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HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Hunger and Poverty in the Latino Community

What's the Problem?

There are 55 million Latinos¹ in the U.S. Some were born in the U.S., while others are originally from Mexico, Central America, or South America. Latinos are culturally and racially diverse and vary in their legal status as U.S. residents. As a group, however, Latinos are more likely to live in poverty and lack regular, reliable access to foods needed for good health than other people in the U.S. Latinos are also more likely to be paid sub-minimum wages and to endure sub-par working and living conditions to make ends meet.

The higher rates of poverty and hunger among Latinos are direct results of racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and discrimination on the basis of immigration status. Compared to the U.S. poverty rate of 13.5 percent, nearly 21 percent of Latinos, 30 percent of households headed by an undocumented person, and a startling 37.1 percent of female-headed Latino households are below the poverty line.

Latinos are more likely to lack access to healthy food.

- 27 percent of counties with a majority-Latino population fall into the 10 percent of counties with the highest childhood food-insecurity rates.
- Latino children are nearly twice as likely to lack access to sufficient nutritious food as non-Latino white children (27 percent vs. 15 percent).²

FOOD INSECURITY

	General Population	Latinos (all households)
All households	12.7%	19.1%
Households with children	16.6%	11.5%
Female-headed household with children	30.3%	N/A*
Undocumented-headed households	14%	N/A*
Migrant and seasonal workers	N/A	62.8% ³

*The percentages of food-insecure Latinos are believed to be higher than the corresponding food-insecurity levels in the general population.

Source: Food Security in the United States, 2015. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.

WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE LATINO COMMUNITY?

- Unemployment, low wages, and seasonal work
- Less access to quality and affordable education
- Limited pathways to citizenship, legal status, and work authorization
- Higher healthcare costs
- Higher levels of incarceration and deportation



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Since poverty rates are higher and incomes are much lower both in female-headed Latino households and in households headed by undocumented people, we expect that food-insecurity levels are also much higher among these households.

The median income of Latino households is nearly \$18,000 less than the median income of white households.

\$42,491
Latino households

\$60,256
white households

As a result, Latinos are almost **TWICE** as **LIKELY** to face food insecurity.

1 in 5

Latino households has at least one person going hungry at some point during the year, compared to 1 in 10 white households.⁴

MORE ON THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO HUNGER AND POVERTY:

Higher Unemployment, Lower Incomes, and Seasonal Work

Recently, lower unemployment rates have helped reduce hunger and poverty in the Latino community. Still, Latinos are more likely to be unemployed and more likely to hold low-wage and/or seasonal jobs with few or no benefits.

- Nearly 30 percent of Latinos live in working households with annual incomes of less than \$25,000.
- More than 1 million Latinos are seasonal and migrant farm workers, and 61 percent of U.S. farm workers have incomes below the poverty line. These households are more than four times as likely to face food-insecurity as other U.S. households.⁵

MEDIAN INCOME

	General Population	Latinos
Median income	\$56,516	\$45,148
Men	\$40,762	\$29,332*
Women	\$29,022	\$21,090*
Female-headed households	\$37,797	\$30,293*
Undocumented-headed households	\$36,000 ⁷	Believed to be less than \$36,000
Migrant farm or seasonal worker	Less than \$7,500	Less than \$7,500

*Calculated based on estimates from U.S. Census general population median income (above) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics Table 3. 2015 Median Weekly Earnings by Age, Race, and Sex. Weekly earnings by gender were multiplied by the average number of weeks men and women worked.

Source: Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2015. U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, September 2016.

Poorer Education

Many lower-resourced schools are located in Latino communities, and Latino children are more likely to sacrifice going to college to help support their families.

- Latinos have the highest high school dropout rate (14 percent) of all racial/ethnic groups.

- Of Latino high school graduates, 66 percent of those who immediately entered the workforce or military reported not enrolling in college so that they could support their families.⁸

Limited pathways to citizenship, legal status, and work authorization

The current barriers to obtaining citizenship, legal status, or work authorization often prevent families from getting jobs that pay a livable wage and benefits, securing health coverage, or sending children to well-resourced schools. Undocumented people often fear that they will be deported if they apply for nutrition or other support that they qualify for as taxpayers.

- 4.5 million children live in households with an undocumented parent; they are twice as likely to live with poverty or hunger.⁹

Poorer Health

Less income to purchase nutritious foods and essential health care, combined with a greater likelihood of working in unsafe environments, contribute to a higher rate of serious medical problems among Latinos, including cancer, obesity, and diabetes.

- One in three Latinos under 65 is uninsured and thus less likely to receive essential medical attention. Being uninsured also means that families may be forced to go into debt to pay for medical care, leaving fewer resources for food and other necessities.¹⁰

Mass Incarceration and Deportation

Soaring incarceration rates from over-policing and immigrant raids split families and deplete resources in the Latino community.

- The family of someone in prison owes an average of more than \$13,000 in court costs alone. The family of someone detained by immigration officials must pay up to \$10,000 in bonds to get the person released. These costs place a burden on already struggling families since they must borrow money and/or have less money for basic living expenses.¹¹

Endnotes

¹ We use the term *Latino* throughout this fact sheet, but some sources use *Hispanic* to refer to this data.

² "Latino Hunger Facts." Feeding America. www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/latino-hunger/latino-hunger-fact-sheet.html

³ "Prevalence and Predictors of Food-Insecurity in Migrant Farmworkers in Georgia." U.S. National Library of Medicine. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3076419/

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Migrant Farm Workers." Cornell University Cooperative. October 2015. <http://articles.extension.org/pages/9960/migrant-farm-workers-our-nations-invisible-population>

⁶ "Latinas and the Wage Gap." December 2015. National Partnership for Women and Families. www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/latinas-wage-gap.pdf

⁷ "Unauthorized Immigrants in the U.S." Pew Hispanic Center. April 2009. www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf

⁸ "5 Facts About Latinos and Education." Pew Research Center. May 2015. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/26/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/

⁹ "Unauthorized Immigrants in the U.S." Pew Hispanic Center. April 2009. www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf

¹⁰ "Health of Hispanic or Latino Population." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 2016. www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/hispanic-health.htm

¹¹ "Paying the Price: The Impact of Raids on America's Children." National Council of La Raza and the Urban Institute. 2007. www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/411566-Paying-the-Price-The-Impact-of-Immigration-Raids-on-America-s-Children.pdf