

# Latino Children in North Carolina

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## AN ACTION FOR CHILDREN NORTH CAROLINA DATA REPORT

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July 2010

### Introduction

Latino children comprise the fastest growing segment of North Carolina's child population, jumping 34 percent in just three years.<sup>1</sup> As the state's schools and other institutions serve this growing group of children and youth, it is important for policymakers, service providers, educators and community leaders to understand the risk and protective factors impacting Latino children and their families. This report highlights data indicators that may begin to explain how Latino children are faring in our state.

Children's well-being is largely determined by their families' economic security and stability. On many indicators of child health, safety and education, the data show lack of access and lack of opportunity for too many Latino children. On average, Latino workers have less education, lower wages and fewer worker protections than whites, and as a result, most Latino children in North Carolina live in low-income families.<sup>2</sup>

There are strong protective factors in the Latino community that help offset risks for children. Most Latino babies are born healthy and thrive. Latino children and youth are positively engaged with their families and have high self-esteem. Most Latino children have at least one parent who works.

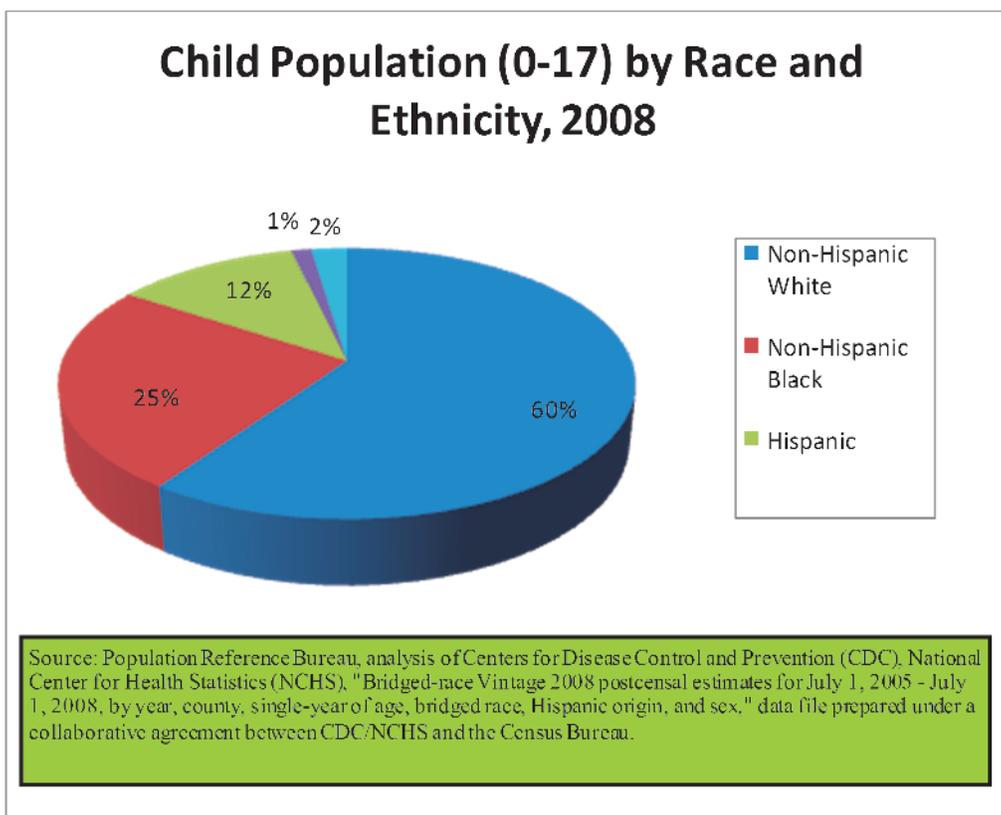
In 2005-06, North Carolina's rapidly growing Latino population contributed more than \$9 billion to the state's economy through purchases and taxes – more than 100 times the estimated net cost to the state budget for health care, education and corrections for Latinos.<sup>3</sup> This critical population is helping drive North Carolina's economy. It is in the best interest of all North Carolinians that the state do all it can to ensure that Latino children – like all children – have access to the tools necessary for school and life success.



# Demographics

In 2008, there were more than 270,000 Latino children in North Carolina – just over 12 percent of the total child population.<sup>4</sup>

Latino children comprise the fastest growing segment of the child population in the state, increasing from 9.6 percent in 2005 to more than 12 percent just three years later. Over the same time period, black, white and American Indian children made up increasingly smaller percentages of the child population.<sup>5</sup> In 2008, 11 percent of all births in North Carolina were to Latina mothers.<sup>6</sup>



The Latino population in North Carolina is young: the median age for Latinos is 25, younger than that of blacks (33) and whites (40).<sup>7</sup> Sixty-five percent of Latinos in North Carolina are of Mexican origin.<sup>8</sup> Nearly half speak only English at home, or are bilingual but speak English very well.<sup>9</sup> Seventy-seven percent of Latino children in North Carolina live in immigrant families.<sup>10</sup> Eighty-six percent of Latino children in our state are citizens.<sup>11</sup>

# Health

Access to high quality health care is essential for children’s growth and development. Healthy children are more likely to learn in the classroom, engage with their communities and grow into healthy adults. Poverty and other barriers to health care access mean that Latino children in North Carolina score lower on indicators of child health than the general child population of the state.

Compared to all children in North Carolina, more Latino children lack a medical home and a regular dental clinic. Fewer Latina mothers receive adequate prenatal care than in the general population. A Latino child in North Carolina is more than twice as likely to be uninsured than the average child.<sup>12</sup>

Despite higher poverty rates, the low birthweight percentage and infant mortality rate for Latino babies are lower than those of the general population. Breastfeeding and Safe Sleep practices are prevalent among Latina mothers.

Adolescent pregnancy is a growing problem in the Latino community. The pregnancy rate among Latina teens is more than twice that of the general population of young women. A higher percentage of Latino children are overweight than the general population of children; however, among states with large Latino populations, North Carolina has the lowest rate of Latino youth who are overweight or obese.<sup>13</sup>

For many of the child health indicators investigated for this report, Latino children have experienced improvement over the last three years.

	All	Latino Children			
	2008	2008	2005	Percent Change	Trend
No medical home	16.0%	29.8%	50.9%	-41.5%	better
Without regular dental clinic	20.7%	29.6%	51.7%	-42.7%	better
Mother received less than adequate prenatal care	18.9%	32.3%	34.3%	-5.8%	better
Mother experienced barriers to getting prenatal care	41.7%	60.5%	**		
Mother received prenatal counseling on Safe Sleep	85.8%	87.6%	81.8%	7.1%	better
Infant put to sleep on back	69.7%	72.8%	67.6%	7.7%	better
Have low birthweight	9.1%	6.3%	6.3%	-	same
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	8.2	6.0	5.9	2%	worse
Overweight/obese	17.5%	22.7%	21.3%	6.6%	worse
Has been told by a doctor that child has asthma	14.2%	10.1%	15.6%	-35.3%	better
Breastfed for any length of time	69.3%	79.5%	78.0%	1.9%	better
Teen pregnancy rate, per 1,000 women (15-19)	63.4	147.5	139.8	5.5%	worse

Please see “Data Notes and Sources” for more information about these indicators.

\*\* 2005 data are not reportable because too few women answered the question for the percentage to be statistically accurate.

# Safety

Children who grow up in safe surroundings are more likely to experience positive developmental outcomes during childhood and be better positioned for success as adults. They are also less likely to engage in crime as adults or be in abusive relationships.<sup>14</sup> Improving children’s safety involves ensuring safe homes and schools, reducing risky behaviors and preventing juvenile delinquency.

Too many Latino children in North Carolina do not feel safe at school. They report that gangs and bullying are problems. However, Latino parents are engaged in their children’s lives — fewer Latino children are home alone after school and more eat dinner regularly with their families than the general population. Latino adolescents are also more likely to report that they feel good about themselves. Positive engagement with family can reduce the risk of juvenile delinquency and substance abuse and improve the likelihood of school and life success.<sup>15</sup>

Juvenile delinquency rates for Latino youth in North Carolina cannot be calculated, since the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) currently tracks youth by race (e.g., black, white, Latino, etc), but not by race and ethnicity (e.g., white Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, etc) as census population data are grouped. DJJDP is changing its data systems to collect and analyze both race and ethnicity data. National evidence indicates that Latino youth are overrepresented in the justice system and receive harsher treatment than white youth.<sup>16</sup>

The Latino child death rate is considerably lower than that of the general child population in the state.

	All Children	Latino Children			
	2009	2009	2005	Percent Change	Trend
Missed school because felt unsafe	5.6%	11.6%	8.1%	43.2%	worse
Reported gangs are a problem at school	36.4%	40.6%	**		
Bullied on school property	16.6%	18.1%	25.1%	-27.9%	better
Been offered, sold or given an illegal drug at school	30.2%	44.0%	28.9%	52.2%	worse
Home alone after school	26.4%	25.2%	**		
Feel good about themselves	76.7%	79.5%	69.7%	14.1%	better
Seriously considered suicide	13.2%	13.2%	15.9%	-17.0%	better

	2008	2008	2005	Percent Change	Trend
	Eat dinner with family every night in a typical week	37.7%	57.9%	52.1%	11.1%
One or more guns are present in the home	36.6%	8.2%	**		
Child death rate (per 100,000)	71	63.4	62.3	1.8%	worse

Please see “Data Notes and Sources” for more information about these indicators.

\*\* 2005 data are not comparable because question was either not asked or asked differently.

# Family Economic Security

Children’s well-being is largely determined by their families’ financial security. Nationally, most Latino children live in two-parent families with at least one parent in the labor force, but, on average, Latino parents have less education, lower wages and fewer worker protections than white parents.<sup>17</sup>

As a result, most Latino children in North Carolina live in low-income families. In fact, among states with large Latino child populations, North Carolina had the highest share of Latino children living in low-income families (73 percent) in 2008.<sup>18</sup> Most Latino children in North Carolina are living with parents who work. Along with Arkansas, North Carolina had the highest proportion of Latino children in low-income *working* families (55 percent).<sup>19</sup> Median household income for Latino households with children is about \$21,000 less than that of the general North Carolina population of households with children.

The data below show that the percentages of Latino children living in extreme poverty, poverty and low-income declined between 2005 and 2008. Data for 2009 and 2010 are not yet available, but the current recession has moved many more children into poverty since 2008.<sup>20</sup> A higher percentage of Latino children are living with food insecurity than children in the general population.

In addition to income poverty, Latino children are also more likely to live in asset poverty than their counterparts. In 2004, 60 percent of Latino children in North Carolina lived in asset poverty, compared to 29 percent of the overall child population of the state.<sup>21</sup> Asset poor households do not have the financial cushion to remain above the Federal Poverty Level for three months without earned income. Asset poverty also means that families are less likely to have the necessary resources to save for their children’s future well-being through the purchase a small business, a college education or a home.

Nationally, 53 percent of Latino children live in unaffordable housing, compared with 51 percent of black children and 32 percent of white children.<sup>22</sup> In North Carolina, 47 percent of Latinos own their own homes, compared to 66 percent of the overall North Carolina population.

	All	Latino Children			
	2008	2008	2005	Percent Change	Trend
Live in extreme poverty	8.1%	10.0%	12.7%	-21.3%	better
Live in poverty	19.8%	32.6%	40.7%	-19.9%	better
Live in low-income	42.7%	72.9%	76.5%	-4.7%	better
Median household income (families with children)	\$53,048	\$31,621	\$26,977	17.2%	better
Household currently enrolled in food stamps	14.4%	25.5%	17.6%	44.9%	**
Food insecure	6.7%	19.3%	16.2%	19.1%	worse
Homeownership rate	66.3%	47.1%	42.4%	11.1%	better

Please see “Data Notes and Sources” for more information about these indicators.

\*\* No trend reported since more households enrolled in food stamps could mean more hungry children or better food stamp program outreach.

# Education

Success in school is a critical determinant for children’s life outcomes. Mothers’ formal education affects school readiness — on average, parents with more education spend more time reading to their children.<sup>23</sup> Along with other states in the South, North Carolina’s Latina formal maternal education level is among the lowest in the nation. However, along with most other states, North Carolina’s level has increased since 2000.<sup>24</sup> In 2005, 25 percent of Latina mothers read to their children at least once a day, compared to more than 50 percent of mothers in the general North Carolina population.<sup>25</sup>

Access to high quality early education is crucial for gaining the skills needed to start kindergarten ready to learn, but cost and other barriers seem to keep Latino children out of high-quality early education classrooms. North Carolina data on Latino children’s access to early education is difficult to report, since the state does not collect race and ethnicity data consistently across programs.<sup>26</sup> National evidence has found that Latinos are less likely than children of any other racial or ethnic group to be enrolled in an early childhood program or to receive early intervention services.<sup>27</sup> In 2005-06, 27 percent of Latino four-year-olds lacked regular, non-parental arrangements for child care, compared with 18 percent of white preschoolers and 16 percent of black preschoolers.<sup>28</sup>

Socioeconomic, linguistic and other barriers inhibit the academic success of many Latino children in North Carolina. In 2008-09, five percent fewer Latino students scored at Level III or better on math end-of-grade tests than the overall student population. A national evaluation that same year found that more than 80 percent of Latino fourth graders were not reading proficiently, compared with 68 percent of all fourth graders. In high school, Latino students’ four-year cohort graduation rate is lower than the general North Carolina student population, and the drop-out rate is higher.

Latino students are suspended at lower rates than the general student population of the state, but at higher rates than white students.<sup>29</sup>

	All Children	Latino Children			
	2009	2009	2005	Percent Change	Trend
Missed at least one week of school in past year because of illness or injury (2008, 2005)	24.7%	20.6%	31.5%	-34.6%	better
Fourth graders below "proficient" in reading	68.0%	83.0%	83.0%	-	same
Third graders at or above "Level III" on math end-of-grade test	81.3%	76.0%	**		
Eighth graders at or above "Level III" on math end-of-grade test	80.4%	75.1%	**		
Short term suspension rate (per 1,000)	201	134	143	-6%	better
Long term suspension rate (per 1,000)	2.45	2.15	2.21	-3%	better
Drop-out rate, grades 9-12	4.27	5.71	7.30	-21.8%	better
4-year cohort graduation rate (2009, 2006)	71.7%	58.9%	52.3%	12.6%	better

Please see “Data Notes and Sources” for more information about these indicators.

\*\* Test scores are not comparable between years because re-test scores were included beginning in 2008.

# Conclusion

Latino children, youth and families are increasingly important players in North Carolina's economy, culture and communities. Now more than ever, policymakers, direct service providers, educators and community leaders must better understand the needs and strengths of Latino children and their families. By considering carefully data such as those described in this report, leaders at the local, state and national levels can make the best possible decisions about how to allocate resources, change and improve policies and provide needed services.

## Data Notes and Sources

**HEALTH: Medical home:** CHAMP, "Do you have one person you think of as (child)'s personal doctor or nurse?" **Dental:** CHAMP, "Does he/she have a dentist or dental clinic where he/she goes regularly?" **Prenatal care:** Kotelchuck index combines when prenatal care began with the number of prenatal visits throughout the pregnancy. Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/births/matched/2008/all.html> (2008) and <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/births/matched/2005/all.html> (2005). **Barriers to prenatal care:** Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey, available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/prams/>. **Counseling on Safe Sleep:** PRAMS, "During any of your prenatal care visits, did a doctor, nurse, or other health care worker talk to you about placing your baby to sleep on his or her back or side?" **Sleep on back:** PRAMS, "How do you most often lay your baby down to sleep now?" **Low birthweight:** less than 2500 grams. N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, special data request, June 2010. **Infant mortality:** N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, special data request, June 2010. **Overweight:** BMI  $\geq$ 95th percentile. North Carolina-Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System (NC-NPASS) includes data on children seen in North Carolina Public Health-Sponsored WIC and Child Health Clinics and some School-Based Health Centers. Available online at: <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com>. **Asthma:** CHAMP, "Has a doctor ever told you that (child) has asthma?" **Breastfeeding:** CHAMP, "Was (child) breastfed for any length of time?" **Teen pregnancy:** N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, special data request, July 2010.

**SAFETY: Missed school:** YRBS, Percentage of students who did not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. **Gangs:** YRBS, Percentage of students who strongly agree or agree that gangs are a problem at their school. **Bullied:** YRBS, Percentage of students who had ever been bullied on school property during the past 12 months. **Drugs at school:** YRBS, Percentage of students who were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug by someone on school property during the past 12 months. **Home alone:** YRBS, Percentage of students who are alone without a parent or adult three or more hours per day on an average school day. **Self-esteem:** YRBS, Percentage of students who strongly agree or agree that they feel good about themselves. **Suicide:** YRBS, Percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months. **Family dinner:** CHAMP, How many times in a typical week do members of your household eat a main meal together that was prepared at home? (7 times). **Guns:** CHAMP, How many guns are in or around your home? **Death rate:** N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, special data request, July 2010.

**FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY: Income poverty data, Median family income, Homeownership rate:** Population Reference Bureau analysis of American Community Survey Public Use Microsample Data, 2005 and 2008. **Food stamps:** CHAMP, "Is your household currently enrolled in the Food Stamp Program?" **Food insecurity:** CHAMP, "In the last 12 months did you ever cut the size of (child)'s meals because there was not enough money for food?"

**EDUCATION: Missed school:** CHAMP, "During the past 12 months, about how many days did (child) miss school because of illness or injury?" (one week or more). **Fourth grade reading:** National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx>. **Math scores:** N.C. Department of Public Instruction (DPI), available online at: <http://disag.ncpublicschools.org/2009/>. **Suspension rates:** N.C. DPI, special data request, June 2010 and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2008-09/consolidated-report.pdf>. **Drop out rates:** N.C. DPI, special data request, March 2009 and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2008-09/consolidated-report.pdf>. **Graduation rates:** N.C. DPI, special data request, March 2009 and <http://app.ncpublicschools.org/2009/app/cgrdisag/>.

# Endnotes

1. Population Reference Bureau, analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), "Bridged-race Vintage 2008 postcensal estimates for July 1, 2005 - July 1, 2008, by year, county, single-year of age, bridged race, Hispanic origin, and sex," data file prepared under a collaborative agreement between CDC/NCHS and the U.S. Census Bureau.
2. Population Reference Bureau analysis of American Community Survey Public Use Microsample Data, 2005 and 2008.
3. Kasarda, J. and J. Johnson, Jr. January 2006. "The Economic Impact of the Hispanic Population on the State of North Carolina," Kenan-Flagler Business School, UNC-Chapel Hill.
4. Population Reference Bureau, analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), "Bridged-race Vintage 2008 postcensal estimates for July 1, 2005 - July 1, 2008, by year, county, single-year of age, bridged race, Hispanic origin, and sex," data file prepared under a collaborative agreement between CDC/NCHS and the U.S. Census Bureau.
5. Ibid.
6. Pew Hispanic Center, 2008. "Demographic Profile of Hispanics in North Carolina, 2008," Data downloaded June 2010. Available online at: <http://pewhispanic.org/states/?stateid=NC>.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. National Council of La Raza, April, 2010. "America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends," available online at: <http://www.nclr.org/>.
11. Ibid. "Children in immigrant families" are defined as children who are first- and second-generation U.S. residents.
12. Estimates of uninsured children in N.C. range from nine to 11 percent, depending on the data source. 2008 CHAMP survey results suggest that 11.3 percent of all children and 25.9 percent of Latino children in N.C. are uninsured. Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/champ/>.
13. National Council of La Raza, April, 2010. "America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends," available online at: <http://www.nclr.org/>. Analysts posit that "the relatively low rates of obesity among Latino youth in the Southeast may reflect the large number of first- and second-generation Latino families in those states. The prevalence of obesity among Latino children has been found to increase with acculturation and the amount of time spent in the U.S."
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16. Campaign for Youth Justice, May 2009. "America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice," available online at: [http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Latino\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Latino_Brief.pdf).
17. National Council of La Raza, April, 2010. "America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends," available online at: <http://www.nclr.org/>.
18. Ibid. Among states with at least 100,000 Latino youth.
19. Ibid. Low-income working families are defined as those with at least one parent working 50 or more weeks per year, with income below 200 percent of the official poverty threshold.
20. Isaacs, J. January 2010. "The Effect of the Recession on Child Poverty," The Brookings Institution. Available online at: [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/0104\\_child\\_poverty\\_isaacs.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/0104_child_poverty_isaacs.aspx)
21. Action for Children N.C. 2009 *Child Economic Opportunity Report Card*, available online at: [www.ncchild.org](http://www.ncchild.org).
22. National Council of La Raza, April, 2010. "America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends," available online at: <http://www.nclr.org/>.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. N.C. CHAMP survey, 2005. "How many times do you read to (child) in a typical week?" (7 or more). Available online at: <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/champ/>.
26. The N.C. Department of Child Development (DCD) does not collect race or ethnicity data on its regulatory functions. In child care subsidy data, race has been an optional field, and it was left blank on enough forms so as to render the data unusable for this report. Going forward, however, race/ethnicity will be a required field in N.C. DCD's subsidy forms.
27. Buisse, Castro, West and Skinner. 2004. "Addressing the Needs of Latino Children: A National Survey of State Administrators of Early Childhood Programs," FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill. Available online at: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nuestros/pdfs/NNExecSummary.pdf>.
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29. N.C. DPI, "2008-09 Consolidated Data Report," available online at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2008-09/consolidated-report.pdf>.



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