

Portrait of Inequality 2012

Hispanic Children in America

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEA IS SO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL



Children's Defense Fund

CDF Mission Statement

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations.

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November 2012

The economic crisis of the last five years has pushed Hispanic children and youth deeper and deeper into an abyss of poverty, hunger, homelessness and despair. Hispanic children and youth continue to face multiple risks from birth and throughout life that increase the danger of their becoming part of the Cradle to Prison Pipeline® crisis that leads to dead end lives.

Poverty

Poverty destroys childhood and can destroy children. In 2011, 16.1 million children – more than one in five – were poor.¹

- Hispanic children are nearly three times as likely to be poor (34.1 percent) as White children (12.5 percent).²
- Hispanic children are two-and-a-half times as likely as White children to live in extreme poverty.³ Extreme poverty is defined as half of the poverty level or less (\$11,511 for a family of four in 2011).⁴
- The 6 million Hispanic children living in poverty in 2011 represented an increase of more than 2.4 million poor Hispanic children in the last decade.⁵
- Hispanic children under five are the third-poorest group of children after young American Indian and young Black children.⁶ Nearly 36 percent of young Hispanic children are poor compared to 15.0 percent of young White children. Young Hispanic children are almost two-and-a-half times as likely as White children to live in extreme poverty.⁷

Family Structure & Income

Poverty can fray family bonds. Children are left without family support systems and often face daunting challenges.

Family Structure

- Nearly 70 percent of poor Hispanic families with children have at least one working family member.⁸
- Sixty-seven percent of Hispanic children live with two parents, compared to 77 percent of White children.⁹
- Twenty-seven percent of Hispanic children live with only their mother. Hispanic children are more than one-and-a-half times as likely to live with their mother only as are White children.¹⁰
- Hispanic children are almost twice as likely as White children to have a parent in prison.¹¹

Births to Unmarried Mothers and Teens

- Hispanic babies were almost twice as likely as White babies to be born to an unmarried mother in 2010.¹²
- Hispanic babies were more than twice as likely as White babies to be born to a teen mother in 2010.¹³

Income

- Hispanic families with children have a median income just over half that of White families. In 2011 the median income for Hispanic families with children was \$37,361, compared to \$72,029 for White families.¹⁴
- The median income for a Hispanic female-headed household with one or more children and without a husband present was \$21,766, about \$4,000 above the poverty level for a family of three.¹⁵ Nearly half of Hispanic female-headed families with children were poor.¹⁶

Health

Many of the health problems Hispanic children face can be attributed to the effects of poverty. Poverty stacks the odds against children before birth and decreases their chance of being born healthy and at normal birthweight. Lack of prenatal care, low birthweight, poor health and being uninsured put young Hispanic children at high risk of entering the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*.

Hispanic Babies Are Born at a Disadvantage.

- Hispanic babies were more than twice as likely as White babies to be born to mothers who received late or no prenatal care in 18 of the 27 states for which data are available for 2009.¹⁷

Hispanic Children Are More Likely to be Uninsured and in Poorer Health.

- Hispanic children are over one-and-a-half times as likely as White children to be uninsured. One in six Hispanic children is uninsured, compared to one in 10 White children.¹⁸
- More than one in 10 Hispanic children has asthma.¹⁹ When uncontrolled, asthma can affect a child's ability to learn and sleep, and require hospital treatment or visits to the emergency department.²⁰
- Hispanic children and teens are more than one-and-a-half times as likely as White children and teens to be obese. Almost 40 percent of Hispanic children and teens were overweight or obese in 2009-2010.²¹

Early Childhood Development & School Readiness

Disparities in development and school readiness are very much evident in the early stages of children's development. Many of these disparities can be traced to low socioeconomic status which is highly connected to race and ethnicity and other demographic characteristics. Young Hispanic children often score lower than White children on measures of proficiency and cognitive development. They are at risk of being funneled into the prison pipeline early in life.

Hispanic Children Fall Behind Early On

- At nine months there is no significant difference between Hispanic and White babies in terms of cognitive development but by 24 months a large gap develops, with Hispanic babies scoring lower than White babies²²
- At age four Hispanic children scored significantly behind White children in their proficiency in letter, number and shape recognition.²³

Too Many Hispanic Children Enter School Behind

- Hispanic infants and toddlers are less likely to have regular mealtimes and have far fewer books than White children.²⁴
- On average, Hispanic children arrive at kindergarten and/or first grade with lower levels of school readiness than White children.²⁵

Education

A lack of a quality education contributes to the devastating *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*. The overrepresentation of poor and minority children in grade retention, out-of-school suspensions and special education have interacted with low teacher expectations to contribute to these children's discouragement, low self-esteem and disengagement from school. Poor Hispanic children experience less-qualified teachers, inadequate education facilities and few resources. Hispanic children experience too few Hispanic teachers in the classroom. Only seven percent of public school teachers are Hispanic.²⁶

The Achievement Gap

- Hispanic children continue to fall further and further behind as they progress through school:
 - In fourth grade 82 percent of Hispanic public school students cannot read at grade level and 76 percent cannot do math at grade level;²⁷
 - In eighth grade 82 of Hispanic public school students cannot read at grade level and 80 percent cannot do math at grade level;²⁸
 - Hispanic students score lower than all other racial/ethnic groups except Black students on the ACT and SAT college entrance exams.²⁹

Teacher Experience and School Curriculum

- Fifteen percent of teachers in schools with the most Black and Hispanic students are in their first or second year of teaching compared to eight percent of teachers in schools serving the fewest Black and Hispanic students.³⁰
- Hispanic children are 25 percent of students in districts offering gifted and talented education programs but only 16 percent of students enrolled in those programs.³¹
- Sixty-two percent of schools serving the most Black and Hispanic students offer Algebra II compared to 82 percent of high schools serving the fewest Black and Hispanic students.³²

High School Dropouts

- Sixty-six percent of Hispanic students graduate from high school within four years of starting ninth grade compared to 82 percent of White students.³³
- Twenty-nine percent of the nation's Hispanic students in 2008 attended one of the 1,700 "dropout factories," high schools where less than 60 percent of the freshman class graduate in four years; only eight percent of the nation's White students attended such schools.³⁴

College or Prison?

- Hispanic adults age 18 and over in 2008 represented 12 percent of the total college student population, but 16 percent of the total prison population.³⁵
- Thirty-two percent of Hispanic young adults 18 to 24 were enrolled in institutions of higher education in 2010, compared to 43 percent of White young adults.³⁶

Job Status & Income of Young Adults

The recession has created an extremely difficult labor market for all youth, but minority youth face the harshest impact. Hispanic college graduates compared to other college graduates, for example, have the second highest unemployment rate.³⁷ This bodes ill for Hispanic wealth creation.

Employment and Unemployment

- As of September 2012 one in seven Hispanic young adults 16 to 24 was unemployed.³⁸

- An average of more than one-third of Hispanic high school graduates ages 17 to 20 was unemployed from April 2011 to March 2012.
- In the same time period, the average unemployment rate for young Hispanic college graduates ages 21 to 24 was the highest of all racial/ethnic groups at 13.2 percent. For White college grads the same age, the average unemployment rate was 8.7 percent.³⁹
- The unemployment rate for Hispanic males age 20 and over (7.6 percent) was nearly one-and-a-half times the unemployment rate for White males (6.2 percent) in September 2012.⁴⁰
- An analysis of 2008 data found that the employment rate among Hispanic male dropouts (excluding those in jail or prison) was 80 percent; this rate fell to 75 percent when inmates were included in the population count.⁴¹

Income

- Hispanic males ages 25 to 64 are more likely to have a lower income than White males with similar educational backgrounds. In 2011, the gap in median earnings between Hispanic and White males with some high school education but no diploma was nearly \$5,000. The gap between Hispanic and White males with master's degrees was over \$25,000.⁴²
- In 2011, White high school graduates ages 25 to 64 earned an average of \$31,497, compared to \$25,372 for Hispanic graduates. For those with a bachelor's degree or higher, the median earnings were \$56,557 for White graduates and \$45,669 for Hispanic graduates.⁴³

Wealth & Asset Development

All parents and caregivers aspire to support their children and assist them in doing better in life than previous generations did. But the future outlook for many is bleak.

- The average wealth of White households was 18 times that of Hispanic households in 2009. This is the largest gap observed since these data were first published a quarter century ago.⁴⁴
- The recession hit Hispanic households particularly hard, with the average wealth for this group dropping by 66 percent from 2005 to 2009, the largest decline of any group. The average wealth for White households dropped just 16 percent.⁴⁵
- The typical Hispanic household had a net worth (assets minus debts) of \$6,325 in 2009 compared to \$113,149 for White households. Hispanic households were more than twice as likely as White households to have zero or negative net worth, with almost a third of Hispanic households in this situation.⁴⁶
- Minority households are more than twice as likely as White households to be "asset poor," meaning that a household does not have enough net worth to live at the poverty level for three months in the absence of income. In 2009, 44 percent of minority households were asset poor compared to 20 percent of White households.⁴⁷
- Hispanic homeowners were almost twice as likely to be affected by the housing crisis as White households. More than a quarter of all Hispanic borrowers with a mortgage that started between 2004 and 2008 had lost their home to foreclosure by early 2011 or were seriously delinquent, meaning that they were 60 days or more late in their payments or were in the process of foreclosure.⁴⁸

Violence

Family violence, gun violence and community violence threaten children's sense of security, hope and vision for the future. They push children deeper into the prison pipeline.

Child Abuse and Neglect

- More than one in five victims of child abuse and neglect in 2010 were Hispanic.⁴⁹
- In 2010, 16.6 percent of deaths from child maltreatment were Hispanic children.⁵⁰

Gun Violence

- While the annual number of firearm deaths of White children and teens decreased by 45 percent between 1990 and 2009, the deaths of Hispanic children and teens decreased by only 24 percent.⁵¹
- One in five children and teens killed by firearms in 2009 was Hispanic. Hispanic males ages 15 to 19 were three times as likely as White males in the same age group to be killed in a firearm homicide in 2009.⁵²
- Eighty-two percent of firearm deaths of Hispanic children and teens in 2009 were homicides (462) and 16 percent were suicides; among White children and teens just under half of all firearm deaths in 2009 were homicides (730) and 46 percent were suicides.⁵³

Involvement in the Juvenile & Adult Criminal Justice Systems

Children of color are grossly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. Involvement in the system is associated with poorer outcomes later in life in health, education and economic mobility.

Juvenile Arrests and Incarceration

- Nationally, Hispanic youth are almost twice as likely as White youth to be detained in a juvenile correctional facility. Over 70 percent of them are detained for non-violent offenses.⁵⁴
- Compared to White youth, Hispanic youth are estimated to be:
 - 16 percent more likely to be adjudicated delinquent ("found guilty" in juvenile court)
 - 41 percent more likely to receive an out-of-home correctional placement
 - 43 percent more likely to be waived into the adult system.⁵⁵
- On June 25, 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that juveniles could not be subject to mandatory life sentences without the possibility of parole. Of the approximately 2,500 juveniles across the nation serving life sentences, the Supreme Court decision could change the sentences of more than 2,000 of them.⁵⁶ A 2009 study found that 12 percent of juveniles serving life sentences without parole were Hispanic, but this rate was much higher in two states with large Hispanic populations: California (42 percent) and Arizona (36 percent).⁵⁷

Adult Incarceration

- Hispanic males born in 2001 are almost three times as likely as White males to be incarcerated some time in their lifetime. Hispanic females born the same year are two-and-a-half times as likely as their White peers to be incarcerated at some point.⁵⁸
- One in 36 working-age Hispanic men was in prison or jail in 2008, compared to one in 87 working-age White men.⁵⁹
- Nearly one in 26 Hispanic men ages 30-34 were held in state or federal prison or jail in 2010, compared to one in 63 White men that same age.⁶⁰

- Hispanic adult men were incarcerated in state and federal facilities at over two-and-a-half times the rate of White adult men in 2010, and Hispanic adult women were incarcerated at over one-and-a-half times the rate of White adult women.⁶¹

Global Comparisons of U.S. Incarceration

- The U.S. has five percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of the world's prison inmate population.⁶²
- In 2008, 2.3 million or one in 100 adults in America were behind bars.⁶³
- The rate of incarceration in the U.S. climbed from 221⁶⁴ to 743⁶⁵ per 100,000 from 1980 to 2009. This is more than a 300 percent increase.
- The U.S. houses more inmates than all European nations combined.⁶⁶

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