



HIGHLIGHTS

- 27% of Latino children live in poverty.
- Latino child poverty rates vary by national origin.
- Immigrant Latino families have higher poverty rates than Latino families headed by US-born parents.
- Latino poverty is linked to low educational attainment.
- Latino children of single mothers are more than twice as likely to be poor as those in two-parent families.
- 85% of Latino children from two-parent families and 37% of Latino children in single-parent families have a securely employed parent.

Background

Poor children are at greater risk than non-poor children for a host of negative outcomes. They are more likely to perform poorly in school, to become teen parents, and to be unemployed as adults.^{1,2} In addition to facing a greater risk of living in poverty, Latino children often confront additional challenges such as language and cultural barriers, and the stresses of adjusting to US society for immigrant families.

Latino Youth in Poverty

In 2000, one-quarter (27%) of Latino children under age 18 lived in poverty, compared to three in ten (30%) African American children and 9% of non-Latino white children. These figures represent substantial declines in child poverty rates during the 1990s. In 1990, 38% of Latino children were poor as were 44% of African Americans and 12% of non-Latino whites. The proportions of children living in deep and near poverty also declined for all groups during the 1990s (See Figure 1). Nevertheless, poverty rates of Latino and African American youth continue to be much higher than those of non-Latino whites.³

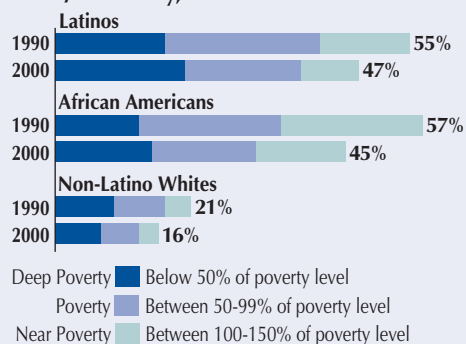
Among Latinos, poverty rates vary by national origin. They range from a low of 16% for Cuban children to a high of 44% for Puerto Rican children (See Figure 2).⁴ Latino families headed by immigrants have higher poverty rates than the overall Latino population. In 1996, 28% of immigrant Latino families were poor. One-third of Mexican (34%) and Central American (32%) immigrant families lived below the poverty line.⁵ However, poverty rates are high for US-born Latinos as well. Third and subsequent generation children of Mexican-origin are about 2.5 times as likely to live in poverty than are non-Latino whites (28% vs. 11%).⁶

Relationship Between Education and Poverty

In 2000, 63% of 25-29 year old Latinos were high school graduates, compared to 87% of African Americans and 94% of non-Latino whites.⁷ One-tenth (10%) of young Latino adults (ages 25-29) had a college degree, compared to 18% of African Americans and 34% of non-Latino whites.⁷ Among full-time workers, people with a college education earn significantly more than those with just a high school diploma or those who did not finish high school.⁸ Lower rates of high school and college graduation in the Latino population translate to lower incomes for Latino families and higher proportions of Latino children living in poor families.

FIGURE 1

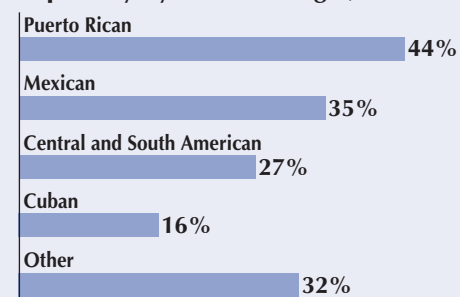
Poverty status of children by race/ethnicity, 1990 & 2000



SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

FIGURE 2

Proportion of Latino children living in poverty by national origin, 1995



SOURCE: Hernandez M. 1997. Population Resource Center. Executive Summary: A Profile of Hispanic Americans.

Relationship Between Family Structure and Poverty

Poverty status is also connected to family structure. Two-thirds (65%) of Latino children lived with two parents in 2001 as did 78% of non-Latino white children and 38% of African American children. One-quarter (24%) of Latino children lived in a mother-only household, as did one-half (48%) of African American and 15% of non-Latino white children.³ Children in two-parent families are much less likely to live in poverty than those who live with a single mother. Latino children of single mothers are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as those who live with two parents. Two in ten (21%) Latino children in two-parent families were poor in 2000, a substantially higher rate than for either African American or non-Latino children in two-parent families (See Figure 3). This suggests that two-parent Latino families struggle to move out of poverty. In 1990, about two-thirds of Latino and African American children in single-mother households were poor; that proportion declined to just under half for both groups by 2000. In contrast, 40% of non-Latino whites in single-mother households were poor in 1990, compared to one-quarter (28%) in 2000.³

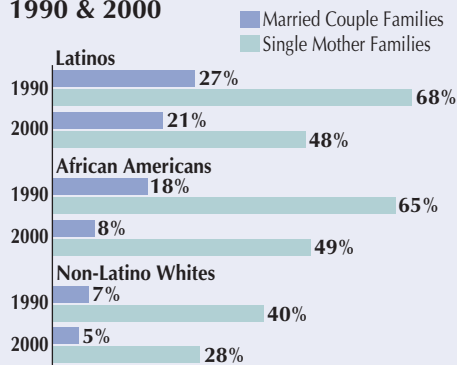
Relationship Between Employment and Poverty

Children who have a securely employed parent are less likely to live in poverty than other children. In 1990, three-quarters (74%) of Latino youth living with two parents had at least one parent who had full-time, year-round employment whereas one-quarter (24%) of Latino children who lived with single mothers had a mother with secure employment (See Figure 4). Both of these percentages rose during the 1990s to 85% of children from two-parent families and 37% of children in single-mother families.³

In comparison, about 85% of African American and non-Latino white children with two parents had a securely-employed parent in 1990; as did about nine in ten in 2000. About one-quarter (27%) of African American children living in single-mother families had a securely employed parent in 1990 as did 40% of non-Latino white in this family type. By 2000, more than half (53%) of the African American and non-Latino white children of single mothers had a parent who worked full-time and year-round, a proportion substantially higher than that of Latino children of single mothers.³

FIGURE 3

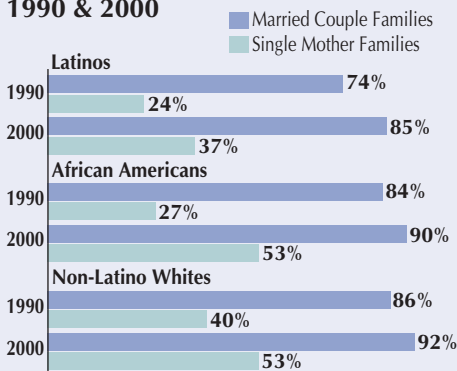
Poverty rates of children by race/ethnicity and family structure, 1990 & 2000



SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

FIGURE 4

Proportion of children with securely employed parents, by race/ethnicity, 1990 & 2000



SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2002. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

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- 4 Hernandez M. 1997. *Population Resource Center. Executive Summary: A Profile of Hispanic Americans*.
- 5 US Census. 1999. *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1997, Current Population Reports P23-195*.
- 6 US Department of Health and Human Services. 2001. *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth, 2000*.
- 7 US Census. 2000. Table A-2. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/tableA-2.txt>.
- 8 National Center for Education Statistics. 2001. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2000*. NCES-2001-034.

Fact Sheet on Latino Youth: Income & Poverty

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University of California,
San Francisco
3333 California Street, Suite 265
San Francisco, CA 94118
Phone: 415.476.9813
Fax: 415.476.0705
<http://reprohealth.ucsf.edu/>