

**YOUNG HISPANIC CHILDREN IN THE U.S.:
A DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT BASED ON CENSUS 2000**

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This report presents a demographic overview of young Hispanic children compared to other children. The new results from Census 2000 describe the family and economic circumstances of children ages 0-8, as well as pre-k/nursery school and kindergarten enrollment for children ages 3, 4, and 5. Appendix Tables 1-11 present more detailed information for specific native-born and immigrant Hispanic groups for the U.S., the nine states with the largest number of Hispanic children (Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas), and for the remaining portions of the four regions of the U.S. Appendix Table 12 provides a summary overview of the circumstances of Hispanics, Hispanics in native families, and Hispanics in immigrant families compared to whites in native-families, for the states with samples sizes in Census 2000 large enough to produced statistically reliable results.

FIGURE 1

Young Hispanic Children are Highly Concentrated in a Few States,
but Distributed Widely Across the States

Young Hispanic children are highly concentrated geographically, 79% live in just nine states. California alone accounts for nearly one-third (32%) of young Hispanic children, and an additional one-in-five (19%) live in Texas. Seven additional states each

account for 2%-7% of these children. At least 19% and as many as 53% of all young children in these states are Hispanic.

But many smaller states also have substantial Hispanic populations. One-third of young children in Nevada (34%) are Hispanic, and between 10%-17% are Hispanic in eleven states spread from the East (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island), through the center of the country (Kansas, Nebraska) to the West (Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming). Proportions nearly this high at 8-9% are also found in Delaware, and in the Southern states of Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Virginia. Thus, at least 1-in-12 young children are Hispanic in 24 states that are located throughout the nation.

FIGURE 2

Young Hispanic Children are Diverse in their Origins

A large majority of young Hispanic children are Mexican-origin (65%), but substantial proportions have origins in Puerto Rico (9%), Central America (7%), or South America (6%), or are Dominican (3%) or Cuban (2%). Because no single Central or South American country is predominant among young children with origins in those regions, after Mexico the largest proportion with origins in a single country is only 3%, but nine additional countries each account for at least about 25,000 young Hispanic children in immigrant families.

With the exception only of Puerto Ricans (who are U.S. citizens by birth), the vast majority of these children live in immigrant families with at least one foreign-born parent. (All results regarding country of birth of parents are based only on parents who are currently living in the homes of children). Two-thirds of Mexican-origin and Cuban-

origin young children live in immigrant families, and this rises to about nine-in-ten for those with origins in the Dominican Republic and Central or South America.

Nevertheless, many young Hispanic children in immigrant families not only have an immigrant parent in the home, but also one born in the U.S. Thus, many Hispanic children live in families with one or both parents U.S.-born. Among all Hispanic children in specific groups, the proportion living with at least one U.S.-born parent is only 27% for Central Americans, but this rises to 41%-43% for Dominicans and South Americans, 49% for Mexicans, and 64% for Cubans. Especially important is that nearly all young Hispanic children are, themselves, U.S. citizens because they were born here, at 88% overall, and 85% for those with South American origins, 88% for the Mexican-origin, and 91-92% for those with origins in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Central or South America.

Although young Puerto Rican children are U.S. citizens by birth, 45% live in “island-origin” families, that is, they were born in Puerto Rico or have at least one parent born in Puerto Rico who migrated to the mainland (or Hawaii). Similar to the situation of immigrant groups, among Puerto Ricans with a parent who migrated to the U.S. mainland, many also have a parent born on the U.S. mainland. Thus, 86% of Puerto Rican children have at least one mainland-born parent. Also, as is true for the immigrant groups, the overwhelming majority (91%) of young Puerto Rican children were themselves born on the mainland.

FIGURE 3

The Number of Young Hispanic Children is Increasing Rapidly

Hispanics were 20% of young children in 2000, or about one-half of young children in race-ethnic minority families. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the proportion of young children who are Hispanic will jump to 26% by 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Thus, by 2030 when less than half of all young children will be non-Hispanic whites, a new American majority will have emerged among young children, consisting of a mosaic of race-ethnic groups from around the world. Hispanics will account for more than half of the young children constituting this new American majority.

But the race-ethnic transformation of the U.S. is occurring most rapidly, and will become a reality first, among children. In 2030, when the baby-boom generation born in the years from 1946-1964 will be in the retirement ages of 66-84 years, a large 72% of the elderly will be white non-Hispanic, compared to only 56% for working age adults. Many of these workers will, as youth, have grown up in Hispanic families, immigrant families, or Hispanic-immigrant families. In fact, young children ages 0-8 in 2006 will be in the prime working ages of 24-32 in the year 2030, and they will account for about one-in-five workers in that cohort.

Thus, the educational success of young Hispanic children will have deep and lasting consequences for the productivity of the U.S. economy, and the predominantly non-Hispanic white baby-boom generation will increasingly depend during its retirement on the adult economic productivity of these children. The young Hispanic children of today also will become voters during the next two decades, with enormous influence on social security and other public policies. Thus, the prospects for young Hispanic children are important not only for these children and their families, but for all Americans.

FIGURE 4

Most Young Hispanic Children Live with Two Parents

Three-fourths of young Hispanic children (77%) live with two parents. The proportion rises to 81-86% for young children in immigrant families from Mexico, Central and South America, and Cuba, similar to the 85% experienced by young white children. However, the proportions range between 52%-71% for young children in native families from these four regions and from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and to only 33% for those in Dominican immigrant families. Thus, a large majority of most groups benefit from living with two parents, but substantial minorities of some groups, mainly in native-born families, have only one parent in the home.

FIGURE 5

Many Young Hispanic Children have Grandparents in the Home

Young Hispanic children are more than twice as likely as whites to have a grandparent in the home (15% vs. 6%). Especially likely to live with grandparents are young Hispanic children in native-born families who are Mexican (20%), Central American (26%), or Dominican (28%). For these groups, grandparents may often provide important emotional support, nurturance, or economic resources.

Other adult extended family members can also play an important part in sharing critical resources with a young child's family. Overall, 24% of young Hispanics have another adult relative in the home (excluding grandparents, but including older siblings), compared to only 5% for whites. Such households are most common among young children in immigrant families from Mexico (33%), Central America (29%), the

Dominican Republic (25%), and South America (19%). Children in these immigrant groups also tend to be more likely to have non-relatives in the home.

Thus, the strengths of Hispanic families are reflected in the large proportions of young children in most groups living with two parents, and living with grandparents or other adult family members. The extraordinary familism among immigrant Hispanics also is reflected in the higher proportions of young children in immigrant families with four or more dependent siblings (ages 0-17) in the home among those with origins in Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic, as well as island-origin Puerto Ricans. Young Hispanic children in native-born families are, however, substantially less likely than those in immigrant families to live with two parents or in large families with four or more siblings.

FIGURES 6, 7, 8

Young Hispanic Children have Parents with a Strong Work Ethic

Young Hispanic children live in families with a strong work ethic and desire to succeed. Overall, 93% have fathers who worked during the previous year, and the proportion is the same in both immigrant and native families, only 4 percentage points below the 97% experienced by whites. In specific Hispanic groups, 91% or more had working fathers, with only two exceptions, at 85%-87% for island-origin Puerto Ricans and for Dominicans in native and immigrant families.

Three-in-five young Hispanic children (59%) have employed mothers. The proportion with an employed mother among young Hispanic children in native families is similar to the proportion for whites (69%-70%), while a smaller majority in immigrant families (53%) has working mothers. Among various native and immigrant groups, 59%-

77% have employed mothers, with the lone exception of young Hispanic children in immigrant families from Mexico, half (49%) of whose mothers work.

Although most Hispanic immigrant groups are less likely than whites to have a mother working, every Hispanic group is more likely than whites to have another adult worker in the home, and they are 2.3-3.6 times more likely than whites to have such a worker if they are in immigrant families from Mexico, Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic. All together, then, 9% of young Hispanic children have three or more adult workers in the home, 3 times the proportion among whites (3%), and the proportion rises from 7% for native Hispanic families to 10% for immigrants. Within each specific Hispanic group, the proportion with 3 or more workers is greater among those in immigrant than in native families. Young Hispanic children in immigrant families from Mexico and Central America are most likely, at 11%-12%, to be living with 3 or more adult workers. Thus, most young Hispanic children in both native and immigrant families live with two parents, and often with other family members, who are strongly committed to supporting their families through paid work.

FIGURE 9

Many Young Hispanic Children Have Parents with Limited Education

Young Hispanic Children benefit from important family strengths but also confront difficult challenges. Nearly half (47%) of young Hispanic children have fathers who are not high school graduates, compared to 10% for whites. (Results are similar for mothers, and are presented in Appendix tables). Nearly one-fourth of young Hispanic children in native families (24%) have fathers not graduating from high school, but this jumps to nearly three-in-five (58%) for those in immigrant families.

Large differences in parental education distinguish various Hispanic groups. With educational levels similar to whites, the proportions with fathers not graduating from high school are 7%-9% for South Americans and Cubans in native families, and 15% for Dominicans and Central Americans in native families. But extremely high levels with fathers not graduating from high school are experienced by young Hispanic children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic (41%), Central America (53%), and Mexico (66%). In fact, many children within origins in these three regions have fathers who have never entered high school, let alone graduated from high school. Among young Hispanic children in immigrant families, the proportion with fathers completing only 8 years of school or less is 15% for Dominicans, 29% for Central Americans, and 40% for Mexicans. Parents with these limited educational attainments may have little knowledge about the U.S. educational system, and may not be literate either in English or in their home language.

FIGURE 10

Many Young Hispanic Children have Fathers Who Work Part-Time

This report has already shown the high levels of parental work among young Hispanic children in both native and immigrant families. Three groups with comparatively high father's educational attainments, young Hispanic children in native families from Central America, Cuba, and South America are most similar to whites in the proportion not working full-time year-round (16%-20%). But, overall, the proportions with fathers not working full-time year-round are substantially higher, at 27% and 33% for young Hispanic children in native and immigrant families. Thus, the strong commitment of fathers to work does not translate into high levels of full-time year-round

work, and large differences in father's educational attainments between young Hispanic children in native and immigrant families do not lead overall to corresponding differences in access to full-time year-round work.

FIGURE 11

Many Young Hispanic Children have Fathers with Low Hourly Earnings

The lack of full-time year-round jobs for fathers of many young Hispanic children poses a major challenge to these families, particularly when combined with low hourly wages. Among young children with fathers who work, 3%-9% of Hispanics in various native and immigrant groups have fathers who earn less than the Federal minimum hourly wage (\$5.15), compared to 3% for whites. Young Hispanic children in native families are substantially more likely than whites (33% vs. 19%) to have fathers who earn less than twice the Federal minimum hourly wage (\$10.30). But this jumps to 45% in immigrant families, and is especially high at 49% for those from Mexico. Part-time work at low wages leads to high poverty.

FIGURE 12

Amount of Mother's Work among Young Hispanic Children is Related to Immigration

Differences across groups in part-time work among mothers have a different character than among fathers. For nearly all Hispanic groups and for whites, 25%-40% of young children have a mother in each of three employment categories: not working, working part-time, working full-time year-round. Mother's employment is more common, and full-time year-round employment is more common, among native Hispanics than among whites for every group, except island-origin Puerto Ricans. Among children in immigrant families, however, mothers are substantially less likely

than whites to work in Mexican, Central and South American, and Dominican families, although they are only slightly less likely than whites to work full-time year-round, except for Mexicans among whom only 21% had mothers working full-time year-round.

FIGURE 13

Many Young Hispanic Children have Mothers with Low Hourly Earnings

Young Hispanic children in immigrant families from Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic also are especially likely, if their mothers work, to have mothers who earn less than twice the Federal minimum wage, at 69%, 61%, and 57%, respectively. Because these groups also often have fathers who do not work full-time year-round and have low hourly earnings, it follows, unfortunately, that these children are among those with especially high poverty rates.

FIGURES 14, 15

Many Young Hispanic Children Live in Poverty

Children with poverty level incomes often lack resources for decent housing, food, clothing, books, other educational resources, child care/early education, and health care. The official poverty rate is the measure most commonly used to assess economic need in the U.S. But the official measure has come under increasing criticism because it has been updated since 1965 only for inflation, but not for increases in the real standard of living, and because it does not take into account the local cost of living, which varies greatly across the U.S. and various metropolitan and rural areas (Citro and Michael, 1995; Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, forthcoming in 2006). To provide a more complete picture of economic need for young Hispanic children, results are presented for the official measure and for two alternatives that take into account federal taxes and the

local cost of various goods and services (Bernstein, Jared, Chauna Brocht, Maggie Spade-Aguilar, 2000; Boushey, Heather, Chauna Brocht, Bethney Gundersen, Jared Bernstein, 2001; Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, forthcoming in 2006).

Young Hispanic children are nearly three times as likely as whites to be officially poor (26% vs. 9%). Although the rates for young South American and Cuban children are nearly as low as for whites (12%-14%), poverty rates are about twice the level experienced whites among Central Americans and native Mexicans (18%-23%), and three to four times the white level for Puerto Ricans, immigrant Mexicans, and Dominicans (30%-36%).

The first alternative measure of economic need presented here is the “baseline” Basic Budget Poverty rate, which takes into account the local cost of food, housing, transportation for parents to commute to work and “other necessities” such as clothing, personal care items, household supplies, telephone, television, school supplies, reading materials, music, and toys. The second more fulsome Basic Budget Poverty rate takes account, in addition, of the local cost of child care/early education and health care (Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, forthcoming in 2006).

Two-fifths of young Hispanic children are baseline Basic Budget poor, three times the rate for whites (39% vs. 12%). Among Hispanics the lowest rates are experienced by Cubans (20%) and South Americans (26%), but this climbs to 39%-43% for Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Central Americans, and to 50% for Dominicans. Differences between the Basic Budget and official rates suggests that the official poverty threshold is set at a level substantially too low to cover the local costs of food, housing,

“other necessities”, and parent’s transportation for work, because the official poverty rates are lower than the baseline Basic Budget rates for every group.

According to the more fulsome Basic Budget Poverty measure which includes the costs of child care/early education and health care, two-thirds (66%) of young Hispanics in native families lack adequate economic resources, and this climbs to 71% for those in immigrant families, compared to 31% for whites. One point of comparison for this fulsome Basic Budget Poverty measure is children in European countries which have nearly universal parental family leave, preschool, and national health insurance programs. The comparable poverty rates of children are 2%-10% in six such countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, and Sweden.

FIGURE 16

Many Young Hispanic Children have Limited English Proficient Parents

Parents who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) are less likely to find well-paid full-time employment than English fluent parents. Insofar as early education centers and other institutions do not provide Spanish language outreach to such parents, they may also be cut off from accessing programs important for their young children.

Three-fourths of young Hispanic children in immigrant families (73%) live with a parent who is Limited English Proficient, not speaking English exclusively or very well, and one-half (50%) live with two such parents. Most likely to live with a parent whose English is limited are young children in immigrant families from Central America (70%), the Dominican Republic (73%), and Mexico (78%). Many of these children, in fact, live with two parents speaking limited English, 44% for the Dominican Republic, 48% for Central America, and 55% for Mexico.

Although only 5% of young Hispanic children in native families live with two parents who are Limited English proficient, a much larger 14% live with at least one such parent. Especially likely to live with a Limited English parent are island-origin Puerto Ricans (45%), but the proportion is also 1-in-10 for mainland-origin Puerto Ricans (10%) and those in native families with origins in Mexico (11%).

FIGURE 17 AND FIGURE 18

Many Young Hispanic Children are Limited English Proficient But Many are Poised to Become Fully Bilingual

English fluency is much more common among young Hispanic children in immigrant families, most of whom were born in the U.S., than among their parents. Among Hispanic children ages 5-8 in immigrant families, 46% are Limited English Proficient. Yet, the proportion that speaks English very well and also speaks Spanish at home is nearly as large (40%). Even young children in immigrant families from Mexico--the group most likely, at 52%, to be Limited English Proficient--38% speak Spanish at home but also speak English very well. Thus, although many of these children have limited English skills, many others are fluent in English and are, therefore, positioned by their family circumstances to become effective bilingual speakers.

The limited English language skills of some children can pose a critical barrier to educational success, if early education programs are not equipped to work effectively with Spanish speakers. But if early education programs are well-designed for non-English speakers and to foster bilingualism, they may act to create a Hispanic community that not only has improved English skills, but also enhanced bilingual skills that can serve as an important resource for the U.S. in the increasingly competitive globalized economy.

Such programs are valuable not only for young children in immigrant families, but also among various Hispanic groups in native families because the proportions who are limited English proficient also are sizable (9%-18%, and 30% for island-origin Puerto Ricans), as are the proportions fluent in English while speaking Spanish at home (17%-38%).

FIGURE 19

Nearly Half of Young Hispanic Children Live in Families Who are Buying Their Homes

Notwithstanding their very high poverty rates, nearly half (48%) of young Hispanic children in native families live in homes owned by their parents or the householder. The proportion is nearly as high for young Hispanic children in immigrant families (43%), despite the fact that many live with one or both parents who have lived in the U.S. less than ten years.

Homeownership rates across groups do, however, vary with poverty rates and the cost of housing in locations where they tend to settle. The lowest homeownership rates are for Dominicans (24%) and Puerto Ricans (33%) who have high poverty rates and often live in the high cost New York City region. Nearly half of young Mexican origin children (46%) lived in owned homes, despite high housing costs for many in California, and this rises to 53% for South Americans and 68% for Cubans, the two Hispanic groups with the lowest poverty rates.

Within particular groups, young Hispanics in immigrant families are more likely than those in native families to live in owned homes (except Cubans); but the differences in home ownership are small, no more than 13 percentage points. Thus, despite the

recency of arrival of immigrants, both immigrant and native Hispanic families have a strong investment in and commitment to their local communities.

FIGURE 20

Many Young Hispanic Children's Immigrant Families

Experience Moderate to Severe Housing Cost Burden

Moderate housing cost burden is defined as devoting at least 30% but less than 50% of household income to paying for housing (including utilities), while severe housing cost burden is defined as paying 50% or more for housing. The proportion of young Hispanic children in families experiencing moderate housing burden ranges from 18%-24% for various native and immigrant groups, slightly to substantially more than the 16% experienced by whites. But only 9% of young white children experience severe housing costs burden, compared to 17%-18% for young Hispanics in native and immigrant families. Young children in Mexican and South American native families and Cubans in either native or immigrant families are least likely to experience severe high housing costs (12%-16%), while the highest severe housing-cost burdens are among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (24%-29%). Thus young Hispanic children in most groups are 2-3 times more likely than whites to experience severe housing cost burden, despite the comparatively high proportions with other adult workers in the home. All told, 31%-50% of various immigrant and native Hispanic groups experience either moderate or severe housing cost burden compared to 25% of young white children.

FIGURE 21

Many Young Hispanic Children Live in Overcrowded Housing

Crowded housing conditions can pose challenges for children, including difficulty in finding a quiet place to study, and it may increase the risks of communicable disease and other health problems. On the other side of the equation, larger households may also include persons who can provide emotional support, child care, or additional family income. Overcrowded housing with more than one person per room is 3.5 times more likely among young Hispanic children in native families than among whites (30% vs. 8%), and 7.4 times more likely among young Hispanic children in immigrant families (68% vs. 8%). Most Hispanic groups are at least twice as likely as whites to live in overcrowded housing, but 68% of young children in Mexican immigrant families live in overcrowded conditions, 8 times the level of whites.

FIGURE 22

Many Young Hispanic Children are Not Enrolled in Pre-K/Nursery School

Young Hispanic children with origins in various regions and family migration circumstances experience quite different pre-k/nursery school enrollment rates. Most likely to be enrolled in pre-k/nursery school are young Puerto Rican children in mainland-origin families, and Hispanics from Central America in native families and from Cuba and South America regardless of immigrant family situation. At ages 3 and 4 these groups are more likely or only slightly less likely than whites to be enrolled in pre-k/nursery school, with a range of 38%-49% at age 3 and 57%-67% age 4, compared to 38% and 61%, respectively, for whites of these ages.

Least likely to be enrolled in pre-k/nursery school at age 3 are young Hispanic children in immigrant families from Mexico (18%), Central America (26%), and the Dominican Republic (33%), and in native families from Mexico (29%) or who are island-

origin Puerto Rican (31%). Thus, the enrollment gaps at age 3, compared to whites, range from 5 percentage points for the immigrant Dominican group, to 7-9 percentage points for the native Mexican and island-origin Puerto Rican groups, to 12 and 19 percentage points, respectively, for the immigrant Central American and Mexican groups.

Pre-k/nursery school enrollment rates for these groups are 17-20 percentage points higher by age 4, compared to an increase of 23 percentage points for whites between ages 3 and 4. Although additional young children are reported to be enrolled in kindergarten at age 4, there is no state with rules that allow children age 4 to be enrolled in kindergarten as of April 1, the census data collection date (Education Commission of the States, 2005; Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, forthcoming in 2007). There are, however, 43 states that offer some form of pre-k under the auspices of public schools, with many physically located in public schools, and across the U.S. various school districts are the grantee or delegate agencies for 17% of Head Start Programs (Clifford, Barbarin, Chang, Early, Bryant, Howes, Burchinal, and Pianta, 2005). It seems likely, then, that many parents with children age 4 who are enrolled in public pre-k, Head Start, or other early education programs misreport their children as being enrolled in kindergarten.

In fact, young children in immigrant families from Mexico, Central America, and Dominican Republic, along with island-origin Puerto Ricans, are among those most likely to be reported as enrolled in kindergarten at age 4 (7%-10%), and the proportion is twice as high for young children in native families from Mexico (4%) as for young white children (2%). Thus, the gap in total school enrollment, combining reported pre-k/nursery school and kindergarten enrollments, for the immigrant Dominican group

compared to whites narrows from 5 to 2 percentage points between ages 3 and 4, it narrows slightly by 1-2 percentage points for the native Mexican and island-origin Puerto Rican Groups, and it remains unchanged for the immigrant Central American and Mexican groups. Thus, these five Hispanic groups experience essentially the same increase in overall school enrollment as whites between ages 3 and 4.

By age 5, the overall school enrollment rates of these 5 Hispanic groups are within 1-2 percentage points of whites. Hence, even though many districts do not require children who are age 5, as of the April 1 census date, to be enrolled in school, the results for these children suggest that locally-available publicly-funded kindergartens essentially equalize access to education for these Hispanic groups and whites, and that the Hispanic groups take advantage of this opportunity to essentially the same degree as whites.

Additional multivariate analyses of Census 2000 data also suggest that financial and other barriers account for much or all of the differences between these five Hispanic groups and whites in school enrollment at ages 3 and 4 (Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, forthcoming in 2007), although it is sometimes argued that a more familistic cultural orientation among Hispanics leads parents to prefer that their children be cared for at home (or in the homes of relatives), rather than by non-relatives in a formal educational setting (Takanishi, 2004, Liang, Fuller, and Singer, 2000; Uttal, 1999).

At ages 3 and 4, for example, among the immigrant and native Mexican groups, which include 72% of all young Hispanic children, statistical controls indicate that cultural influences (including child's generation, number of years parents have been in the U.S., and mother's English fluency) account for no more than 15% of the enrollment gaps, compared to whites, but socioeconomic and structural influences (including

poverty, mother's education, and parents' occupations) account for at least half and perhaps all of the enrollment gaps. This is consistent with the strong commitment in contemporary Mexican political culture to early education, reflected in national legislation in Mexico mandating, as of the 2008-2009 school year, that the State provide preschool services to children beginning at age 3 and requiring parents to assure that their children attend preschool (OECD, 2006). Consistent with this commitment to early education, 63% of children age 4 in Mexico in 2002-2003 were enrolled in preschool, precisely the same as the proportion enrolled among white children age 4 in the U.S. in native-born families in Census 2000.

Additional evidence that Hispanic culture is not opposed to early education is provided by the fact six other U.S. Hispanic groups (the immigrant Cuban and South American groups, as well as mainland origin Puerto Ricans, and the native Cuban, and South and Central American groups) have enrollment rates that are about as high or higher than for whites at ages 3 and 4. Thus, financial, educational, and other structural barriers account for most, if not all, of the white-Hispanic difference in early education enrollment.

Early education programs have been found to promote school readiness and educational success in elementary school and beyond (Haskins and Rouse, 2005; Lynch, 2004). Although research suggests that children with low family incomes and limited English Proficiency may be most likely to benefit from early education programs, young Hispanic children are less likely than whites to be enrolled in these programs (Hernandez, 2004; Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, and Dawson, 2005). Insofar as financial and structural

barriers account for low enrollment rates of some Hispanic groups, public policies can be designed and implemented to eliminate these gaps.

FIGURE 23

Circumstances of Young Hispanic Children in States Where They Concentrate

As noted earlier in the report, young Hispanic children account for at least 19% and as many as 53% of young children in ten states: New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Florida, New York, Illinois, and New Jersey. These states account for 80% of all young Hispanic children in the U.S. Their circumstances are sometimes similar, but sometimes vary widely across these states.

With one exception, the proportion of young Hispanic children in these states living with two parents is in the narrow range of 61%-68% for native families and substantially higher at 82%-90% for immigrant families. The lone exception is New York, where much smaller proportions of 48% in native families and 73% immigrant families live with two parents, reflecting the large numbers of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the state. The corresponding range for whites in these ten states is 80%-91%.

Among those living with fathers, the proportions whose fathers work for pay are quite similar across groups in these ten states, at 91%-96% for young Hispanics in native families and immigrant families in each state, again with the lone exception of New York at 86% in native and 89% in immigrant families. For whites in all ten states the proportions are quite similar to Hispanics in nine of these states at 96%-98%. The proportions with working mothers also are similar in nine of the ten states, for young Hispanics in native families (70%-75%) and whites (66%-72%), except in New York

with 58% for Hispanics and 65% for whites. The proportions are significantly lower for young Hispanic children in immigrant families at 45%-56% in eight states, rising somewhat to 62%-64% for Florida and New Jersey.

About one-fourth (23%-28%) of young Hispanic children in native families in eight of the states have fathers who are not high school graduates, although the proportions are somewhat lower in New Mexico (19%) and Colorado (17%). This jumps for young Hispanic children in immigrant families to 34%-37% in Florida and New Jersey, 43% in New York, and 59%-66% in the remaining seven states. Only 6%-12% of whites have fathers not graduating from high school in the ten states. Nearly all young white children have English fluent parents, but this is not true for Hispanics. About four-in-ten young Hispanic children in immigrant families (37%-44%) live with both a father and mother who are Limited English Proficient in four states (New Mexico, Florida, New York, and New Jersey), and the proportion rises to 51%-56% in the other six states. At least 90% of young Hispanic children in native families live with English fluent parents, but significant numbers do not. The proportions in native families living with two parents who both are Limited English Proficient is 5%-8% in Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois, and 10% in New Jersey.

Poverty rates broadly reflect these differences in parental education and English language fluency. Only 5%-13% of whites are officially poor across these ten states. But this jumps 18%-27% for young Hispanic children in native families in these states, except New York where the rate rises to 39%. Official poverty rates for young Hispanic children in immigrant families in four states are about the same level as in Hispanic native families in most states, 18%-22% in Nevada, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.

But official poverty rates for young Hispanic children in immigrant families rise to 30%-36% in California, Texas, Arizona, and New York, and to a high of 41% in New Mexico.

The rates are much higher, however, using the Basic Budget poverty measure to take account of the local cost of living. The highest poverty rates for young Hispanic children in immigrant families are 82% in New Mexico and 71%-79% seven other states. The rate is somewhat lower, however, for young Hispanic children in Illinois (66%), New Jersey (59%), and Florida (57%). Among young Hispanic children in native families the Basic Budget poverty rate is highest in New York (72%) and New Mexico (64%), but still one-half or more (50%-59%) in the other eight states. New Mexico and New York also are the states with the highest Basic Budget poverty rates for whites (41%), while they fall to 29%-38% in all the other states, except New Jersey (24%).

Hispanic children ages 5-8 who speak Spanish may experience substantial challenges but also important opportunities, depending on the circumstances in communities where they live and the policies and programs of education, health, and social service organizations. Most likely to confront challenges, especially if institutions important to young children and their families are not Spanish-friendly, are children who are limited English proficient. The proportion of Hispanic children ages 5-8 in native-born families who are Limited English Proficient ranges from 4%-8% in five of the ten states to 12% in Illinois, 15%-16% in Texas and Florida, 19%-20% in New York and New Jersey. At higher levels, young Hispanic children in immigrant families are least likely to be Limited English Proficient if they live in Florida, New York, or New Jersey at 31%-33%, but this rises to 46%-51% in the remaining seven states. With appropriate education these children might become fully bilingual in both Spanish and English.

But many young Hispanic children ages 5-8 are, in fact, English fluent but also speak Spanish at home. These children are especially well positioned, with proper education, to become bilingual. Among children in native families, only 8% fit this description in Colorado, but this rises to 15%-24% in seven states and to 32%-37% in Florida, New York, and New Jersey. Similarly high proportions (37%-39%) are found in six states among Hispanic children ages 5-8 in immigrant families and still high proportions are found in Nevada and New York (44%-45%) and in Florida and New Jersey (50%-51%).

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