



Fact Sheet

Hunger and Poverty among Latino Immigrant Children

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In 2000, Latinos became the largest ethnic minority in the United States. Today, 16.3 percent of the U.S. population is Latino—more than 50 million people. Moreover, more than half the U.S. population growth since 2000 has been among Latinos. The growing Latino presence is increasingly evident in schools, communities, and workplaces.

- Children who are U.S. citizens but have at least one parent who is an immigrant are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population.¹
- A higher percentage of children than of the total population are Latino: 22 percent.²

Hunger

Nearly one in four children in the United States lives in families that struggle to put food on the table, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Latino children are even more likely to be at risk of hunger.

- Nearly 35 percent of Latino children live in households that struggle to put food on the table.³
- In 2009, 30 percent of Latino families received help from Feeding America, the nation’s largest network of food banks.⁴

Table 1: Food Insecurity, 2009 data*

	General Population	Latinos
Households	14.7% 17.4 million	26.9% 3.6 million
All Individuals	16.6% 50.2 million	29.7% 13.7 million
Children Under 18	23.2% 17.2 million	34.9% 5.3 million

**The last full year of available data.
Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR108/ERR108.pdf>*

Poverty

Poverty rates increased for all U.S. racial and ethnic groups during the recession, but people of color experience more poverty.

- About one-third of all Latino children live in poverty.
- In 2009, more than one in four Latinos lived below the poverty line.⁵
- 56 percent of immigrant children live in families with low incomes.⁶
- Immigrant children live in families with median incomes 20 percent lower than those of children with U.S.-born parents.⁷

Table 2: Poverty, 2009 data

	General Population	Latinos
Individuals	14.3% 43.6 million	25.3% 12.4 million
Children under 18	20.7% 15.5 million	33.1% 5.6 million

Source: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/pov/new01_100.htm

Access to Nutrition Programs

There are many reasons some immigrant households don't participate in SNAP despite their eligibility, including:

- The belief that participating in SNAP could affect their immigration status. In fact, non-citizens cannot be deported, denied entry to the country, or denied permanent status because they apply for or receive SNAP benefits.
- Language or literacy issues. Non-citizens may not be able to read or write in their native language or have limited English proficiency.
- Limited information about the program. Many immigrants are unaware that SNAP is available to eligible non-citizens.
- 2011 data show that just 44 percent of eligible Latino children receive SNAP benefits.
- Current laws limit access to safety-net programs. Undocumented immigrants, as well as legal immigrants who have been in the United States less than five years, are ineligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps).⁸



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Table 3: SNAP state participation rates of eligible citizen children with at least one non-citizen parent, in states with the largest Latino populations

Rank	State	State Population	Latino Population	% of total state pop. 2009	SNAP Participation Rates (%), 2011	
					Immigrant children	All eligible people
	United States	307,007,000	48,419,000	16	44	66
1	California	36,962,000	13,681,000	37	42	48
2	Texas	24,782,000	9,148,000	37	47	55
3	Florida	18,538,000	3,992,000	22	38	57
4	New York	19,541,000	3,274,000	17	54	61
5	Arizona	6,596,000	2,032,000	31	49	61

Sources: Population: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2011/tables/11s0019.pdf>. SNAP participation: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1002.pdf

Endnotes

¹ Matthews Hannah, Ewen Danielle. August 2010. "Early Education Programs and Children of Immigrants: Learning Each Other's Language." <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412205-early-education.pdf>

² National Council of La Raza. 2010. "America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends Research Report." http://www.nclr.org/images/uploads/publications/AMERICAS_FUTURE_Latino_Child_Well-Being_in_Numbers_and_Trends.pdf

³ National Council of La Raza. 2010. "Profiles of Latino Health: A Closer Look at Latino Child Nutrition." http://www.nclr.org/images/uploads/pages/Jan12_Profiles_Issue_6.pdf

⁴ Feeding America. 2009. "When the Pantry is Bare: Emergency Food Assistance and Hispanic Children: Executive Summary." <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/the-studies/~media/Files/research/ExecutiveSummaryHispanicBriefs.aspx?pdf>

⁵ The poverty rate for Latinos as a group was 25.3 percent. Weller Christian, Fields Jarun, Agbede Folayemi. January 2011. "The State of Communities of Color in the U.S. Economy." http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/comm_of_color.pdf

⁶ The Urban Institute. 2004. "The health and well-being of young children of immigrants." http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311139_Childrenimmigrants.pdf

⁷ The Urban Institute. November 2010. "Children of Immigrants: Economic Well-being." <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412270-children-of-immigrants-economic.pdf>

⁸ The Urban Institute. "The health and well-being of young children of immigrants." Op cit.



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