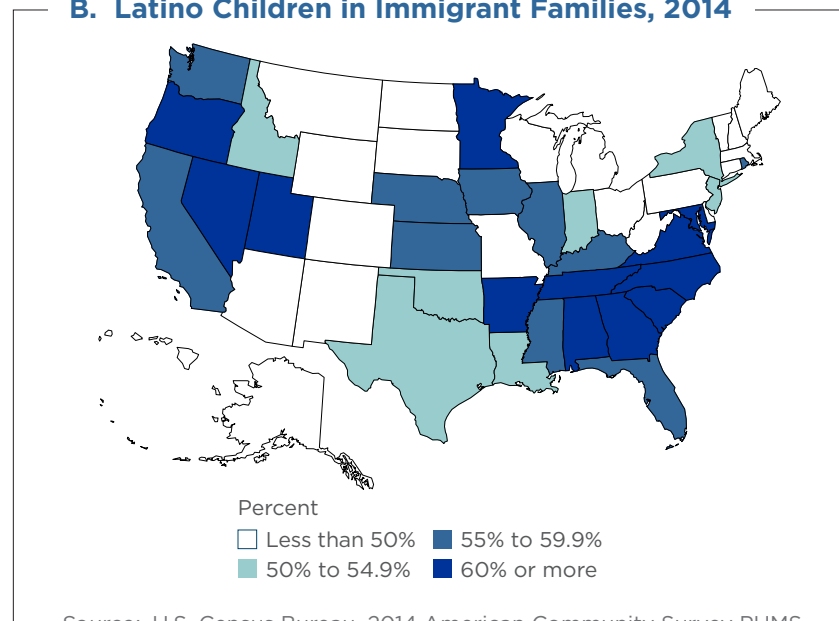
Latino Children in Immigrant Families, 2000 and 2014

A. Latino Children in Immigrant Families, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census 5-Percent PUMS.

B. Latino Children in Immigrant Families, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND INCOME

The social and economic well-being of all children is largely determined by their parent's circumstances. Family structure, parental education, and income are all key factors that help shape children's opportunities and development. Most Latino children live in married-couple families with one or more parents in the labor force. However, Latino parents have less education, lower wages, and fewer worker protections, on average, compared with White parents. Although Latino children make up about one-fourth of the total child population, they account for more than one-third of children living in low-income families. During the recent recession,

Latino and Black families were disproportionately affected by the housing crisis and unemployment, putting minority youth at further risk of falling behind their White peers.²² While some economic outcomes have improved slightly within the past few years, the racial and ethnic disparities exacerbated during the recession are still clearly evident today.

Fewer Latino Children Living in Married-Couple Families

Over the past three decades, the number of U.S. children growing up in married-couple families has declined dramatically for all racial and ethnic groups, causing concern

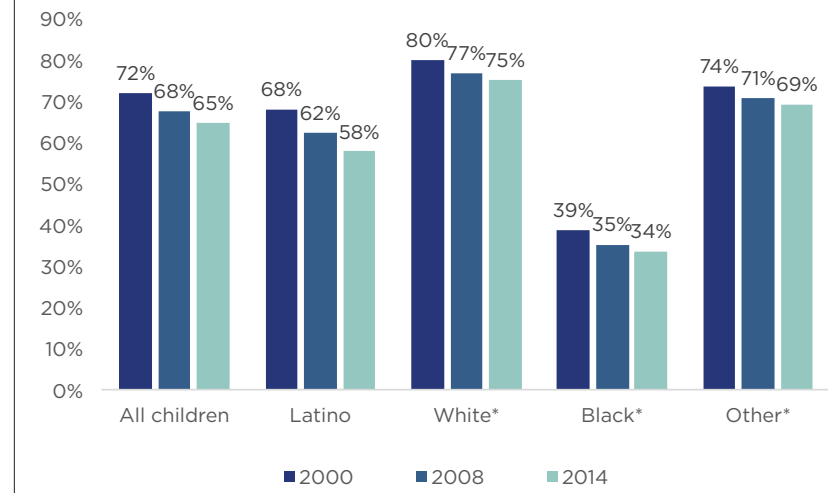
among policymakers and the public. Children growing up in single-parent families typically do not have access to the economic resources and social capital available to children growing up in two-parent families.²³ While social and cultural norms—or the presence of a cohabiting partner—can mediate the effect of single-parent families on children, Latino children growing up in single-parent families are still at an economic disadvantage relative to children growing up with both parents present in the household. Across all racial and ethnic groups, children living with one parent are more likely to be poor and less likely to graduate from high school, compared to children in two-parent families.

In 2014, a majority of Latino youth (58%) lived in married-couple families, but this represents a substantial decline from the level in 2000 (68%) (see Figure 3). Nationwide, the share of all children in married-couple families decreased from 72% to 65% during the same period. There were also declines in the share of White and Black youth in married-couple families, but Latino youth experienced the largest drop since 2000. However, the share of Latino children in married-couple families is still well above the share of Black children, one-third of whom (34%) lived in married-couple families in 2014. Since the 1970s, the decline in married-couple families has been linked to a rising age at first marriage, an increase in births outside of marriage, a rising divorce rate, and an increase in cohabitation among young adults.²⁴

There are differences in family structure between first-generation Latinos and those whose families have lived in the United States for multiple generations. For example, economic mobility and education tend to increase among Latinos from one generation to the next. By contrast, third- and higher-generation Latinos have less stable marital arrangements than their first- and second-generation peers. In 2014, about 68% of first- and second-generation Latino children lived in married-couple

Figure 3

Children Living in Married-Couple Families, by Race/Ethnicity 2000, 2008, and 2014



*Non-Hispanic.

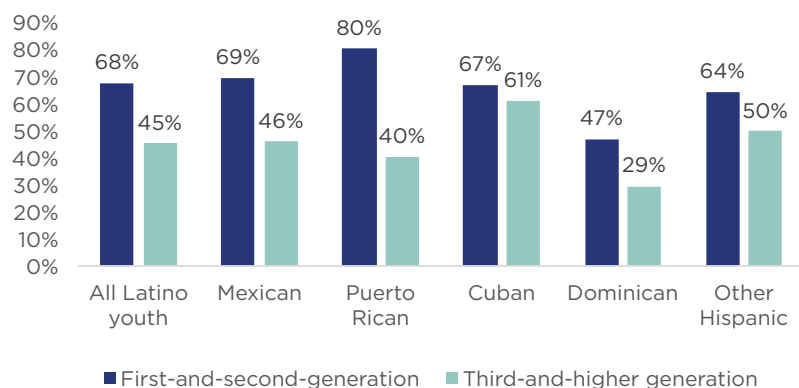
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 and 2014 American Community Survey.

families, compared with 45% of third- and higher-generation Latino youth.²⁵

Among different Hispanic groups, children in families of Puerto Rican origin show the biggest differences in family structure across generations (see Figure 4). In 2014, about 40% of third- and higher-generation Puerto Rican youth lived in married-couple families, compared to 80% of first- and second-generation Puerto Rican youth. The gap in family structure across generations was smallest among Cuban American children (61% vs. 67%).

Figure 4

Latino Children Living in Married-Couple Families, by Hispanic Origin, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.

Latino Children in Single-Parent Families Most Concentrated in Northeast

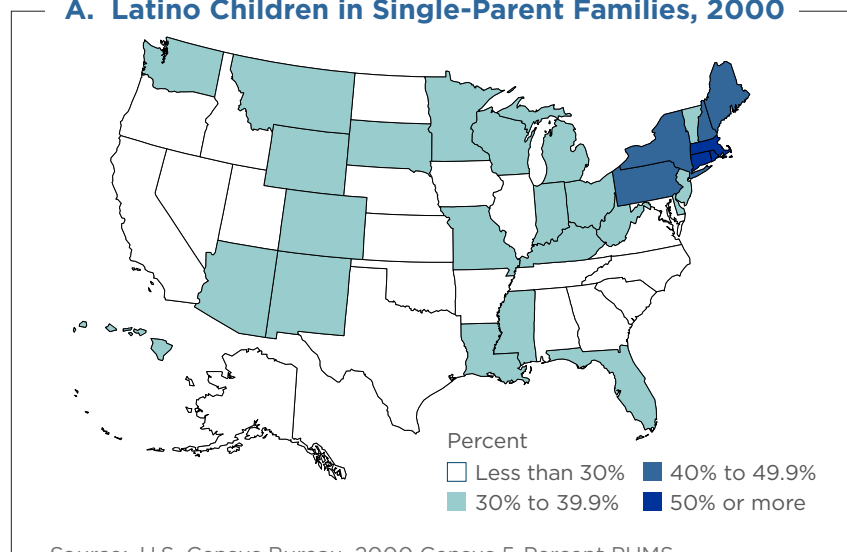
In 2014, Latino youth in the Northeast—which has a high concentration of third- and higher-generation Latino families—were more likely to live in single-parent families compared to those living in other parts of the country. Furthermore, more than half of Latino children in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island lived in single-parent families that year. Rates were lowest in several states with relatively small, mostly first- and second-generation Latino populations, especially in the South (see Map 5).

Between 2000 and 2014, the share of Latino children in single-parent families increased in 46 of the 50 states. California, Florida, and Texas were among the states where the share of Latino children in single-parent families increased by 10 percentage points or more between 2000 and 2014. New York's Latino youth population also experienced a modest increase (four percentage points) during this period.

Map 5

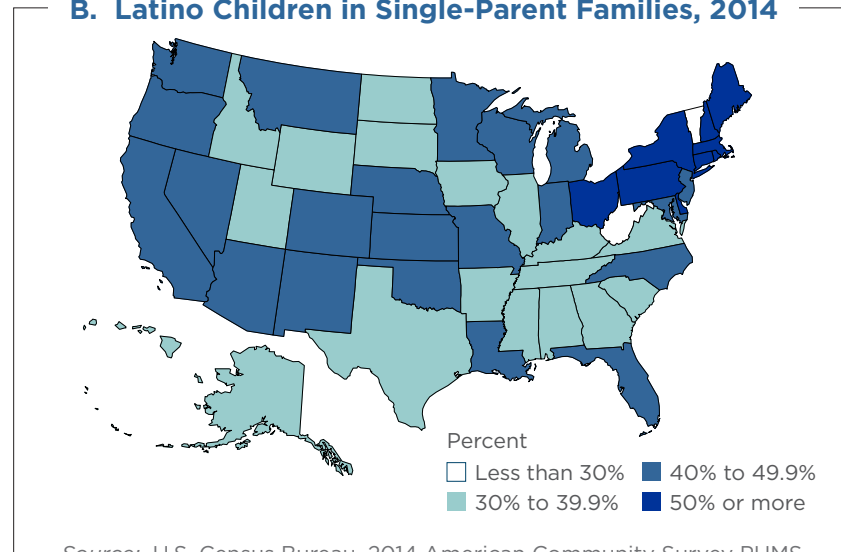
Latino Children in Single-Parent Families, 2000 and 2014

A. Latino Children in Single-Parent Families, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census 5-Percent PUMS.

B. Latino Children in Single-Parent Families, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

More Than Three-Fifths of Latino Youth Live in Low-Income Families

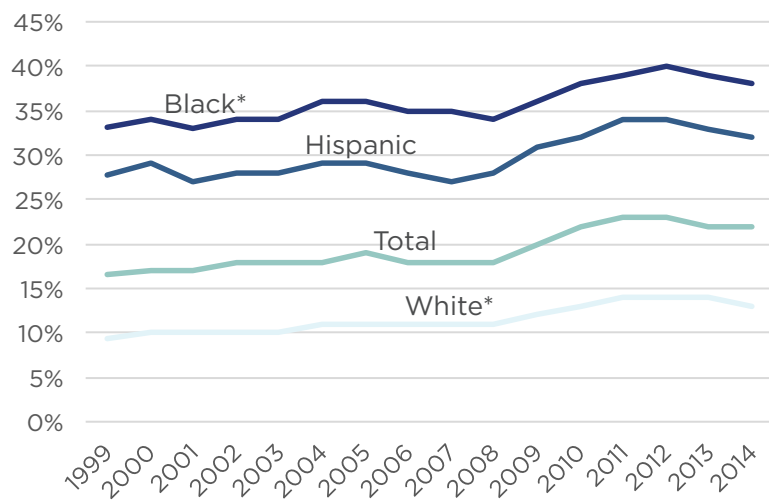
Economic hardship can adversely affect a child's development in ways that are fundamental to later success in life. Children growing up in poor and low-income* families tend to have worse health and educational outcomes, are more likely to experience parental divorce and live in single-parent families, and are more

likely to experience violent crime compared to children growing up in higher-income families.²⁶ For many children, poverty persists into adolescence and adulthood, and is associated with greater risk of dropping out of school, teenage parenthood, and lower earnings for young adults.²⁷ Latino and Black youth are often doubly disadvantaged compared to their peers, living in low-income families as well as high-poverty neighborhoods that are socially and economically isolated, offering fewer resources and support structures than more affluent communities.²⁸

* Typically, children are classified as poor if they live in a family with yearly income below the official poverty threshold. In 2014, the poverty threshold for a family of four, including two children, was \$24,008. The low-income threshold is typically defined as 200% of the poverty threshold, or \$48,016 for a four-person family. Poverty and low-income thresholds are used to determine eligibility for need-based programs, including Head Start, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the National School Lunch Program.

Figure 5

Children Living in Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity, 1999 to 2014



*Non-Hispanic.

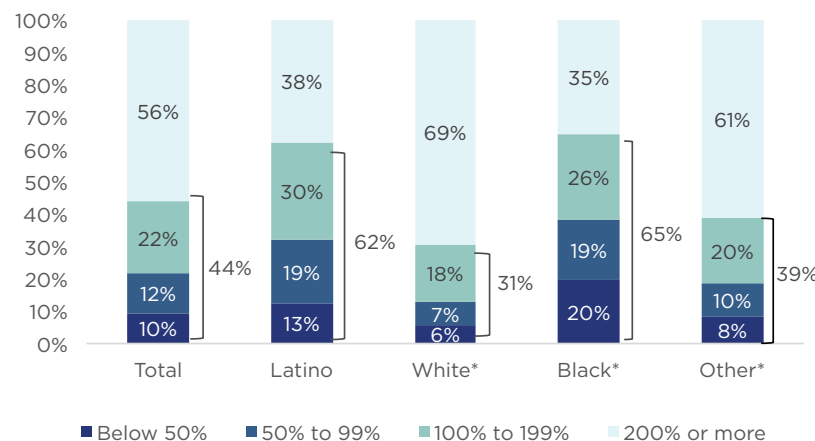
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census; and Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center.

The poverty rate among Latino youth increased sharply during the recession and has yet to return to pre-recession levels (see Figure 5). In 2014, nearly one-third (32%) of Latino youth were poor. While the poverty rate for 2014 was lower than the rate in 2011–2012 (34%), it had increased from the rate in 1999 (28%). The 2014 Latino child poverty rate was more than double the rate for White children (13%) but was lower than the rate among Black children (38%). The national child poverty rate in 2014 was 22%, according to data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

High employment rates keep most Latino families out of poverty. However, a relatively high proportion of Latinos are low-income,

Figure 6

Distribution of Children by Poverty Level and Race/Ethnicity, 2014



*Non-Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey.

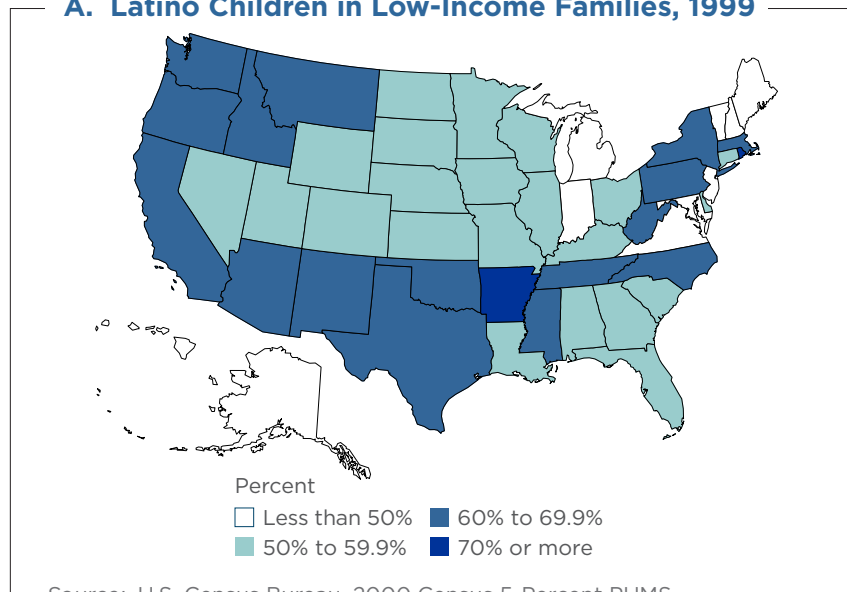
with family income below 200% of the poverty threshold. This is especially true for first-generation immigrants, who are more likely to work in low-wage service, manufacturing, and agricultural jobs with few benefits or worker protections.²⁹ In 2014, 13% of Latino children lived in deep poverty (below 50% of the poverty threshold), 32% were poor (below 100% of poverty threshold), and 62% were in low-income families (below 200% of poverty threshold) (see Figure 6). The percentage of Latino youth living in low-income families has increased since 2008, when 59% of Latino youth were low-income.

The share of Latino youth in low-income families (62%) was slightly lower than the share of Black children in low-income

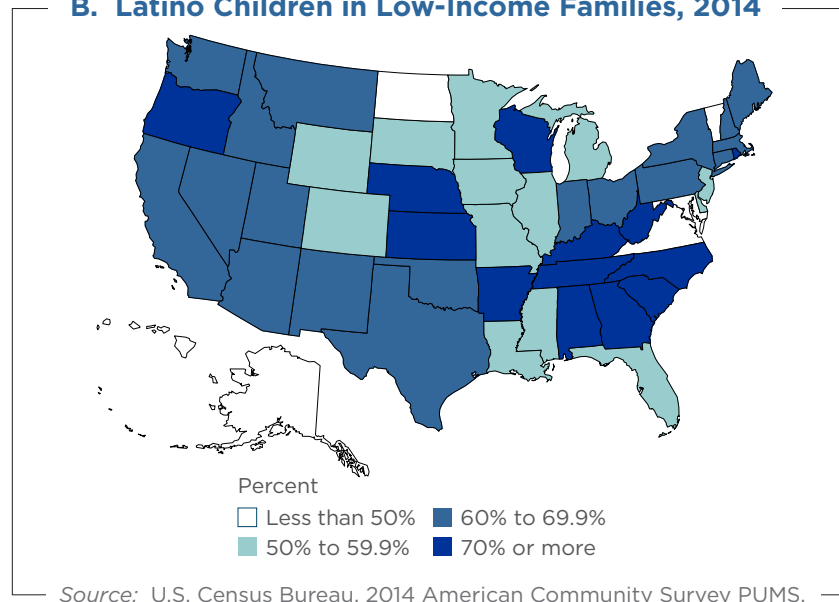
Map 6

Latino Children in Low-Income Families, 1999 and 2014

A. Latino Children in Low-Income Families, 1999



B. Latino Children in Low-Income Families, 2014



families (65%), and twice the proportion of White children who were low-income (31%). Nationwide, about 44% of children lived in low-income families in 2014. While Hispanic children make up about one-fourth of the population under age 18, they account for more than one-third of children living in low-income families.

The high proportion of Latino youth in low-income families can only partially be linked to patterns of marriage and family formation. In 2014, Latino children in single-parent families were much more likely to be low-income (76%) than those in married-couple families (52%). But even among children in married-couple families, Latinos were much more likely to be low-income in 2014 compared with Whites (21%) or Blacks (39%), suggesting that having two potential earners in the family is not sufficient to lift many Latino children above the low-income threshold.

Latinos in the South More Likely to Live in Low-Income Families

Arkansas and North Carolina had the highest shares of Latino children in low-income families in 2014, at more than 75% each (see Map 6), while rates were lower in the Mid-Atlantic region and in several states with smaller Latino populations. Higher Latino family incomes in the Mid-Atlantic states are associated with high proportions of married-couple families, high levels of educational attainment and labor force attachment, and the high proportion of Latinos who speak English in that region.

Between 1999 and 2014, the proportion of Latino children in low-income families increased in 37 of the 50 states, including California and Florida. In Wisconsin, there was a 17 percentage-

point increase in the share of Latino children in low-income families between 1999 and 2014. Several states in the Southeast also experienced sharp increases in the share of Latino youth in low-income families during this period. In New York and Texas, the percentage of Latino children in low-income families declined slightly, by one percentage point each, while the shares of low-income Latino youth increased in California (one point) and Florida (seven points).

Another way to assess income disparities is to compare the “low-income gap” between Latino children and White children in different states. Nationwide, there was a 32 percentage-point difference between the share of White and Latino youth in low-income families in 2014. However, in several states in New England—Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island—the low-income gap was 44 percentage points or more. Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, and Vermont were among the states with the smallest income gaps between Whites and Latinos (less than 20 points).

Most Low-Income Latino Youth Have Parents Who Are Working Year-Round

Working full-time does not always ensure enough income to provide for a family’s basic needs. In fact, more than seven out of 10 low-income families in the United States include at least one full-time worker.³⁰ Low-income families often face significant challenges in their efforts to balance the demands of work and family. For example, parents with young children need to find affordable child care while they are at work. However, many low-income parents are employed in service

or retail jobs with long and irregular hours—often making it difficult to find high-quality, affordable care for their children.³¹

Beyond difficulties in finding a child care provider, low-income working families face other challenges. Compared to higher-income families, low-income working families spend a higher share of income on housing costs and are less likely to have employer-sponsored health insurance.³² Most low-income workers are employed in low-skilled jobs with few benefits and few opportunities for advancement.

Most low-income Latino youth live with at least one parent who is working year-round—at least 50 weeks of the year. In 2014, 63% of Latino youth in low-income families had a parent working year-round, compared to 49% of Black youth and 61% of White youth (see Figure 7).*

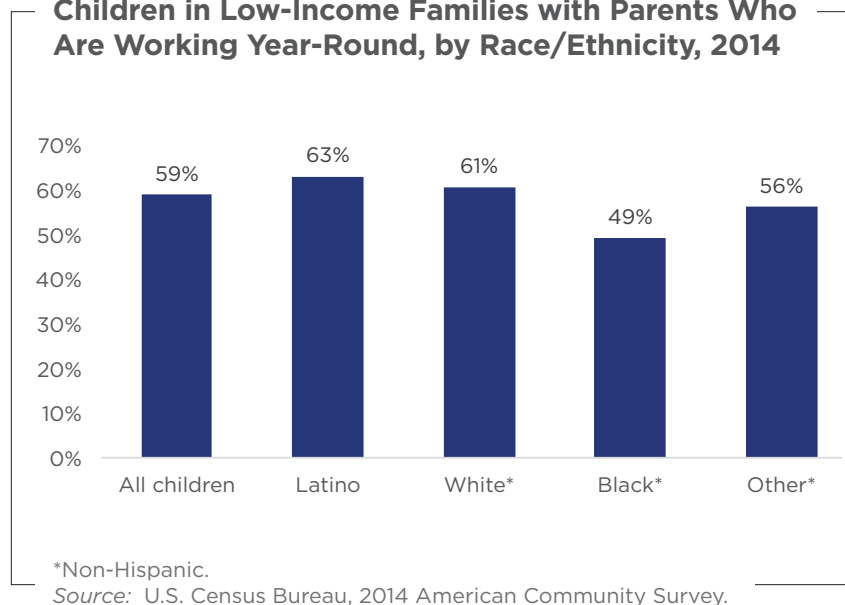
Overall in 2014, two-fifths of Latino children (40%) lived in low-income working families, compared to 19% of White children and 34% of Black children. Since 2008, the share of Latino children in low-income working families increased only slightly (one percentage point).

Low-income working families are most common in the South, where Latinos are more likely to be working in low-wage jobs. In 2014, Arkansas, North Carolina, and South Carolina had the highest proportions of Latino children in low-income working families (more than 55% each) (see Map 7). Among states with large Hispanic populations, New York had the lowest share of Latino children in low-income working families (35%).

* Low-income working families are defined as those with at least one parent working 50 or more weeks per year, with income below 200% of the official poverty threshold.

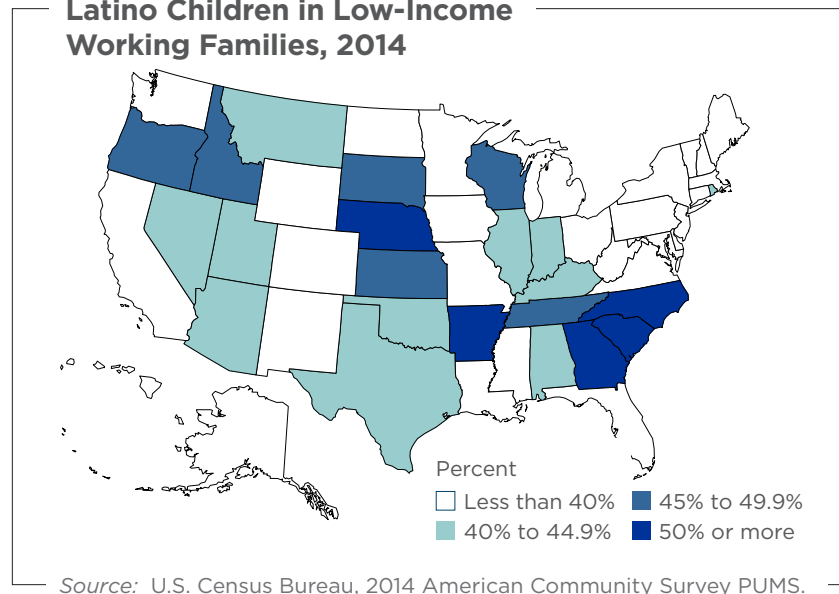
Figure 7

Children in Low-Income Families with Parents Who Are Working Year-Round, by Race/Ethnicity, 2014



Map 7

Latino Children in Low-Income Working Families, 2014



Housing Costs Decline, But More Than Half of Latino Children Still Live in Unaffordable Housing in California, Northeast

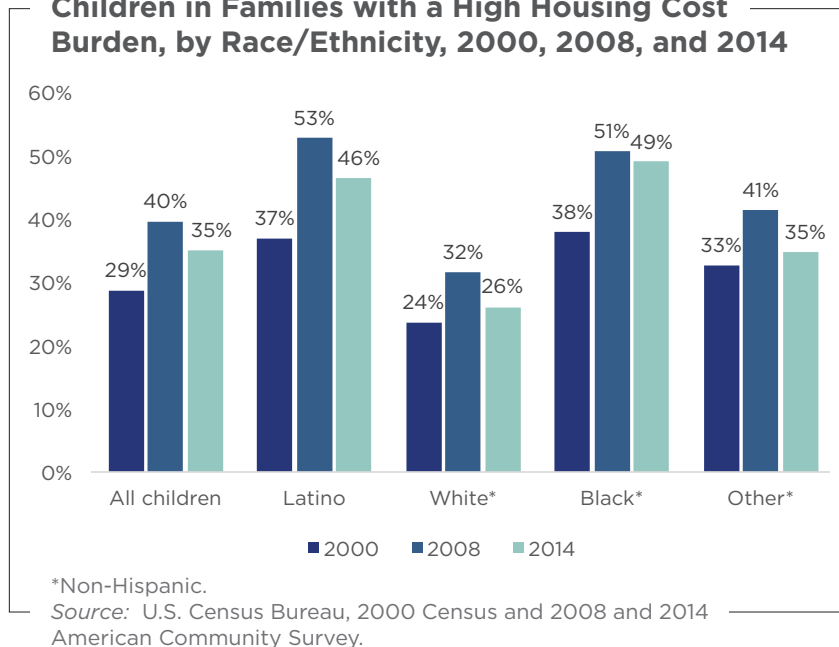
The recession and housing bust hit Latino and Black communities especially hard. At the height of the recession, nearly one in 10 Latino homeowners said they had missed a mortgage payment during the previous year.³³ Despite an overall decline in housing costs since that time, the concentration of the Latino population in coastal California and other high-cost urban areas—combined with their relatively low incomes—puts a large number of Latino families at risk of severe housing cost burdens.³⁴ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers housing affordable if total expenses

(rent or mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities, and other related payments) account for less than 30% of total household income. Paying 30% or more of income on housing expenses may leave insufficient resources to cover other basic expenditures, including food, child care, and health care costs. High housing costs also put homeowners at greater risk of falling behind on mortgage payments, as well as foreclosure.³⁵

Between 2000 and 2008, there was a sharp increase in housing cost burdens across all racial and ethnic groups, but Latinos experienced the biggest increase in unaffordable housing. More than half of Latino youth (53%) lived in unaffordable housing in 2008, up from 37% in 2000 (see Figure 8). However, by 2014, the share of Latino youth in

Figure 8

Children in Families with a High Housing Cost Burden, by Race/Ethnicity, 2000, 2008, and 2014



families with high cost burdens had dropped to 46%—lower than the share of Black children (49%) but much higher than the share of White children (26%).

Renters, who tend to have lower incomes, are more likely to live in unaffordable housing. Consequently, they were the most affected by the recent run-up in housing costs.³⁶ However, between 2000 and 2008, costs also increased sharply for Latino homeowners, due to the rise in homeownership and

mortgage lending among lower-income families.³⁷ During the pre-recession rise in housing prices, Latinos in many large metropolitan areas were more than twice as likely as Whites to have high-cost mortgages.³⁸

Since the recession, home prices have eased somewhat in many parts of the country, but tighter credit standards have squeezed many racial and ethnic minorities out of the housing market and into renting. As of 2012, only 12% of home loans were made to Latino or Black households, down from 23% in 2005.³⁹

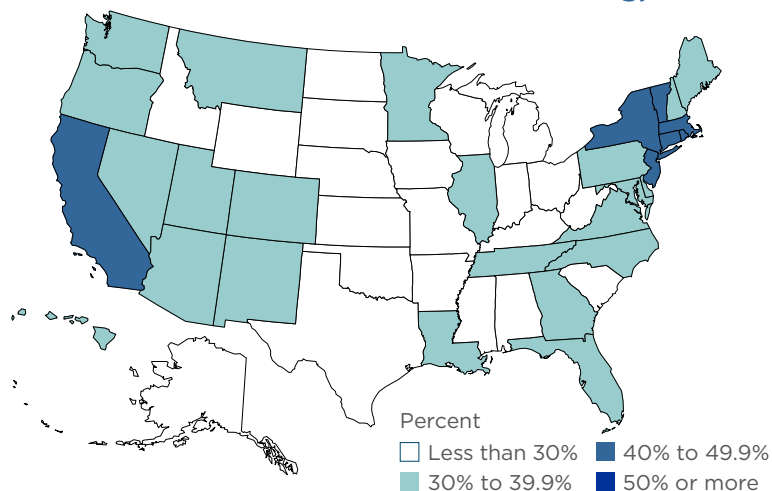
A lack of affordable housing has also contributed to Latino families living in crowded conditions. In 2014, crowding (defined as having more than one person per room) occurred in 13% of Latino-headed households, while only 3% of households nationwide were identified as being crowded.⁴⁰

Between 2000 and 2008, there were widespread increases in unaffordable housing among Latino families across the country (see Map 8). In 2000, there were no states where the majority of Latino children lived in unaffordable housing. By 2008, there were 18 such states. In 2014, there were 11 states—including California and New York—where the majority of Latino youth lived in unaffordable housing. In Florida, where there was a dramatic swing in home prices during the past decade, the share of Latino children in unaffordable housing increased from 39% in 2000 to 59% in 2008, before falling to 49% in 2014. In addition to New York, there were several other states in the Northeast where more than half of Latino youth lived in unaffordable housing in 2014. These states included Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Map 8

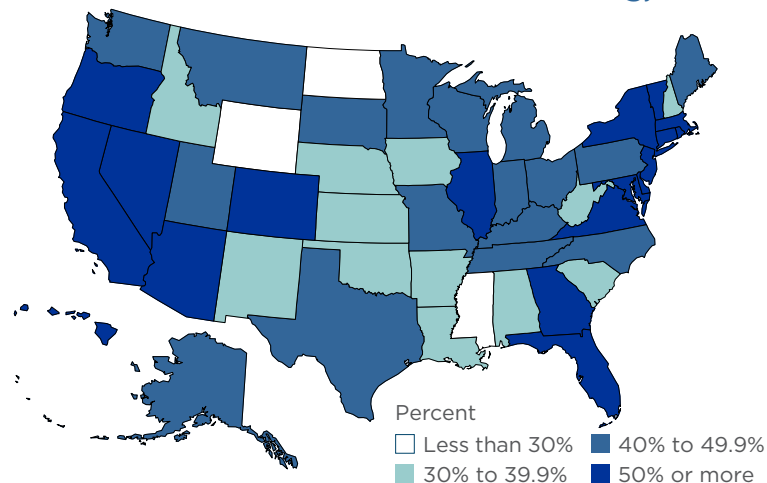
Latino Children in Unaffordable Housing, 2000, 2008, and 2014

A. Latino Children in Unaffordable Housing, 2000



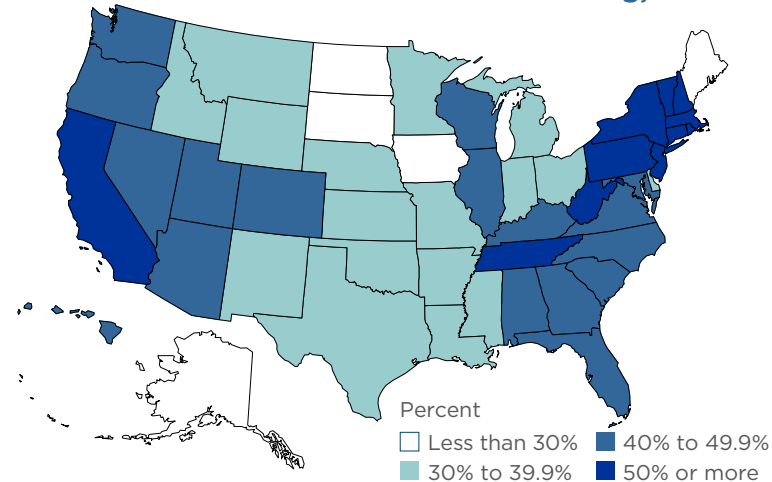
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census 5-Percent PUMS.

B. Latino Children in Unaffordable Housing, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey PUMS.

C. Latino Children in Unaffordable Housing, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

Education is perhaps the most significant factor shaping children's health and development. Among immigrant and minority populations, education is key to the successful integration of communities. The rapid growth of the Latino child population in recent decades is changing the racial and ethnic composition of schools in the United States. By 2023, Hispanic students are projected to make up 30% of early childhood through grade 12 enrollments.⁴¹ However, despite some significant gains in educational outcomes for Latino students in the past 15 years, a number of important disparities between Latino and other students persist.

There continue to be gaps between Latinos and Whites in areas such as math, reading scores, and high school completion

rates. While Latino children account for a significant share of enrollment in Head Start programs, they are underrepresented in other preschool programs.⁴² Maternal educational attainment, which is especially important for language acquisition and school readiness among young children, has risen sharply over the years among Latinas.⁴³ However, continuing disparities in maternal education levels between White women and Latinas contribute to the persistent gap between Latino and White children in vocabulary and problem-solving skills.⁴⁴ Early childhood disparities in education carry over into adolescence, resulting in lower test scores and higher dropout rates. These disparities put Latino youth at a disadvantage in terms of future employment opportunities and potential earnings compared to their White peers.

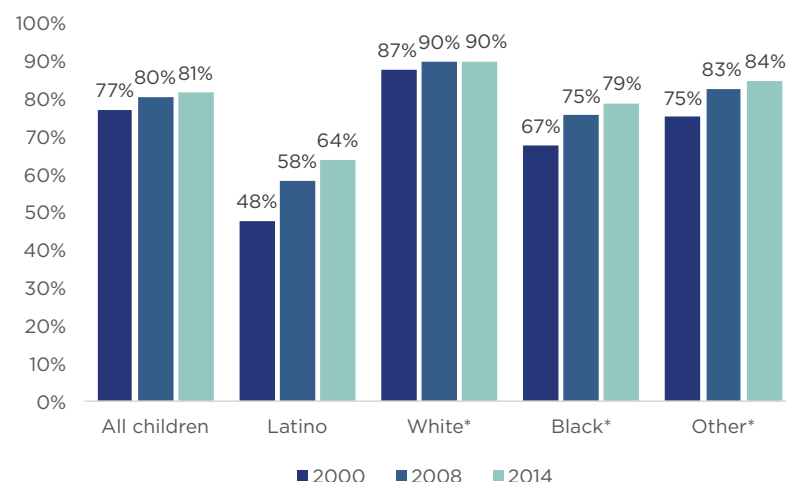
Maternal Education Up Sharply Among Latino Youth

In 2014, about two-thirds (64%) of Latino children under age 18 lived with mothers who graduated from high school, compared to 79% of Black children and 90% of White children. However, maternal education levels have increased sharply among Latinas since the turn of the millennium, which has reduced the size of this racial and ethnic education gap. Between 2000 and 2014, the share of Latino children whose mothers completed high school improved by 16 percentage points (see Figure 9), compared to an 11-point increase among Black mothers and a two-point gain among White mothers.*

Part of this increase may reflect the rising share of second- and third- and higher-generation Latinos, who have higher levels of education, on average, than their foreign-born peers.

Figure 9

Children Living with Mothers Who Completed High School, by Race/Ethnicity, 2000, 2008, and 2014



*Non-Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 and 2014 American Community Survey.

However, education levels have also increased among new Latino immigrants, compared to those who arrived in previous decades.⁴⁵

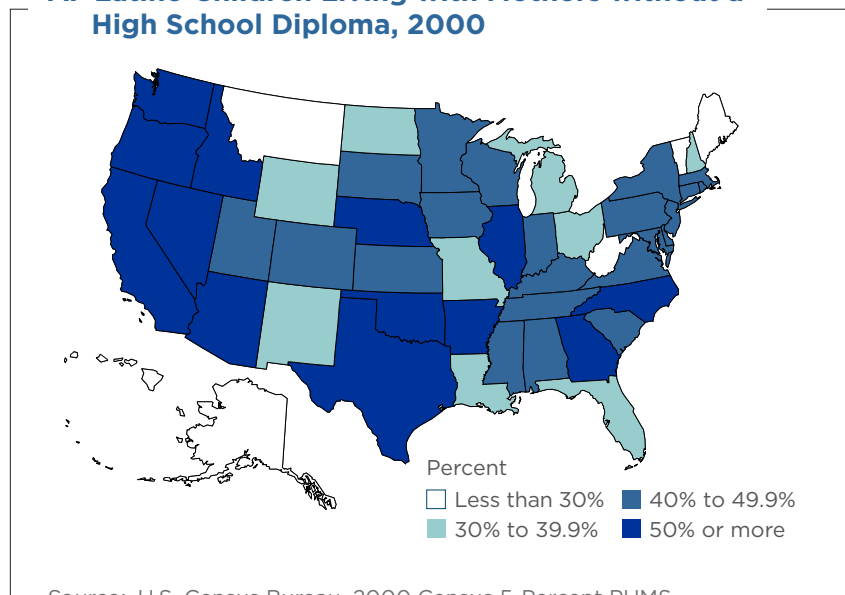
Between 2000 and 2014, maternal education levels increased in all 50 states (see Map 9). States with the biggest improvements included California, where there was a 20 percentage-point decline in the share of Latino youth whose mothers did not graduate from high school. States with the smallest declines—less than three points each—were all located in the South: Alabama, Louisiana, Missouri, and West Virginia.

* Calculations are based on unrounded estimates.

Map 9

Maternal Education Levels of Latino Youth, 2000 and 2014

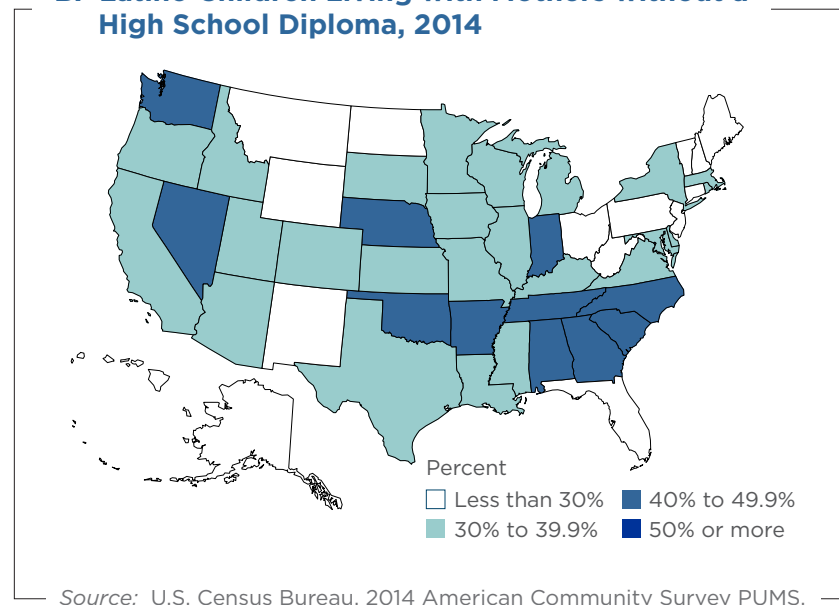
A. Latino Children Living with Mothers without a High School Diploma, 2000



States in the South also had the lowest levels of maternal education in 2014 (see Map 9). Many Latino parents in these states arrived in the United States with limited education and now face several obstacles to furthering their schooling, including high levels of residential mobility, limited understanding about school systems in the United States or continuing education programs, and limited access to educational resources.⁴⁶ Family responsibilities and high levels of labor force participation among Latino immigrants also limit the time available to take adult education classes.

In 2014, states in the Northeast and the Northern Great Plains, which had higher proportions of U.S.-born Latinos, had among the highest levels of maternal education. In Florida, which has a

B. Latino Children Living with Mothers without a High School Diploma, 2014



large, well-educated Cuban American population, only 22% of Latino children lived with mothers who did not graduate from high school.

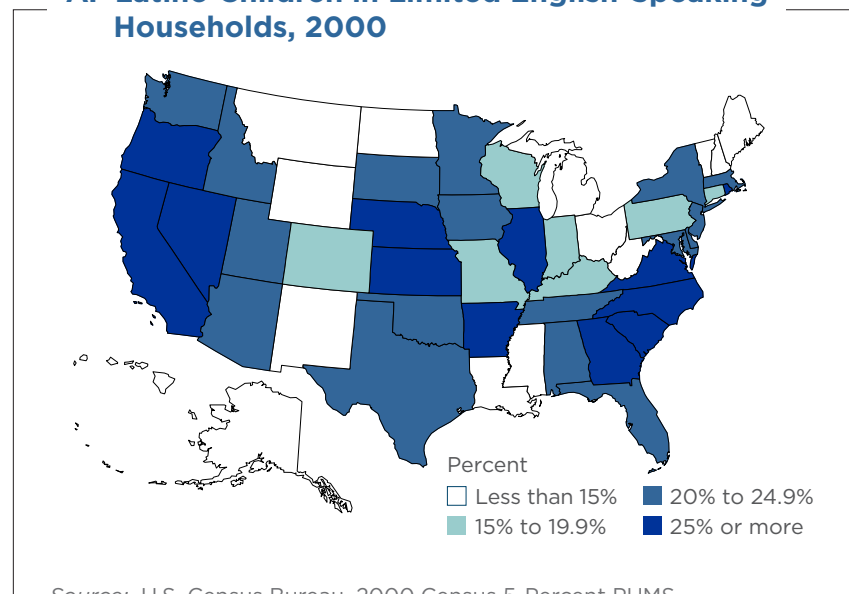
Fewer Children in Limited English-Speaking Households

Children's success in school is also closely tied to their parents' ability to speak English. Limited English proficiency can limit job opportunities, earnings, access to health care, and parents' ability to interact with the school system or help their children with homework.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, given that the majority of Hispanic children are U.S.-born, most Latino children grow up learning English as their primary language.

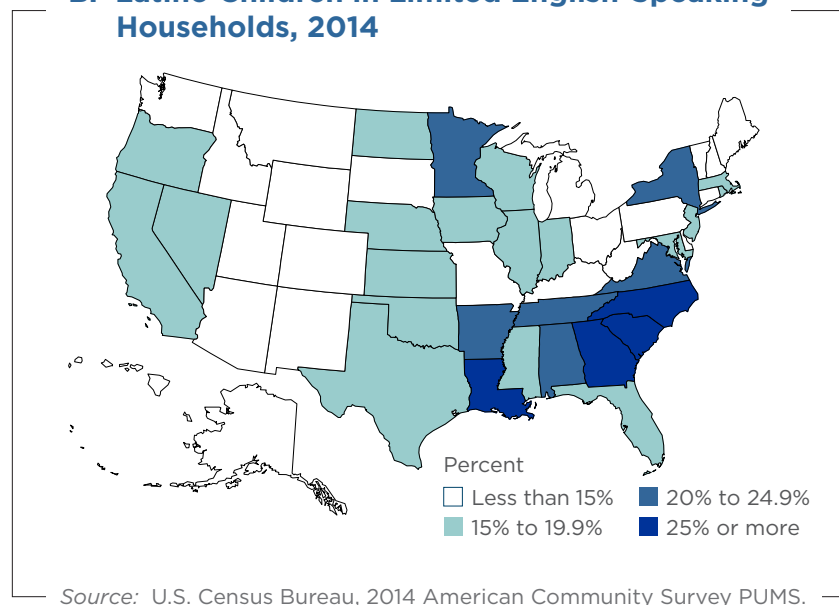
Map 10

Latino Children in Limited English-Speaking Households, 2000 and 2014

A. Latino Children in Limited English-Speaking Households, 2000



B. Latino Children in Limited English-Speaking Households, 2014



In 2014, 17% of Latino children under age 18 lived in “limited English-speaking” households where no one ages 14 and older spoke English very well. But just six years earlier in 2008, 23% of Latino youth lived in limited English-speaking households. This decline reflects the growing number of second- and third-or-higher-generation Latinos who have grown up speaking English.

In 2014, states in the Southeast—with the exception of Florida—had the highest proportions of children living in limited English-speaking households (see Map 10). In South Carolina, 31% of all Latino children lived in such households, more than any other state. California, Florida, New York, and Texas were all among

the 41 states with a decline in the share of Latino youth in limited English-speaking households between 2000 and 2014.

High School Completion Rates Increase Among Latino Youth

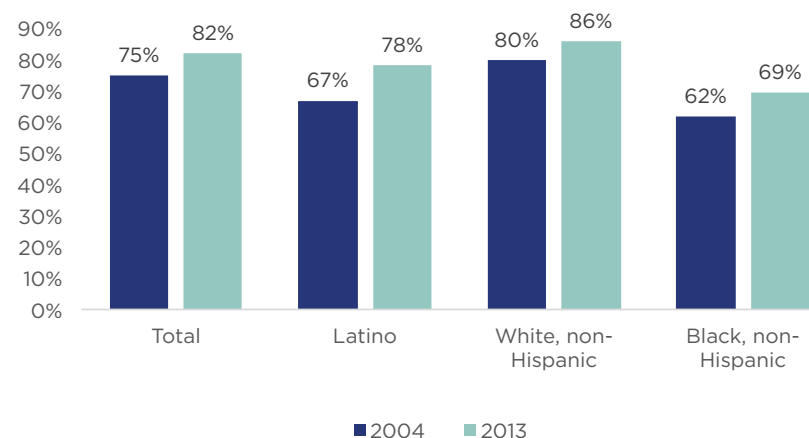
Dropping out of high school translates into lower lifetime earnings—more than \$300,000 less—compared to those who graduate from high school.⁴⁸ Dropouts are also more likely than high school graduates to end up in prison and have worse health outcomes as adults, even after controlling for income.⁴⁹

A major success during the past decade has been the narrowing gap in high school graduation rates between White and Latino youth (although, the latter are still less likely to complete high school on time).^{*} In 2004, about 67% of Latinos who entered ninth grade completed 12th grade on time with a regular diploma, compared to 80% of Whites—a 13 percentage-point difference. By 2013, the graduation gap had shrunk to seven percentage points, with 78% of Latino youth and 86% of Whites graduating from high school on time (see Figure 10).[†] During the same period, the on-time graduation rate for Black youth also increased, but at 69% in 2013, was still well below the rates for Latinos and Whites. The recent rise in high school graduation rates among Latinos has been associated with a parallel increase in the college enrollment rate, which has surged among Latinos in recent years.⁵⁰

Boys are less likely than girls to complete high school, especially among Latinos and Blacks. In 2013, there was a nine-point gap between the high school completion rate of Latino boys (74%) and Latina girls (83%). Nationwide, the gap between boys and girls was six percentage points.⁵¹

Figure 10

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate in Reporting States,^{*} by Race/Ethnicity, 2004 and 2013



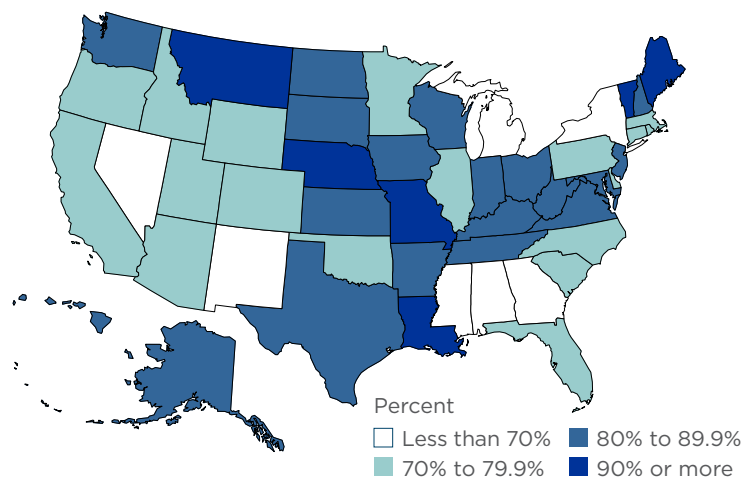
^{*} Data are not available for all states; data may not be comparable due to missing data across years.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

^{*} Estimates of high school graduation among Latino youth can vary widely depending on the method and source of data used to make the calculations. In this report, we use an averaged freshman graduation rate that provides an estimate of the proportion of students entering the ninth grade who complete high school on time with a regular diploma.

[†] Calculations are based on unrounded estimates.

Map 11

Latino Freshmen Who Graduated from High School On Time With a Regular Diploma, 2013



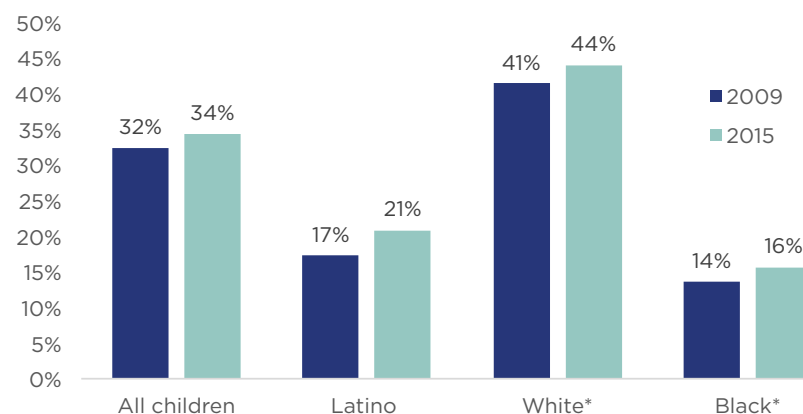
Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

In 2013, high school completion rates among Latino youth were highest—at 84% or more—in parts of the Mid-Atlantic region, and in several states with relatively small Latino populations (see Map 11). Among states with large Latino populations, Texas had the highest Latino graduation rate (82%). There were also seven states with sizable Latino populations that had graduation rates below 70%, including Alabama, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, and New York. In 2013, only 66% of Latino freshmen in New York graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma.

Low high school completion rates have been linked to concentrated poverty, as well as racial and ethnic segregation in school districts. Nearly 90% of highly segregated schools are in areas of concentrated poverty with high

Figure 11

Eighth-Grade Students Who Are Proficient to Advanced in Reading, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009 and 2015



*Non-Hispanic

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.

levels of student turnover, less qualified teachers, and high concentrations of students with health, emotional, and behavioral problems.⁵²

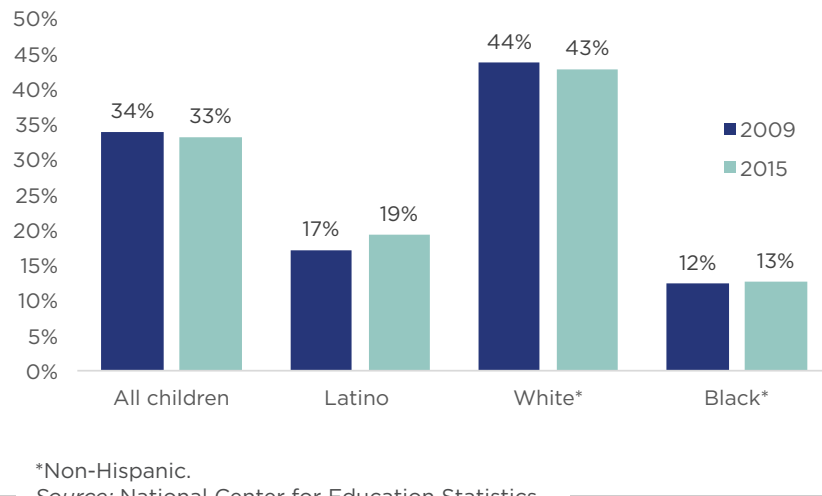
Reading and Math Achievement Increases Among Latino Youth, but Gaps Remain

Students' achievement in school is an important measure of their cognitive development, and their ability to communicate and learn.⁵³ One way to track students' progress is through their performance on standardized tests, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

In 2015, about 21% of Latino eighth graders were proficient or advanced in reading, up from 17% in 2009 (see Figure 11). The

Figure 12

Eighth-Grade Students Who Are Proficient to Advanced in Math, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009 and 2015



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.

2015 reading proficiency rate among Latino eighth graders was higher than the rate for Black eighth graders (16%), but less than half the rate for Whites (44%). Nationwide, about 34% of eighth graders were proficient or advanced in reading in 2015, up from 32% in 2009.

Among states with large Hispanic populations, Florida had the highest share of Latino eighth graders who were proficient or advanced in reading (26%), while the corresponding share in California was much lower (18%).

The percentage of Latino eighth graders who are proficient or advanced in math also increased between 2009 and 2015, from

17% to 19% (see Figure 12). But in 2015, White eighth graders were more than twice as likely as their Latino counterparts to be proficient or advanced in math (43%). Among states with the largest Hispanic populations, Texas had the highest share of Latino students who were proficient or advanced in math (23%), while California had the lowest share (13%).

One of the key challenges for educators is the large and growing number of Hispanic English learners (ELs), who consistently score lower on standardized tests compared to other demographic groups.⁵⁴ In 2014, there were about 4.5 million ELs in U.S. schools, and 3.8 million (76.5%) were Spanish-speaking.⁵⁵

One way to improve test scores among Latino students is to promote school readiness through high-quality early childhood education programs—such as Head Start—which contribute greatly to children’s cognitive, physical, and neurological development. In 2014, a disproportionate share of young children enrolled in Early Head Start (35%) were Latino.⁵⁶ However, Latino children are less likely than children in other racial and ethnic groups to be enrolled in center-based child care.⁵⁷ Overall, about 54% of Latino three- to five-year-olds were enrolled in preschool in 2014, compared to 60% of Whites and 63% of Blacks.

HEALTH

As with education, there have been encouraging trends around health outcomes for Latino children in recent years. However, significant disparities persist, starting in early childhood and continuing through the teen years. Health outcomes intersect with important social and community determinants of health such as poverty, parents’ education, lack of safe spaces for physical activity, access to transportation, and high-quality health care.

Broadly speaking, Latinos have surprisingly better health than non-Hispanic White and Black groups, despite exposure to more risk factors such as poverty and lower levels of education. The Latino child poverty rate is nearly as high as that of Black children, yet Latinos have substantially lower infant mortality rates and fewer low-birthweight babies compared to Blacks.⁵⁸ In the adult population, researchers have also observed lower-than-expected rates of mortality and chronic illness among Latinos compared to other racial and ethnic groups. This phenomenon—often referred to as the “Hispanic paradox,” has been linked to the health behaviors and diet of the Latino population, the selectivity of healthy migrants to the United States, and protective social factors in Hispanic communities that improve health behaviors, monitoring, and outcomes.⁵⁹

However, this pattern is not uniform. Health outcomes may vary across a number of factors, such as generational status. Hispanic adults, for example, are more likely than White adults to suffer from health conditions like diabetes, obesity, and cervical cancer.⁶⁰ Latino children are also lagging behind their peers on several important indicators of health, including childhood obesity, certain mental health issues such as depression, and access to regular, high-quality health care. A number of health problems, such as childhood obesity, are more prevalent among second- and especially third- and higher-generation Latinos. This trend is linked to acculturation and generational poverty—characterized by two or more generations being born into poverty—and may be caused by prolonged exposure to unhealthy environments and a loss of protective factors. Policymakers must address these issues to ensure the health and productivity of Latino youth as they reach adulthood.

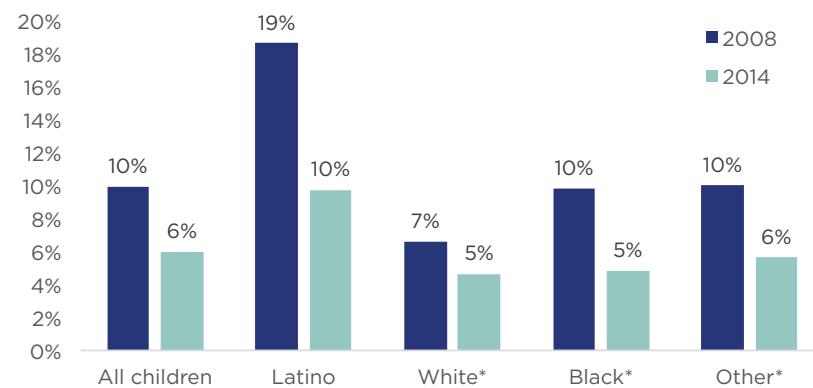
One of the most positive trends for Latino child health has been the sharp increase in health insurance coverage resulting from implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, along with the continued gains made under Medicaid and the

Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Collectively, these efforts have reduced health disparities among Latino youth. However, further steps are needed to ensure that more children enroll in coverage, are able to access high-quality health services, and are encouraged to maintain healthy lifestyles.

Share of Latino Children Without Health Insurance Down Sharply Since 2008

Implementation of the ACA, coupled with gains through Medicaid and CHIP, have led to historic gains in Latino children’s health insurance coverage. In previous years, lack of access to health care was one of the most serious problems facing Latino children and families in the United States, leading to gaps in access to needed health care and prescription medicine.⁶¹ Between 2008 and 2014, the percentage of Latino children without health insurance fell sharply, from 19% to 10% (see Figure 13). This decline in the share of uninsured Latino children

Figure 13
Children without Health Insurance, by Race/Ethnicity, 2008 and 2014



*Non-Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2008 and 2014 American Community Survey.

was a direct result of the expanded opportunities for health coverage available to lower-income families under the ACA.

Despite these gains, Latino youth still lag behind other racial and ethnic groups in health coverage. As of 2014, the uninsurance rate among Latino youth, at 10%, was twice the rate for Black and White youth (5% each). This gap is partly explained by the fact that, in 2013, about two-thirds of uninsured Hispanic children who were eligible for Medicaid and CHIP remained unenrolled. Barriers to enrollment include language access challenges, worries about immigration-related consequences for their family members, and the complexity of eligibility rules.⁶²

Among Latino children who had health insurance, more than half were covered through public health insurance programs such as Medicaid or CHIP. In 2014, only 42% of insured Latino children were covered through their parents' jobs, compared to 76% of insured White children.⁶³ Most Latino children have parents who are working full-time, year-round. Nonetheless, a high proportion of Latino workers are in jobs that do not provide health insurance and other benefits.⁶⁴

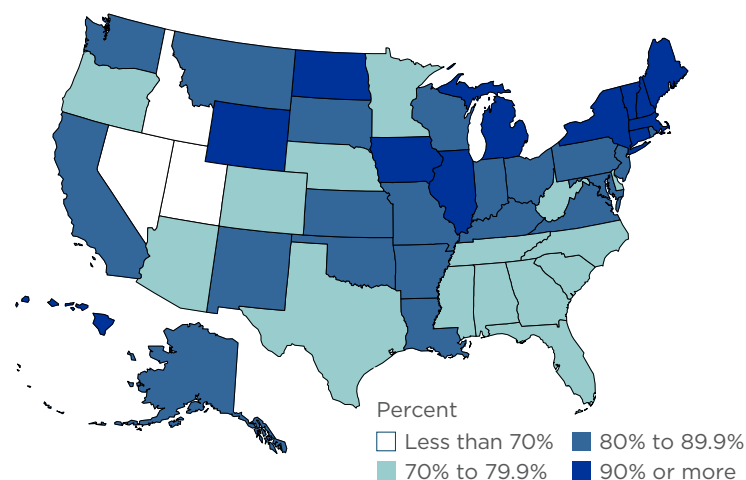
Between 2008 and 2014, Latino children's health coverage increased in 45 of the 50 states (see Map 12). States in the South experienced some of the biggest gains in Latino children's health insurance rates. For example, during this period, the share of uninsured Latino children in Florida declined by 14 points—from 26% to 12%.

Hispanic children were much more likely to have health coverage in states that have taken steps to expand coverage for children and parents.⁶⁵ In Massachusetts, which was among the first states to enact universal health care legislation, only 2% of Latino children did not have health insurance in 2014. States with the lowest rates of health coverage among Latino youth included North Dakota (25%) and Utah (22%). Among states

Map 12

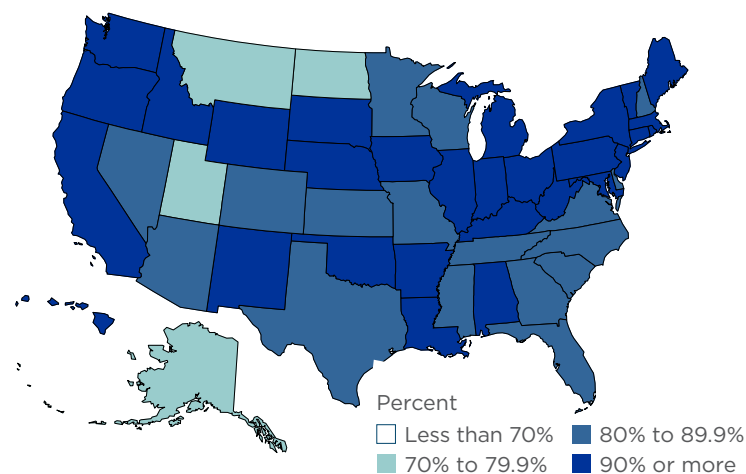
Health Coverage of Latino Youth, 2008 and 2014

A. Health Coverage of Latino Youth, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey PUMS.

B. Health Coverage of Latino Youth, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey PUMS.

with large Hispanic populations, Texas had the highest share of Latino youth without coverage (16%), compared to 12% in Florida, 7% in California, and just 4% in New York.

Patterns of health coverage mirrored those of several other indicators, with relatively high coverage rates in states with many third- and higher-generation Latino children, and low coverage rates in states with mostly first- and second-generation Latino youth.

More than Three-Fifths of Latino Youth Still Lack a Medical Home

While increased health coverage should eventually translate to access to care, a majority of Latino children still lack access to regular, high-quality health care. The concept of “medical home” combines several characteristics of health care in order to define a standard for high-quality medical care. In the National Survey of Children’s Health, children are classified as having medical homes if their care meets a list of criteria defining quality services.* Children who have a regular doctor and “medical home” are more likely to receive preventive, family-centered, efficient care and less likely to be hospitalized or visit the emergency room.⁶⁶

In 2011–2012, more than three-fifths of Latino children (63%) did not have a medical home—about the same share as

in 2007 (62%). Hispanic youth were less likely to have a medical home compared to their Black (55%) and White (34%) counterparts. Among states with the largest Hispanic populations, the share of Latino children without a medical home was highest in California (66%) and lowest in Florida (58%).

For many Latino families, the major barrier to accessing a medical home is their lack of health coverage. These numbers show that increasing insurance is a first step to improving health outcomes for Latino children, but reducing barriers to enrollment, and increasing the availability to culturally and linguistically competent health care should lead to a greater portion of Latino youth who receive quality, regular, preventive health care.

Two-Fifths of Latino Youth Are Overweight or Obese

High rates of Latino youth are overweight or obese, putting them at a higher risk of developing type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, hypertension, and other health problems.⁶⁷ Over the past 30 years, the share of American obese children ages six to 11 has doubled, while the rate among adolescents has quadrupled.⁶⁸ While rates have stabilized somewhat in recent years, progress has been uneven. For Latino children, there are still major disparities in obesity outcomes.

* These criteria are the following: The child has a personal doctor or nurse who knows him or her well and a usual source of sick care; the child can get referrals for specialty care and access to therapies or equipment; the family is very satisfied with the communication among their child’s doctors; the family gets help coordinating care when needed; the child’s doctors spend enough time with the family, listen to their concerns, respect their values and customs, provide any information they need, and make the family feel like a partner in their child’s care; and an interpreter is available when needed.

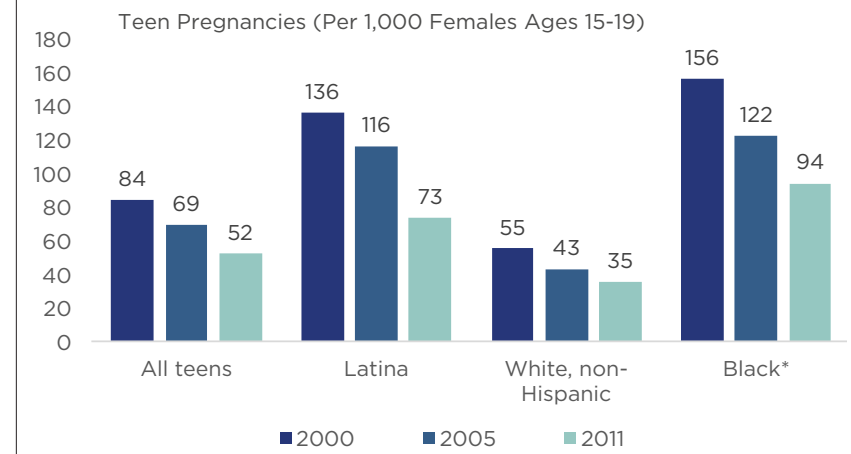
According to 2011–2012 data from the National Survey of Children's Health, the share of Latino youth ages 10–17 who are overweight or obese, at 40%, is slightly lower than the rate for Black children (42%), but much higher than the rate for White children (26%).⁶⁹ The 2011–2012 rate for Latino youth was down slightly from the 41% who were overweight or obese in 2007, but higher than the rate in 2003 (38%).* Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which uses trained health technicians to measure children's height and weight, suggest that while the obesity rate among Latino boys has leveled off in recent years, the rate for Latina girls has continued to increase.⁷⁰

More than half of Latino youth were overweight or obese in several states in the Great Plains, Midwest, and Southwest, including Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, and North Dakota. Relatively low rates of Latinos were overweight or obese in parts of the Southeast—especially Alabama and North Carolina—perhaps reflecting the large number of first- and second-generation Latino families in those states. Among immigrant groups, the prevalence of obesity has been found to increase with the amount of time spent in the United States.⁷¹ By the same token, childhood obesity increases among second- and third-or-higher-generation Latinos, partly because of Latino families' prolonged exposure to unhealthy environments, particularly in high-poverty communities.⁷²

Latina Teen Pregnancy Rates Declining

Between 2000 and 2011, there was a remarkable decline in the teen pregnancy rate across every racial and ethnic group (see Figure 14). Among Latinas, the rate fell from 136 pregnancies per 1,000 teens in 2000 to 73 in 2011. The decline

Figure 14
Teen Pregnancy Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2000, 2005, and 2011



*Data for 2011 are for non-Hispanic Blacks.
Source: Guttmacher Institute.

* Data are based on a measure of body mass index using parental reports of children's height and weight. Children ages 10–17 are classified as being overweight or obese if their body mass index falls above the 85th percentile.

in the Latina teen pregnancy rate has been associated with a corresponding decline in the Latina teen birth rate, from 87 births per 1,000 Latina teens in 2000 to 38 in 2014.⁷³ The drop in the teen pregnancy and birth rates may reflect higher rates of contraceptive use as well as higher proportions of teens who are delaying sex.⁷⁴

In 2011, the Latina teen pregnancy rate was more than twice the rate for Whites (35 pregnancies per 1,000 teens) but lower than the rate for Blacks (94 pregnancies per 1,000 teens). The gap between Latinas and Whites has narrowed in recent years because the pregnancy rate has declined faster among Latinas than it has for Whites.

Teen pregnancies and births can have long-term negative consequences for both teen mothers and their children. Adolescent mothers have higher rates of poverty, unemployment, high-risk pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and dropping out of school, compared to women who start having children at later ages.⁷⁵ Most teen pregnancies are unintended, and children of teen mothers are more likely to have lower test scores in school, have chronic health and behavior problems, be incarcerated as young adults, and become teen parents themselves.⁷⁶

Percentage of Latino Babies Who Are Low Birthweight Has Increased Since 2000

Low birthweight—defined as a birth weight of less than 2,500 grams, or about five pounds, eight ounces—is linked to developmental problems in children and can lead to long-term health and behavioral issues. Many low-birthweight babies

are also preterm births—infants born at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy. Both low-birthweight and preterm births are leading causes of infant deaths in the United States.

Between 2000 and 2014, the low birthweight rate increased among Latino infants, from 6.4 (per 1,000 live births) to 7.1. Among Whites, the rate also increased during this period, from 6.6 to 7. The rate for Blacks held fairly steady, but at 13.2, remains much higher than the rate among Latinos and Whites. That Latinas give birth to fewer low-birthweight babies than Black or White women, despite their socioeconomic disadvantages, has been described as part of the Hispanic paradox.⁷⁷ While the Latino low-birthweight rate is relatively low, there are important differences between subgroups. For example, Puerto Rican Latinas (9.4%) have more low-birthweight babies than other groups such as Mexican women (6.6%).⁷⁸

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Fewer Latino Youth in Residential Placement

Incarceration disrupts key life transitions and reduces an individual's long-term earning capacity.⁷⁹ Over their lifetimes, incarcerated youth will perform worse in school, earn lower wages, experience more health problems, and are more likely to be imprisoned as adults.⁸⁰ In 2013, there were more than 12,000 Latino youth in residential placement facilities in the United States, mostly for nonviolent offenses. However, there is a large gap between the reality and public perception of Latino youth in the juvenile justice system. While this gap may reflect media coverage of juvenile crime, which has focused

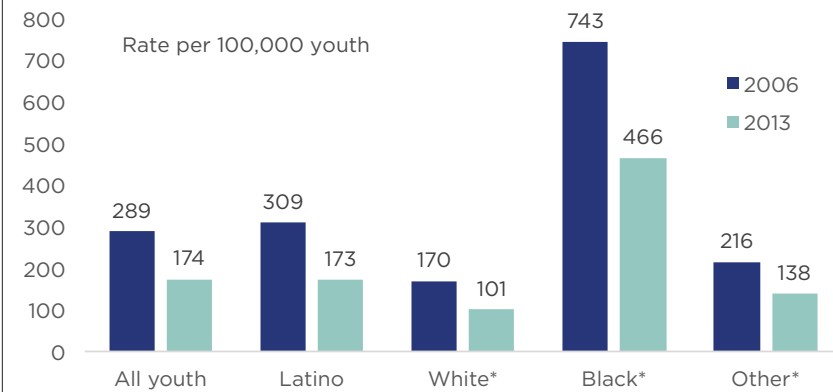
heavily on violent offenses and gang-related offences, another major problem is the lack of comprehensive juvenile justice statistics for the Latino youth population.*

While the youth incarceration rate for all racial and ethnic groups has declined sharply over the past few years, it has declined more slowly for youth of color. The Latino youth incarceration rate nonetheless dropped substantially, from 309 per 100,000 youth in 2006 to 173 per 100,000 youth in 2013 (see Figure 15). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention attributes these declines to a combination of factors: a recent decline in the juvenile arrest rate; reforms that have led to the placement of many juveniles in smaller, private facilities; and a growing interest in finding alternative, lower-cost options for dealing with juvenile offenders, including probation, treatment programs, and other community-based solutions.⁸¹

In 2013, incarceration rates were highest among Blacks (466 per 100,000 youth) and lowest among Whites (101 per 100,000 youth). The rate for Latino youth fell between those of Blacks and Whites, at 173. Although the rate of incarceration is by far the highest among Black youth, the actual numbers of Latino youth behind bars in states such as California, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico—which have relatively large Hispanic youth populations—is significantly higher. Among all youth

Figure 15

Youth in Residential Placement Facilities, 2006 and 2013



*Non-Hispanic. Rates are per 100,000 youth ages 10 to upper age of each state's juvenile court jurisdiction.

Source: National Center for Juvenile Justice and U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program.

in residential placement facilities in 2013, about 38% were in detention centers, 31% were in long-term secure facilities, 16% were in residential treatment centers, 8% were in group homes, and the remaining 7% were in reception and diagnostic centers,

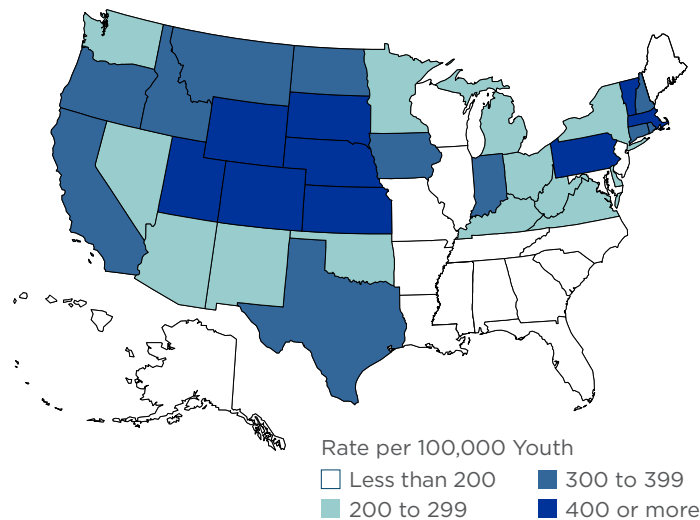
* Unlike the other indicators presented in this report, the juvenile justice data are unique because there are 51 separate juvenile justice systems in the United States, each with its own laws and procedures for handling youth victimization and arrests. The most comprehensive source for arrest data is the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. However, the FBI's database does not break down data for Latino youth in their annual crime reports. The National Crime Victimization Survey has been a useful source of data on crime victimization for special populations, including Latinos and teenagers. However, the sample size is not large enough to report state-level estimates. Latino youth in the juvenile justice system are too often undercounted or their circumstances are misreported, a problem that makes them invisible to policymakers and the public. The numbers that we do have are alarming—better data are urgently needed so that policymakers can craft appropriate policy responses.

In this report, we present data from the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, a one-day count of juvenile offenders held in residential placement facilities throughout the United States. The census is intended to enumerate juveniles under age 21 who have been charged with an offense or court-adjudicated for an offense and who have been assigned a bed in a residential facility because of that offense.

Map 13

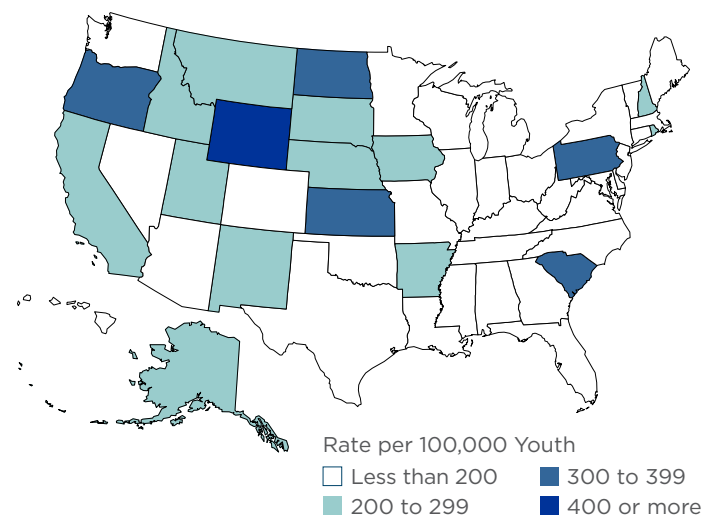
Latino Youth In Residential Placement Facilities, 2006 and 2013

A. Latino Youth In Residential Placement Facilities, 2006



Source: National Center for Juvenile Justice

B. Latino Youth In Residential Placement Facilities, 2013



Source: National Center for Juvenile Justice

boot camps, shelters, ranch and wilderness camps, or other facilities.⁸² However, these numbers underestimate the actual number of incarcerated youth. Indeed, a recent report found that one in four incarcerated Latino youth was held in an adult prison, which is less likely to offer age-appropriate educational, health, and counseling services.⁸³

In 2013, California had the largest number of Latino youth in residential placement facilities (4.7 million), but incarceration rates were highest in parts of the Midwest and Mountain West regions (see Map 13). High rates of detention in these regions reflect their relatively small Latino youth populations, relative to those in residential placement. For example, Wyoming, which had the highest incarceration rate in the country, recorded only 33 Latino youth in residential placement facilities in 2013. Incarceration rates were lowest in states in the southeastern United States.

CONCLUSION

This report has covered several broad trends in the demography and well-being of Latino children and youth since the year 2000. By analyzing a range of data points that describe the state of children from early childhood to adolescence, across geographic areas, and through comparisons across different racial and ethnic groups, we paint a comprehensive picture of the state of Latino children across the country relative to their non-Latino peers. More specifically, we point to both positive trends and continuing challenges in reducing inequities for young Latinos, charting out a clear picture of what progress has been made, and how far we still have to go. Given the fact that in just two decades, one out of three American children will be Hispanic, it is in our nation's best interest to pay attention to these trends, and ensure that Latino youth, and all of America's youth, are able to thrive.

The year 2008 has been a useful baseline for parts of our analysis; that year marked the midpoint of the recession and housing bust, a period that had a disproportionate impact on the economic well-being of Latinos, many of whom lost jobs, homes, and income. As the report shows, Hispanic families and children still have a long way to go to recover from the economic downturn, which contributed to a record number of Latino youth living in poor and low-income families. Today, the Latino child poverty rate is still double the poverty rate for White children. But the years following 2008 have also been marked by new legislation, policies, and programs that have contributed to significant progress in other areas of well-being. Increased high school graduation rates, higher rates of health insurance, lower rates of youth incarceration, and even the small but sustained improvements in economic and housing outcomes—these are all encouraging trends that reflect the

impact of targeted policies designed to help Latino and other American children grow up healthy, safe, and well-prepared for the future.

But the report also shows that promising trends in some areas do not reveal the full picture, as significant disparities continue to exist for Latino and other minority children and youth in other areas. For example, while the expansion of health coverage opportunities for lower-income families under the ACA undoubtedly benefited Latino children—nearly cutting in half the proportion of young Latinos without health insurance—enrollment barriers to Medicaid and CHIP have kept a significant share of Hispanic children from accessing this coverage. In addition, although health insurance is an important step toward enhancing health care for Latino youth, it has not yet translated to higher rates of access to regular health care, or to reducing health problems such as the 40% of Latino children who are overweight or obese.

Similarly, while the increase in high school graduation rates is a clear marker of progress for Latino students, we continue to see significant gaps in academic achievement for young Hispanic students, including in eighth-grade reading and math skills, persist through high school and possibly impact college readiness. Indeed, while the rise in high school graduation rates has also led to increased enrollment in postsecondary institutions—the Hispanic college enrollment rate currently surpasses that of White students (49% to 47%)⁸⁴—a new major challenge for Latino students and educators is the low college completion rate among Latino students, only 52% of whom finish a postsecondary degree within six years.⁸⁵ The reasons for this low completion rate are complex, and include issues relating not only to academic preparedness, but also financial and cultural struggles, particularly among youth from immigrant families who are first-generation college students.⁸⁶

Finally, this report also tells the story of a Latino demographic that is evolving and maturing at different rates throughout the country—an ongoing story of integration of Hispanic families and communities. At a national level, one indication of this evolution is the declining share of Latino children living in limited English-speaking households, from 23% in 2008 to 17% in 2014. However, the challenges faced by Latino children may vary greatly by state and region, in some cases reflecting both generational and geographic trends. States in the Southeast, for example, which have higher concentrations of first- and second-generation Latino children, also have higher proportions of Hispanic children living in poor or low-income families and in limited English-speaking households, though they have much lower rates of Latino child obesity. States in the Southwest such as Arizona and Nevada have more third- and higher-generation Latino children who often face different issues than their first- and second-generation peers. For example, childhood obesity increases among second- and third-generation Latino youth, due to an array of factors including generational poverty and exposure to unhealthy environments.

But geography and generation alone do not explain the difference in outcomes by states; a number of the trends outlined in the report also reflect both state- and national-level

policies and programs that are contributing to varying outcomes for Latino children across the country. For example, Hispanic children in states that have made a concerted effort to expand health coverage are much more likely to be covered by health insurance. The longer-term effects of some current policies and interventions, however, may take more time to have an impact and to appear as positive trends in the data. In order to ensure that positive trends in Latino child well-being continue, it is imperative that policymakers maintain support for interventions that are working, and find solutions that reduce remaining inequities. As we look toward the future, new challenges such as closing the gap in postsecondary graduation rates will become increasingly important not only for Latino students, but for the nation's overall social and economic well-being. Finally, while targeted policies and programs are needed, this report also underscores the fact that all of these outcomes—poverty, health, education, and juvenile justice—are often interrelated, and that support for children must also include support for Latino parents, families, and communities.

For easy access to the Latino Kids' Data Explorer, which provides data for 27 indicators of child well-being by race and ethnicity, by state, and across time, please go to dataexplorer.nclr.org.

ENDNOTES

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