



# America's Hispanic Children: Gaining Ground, Looking Forward

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## Foreword

For many groups of children in the United States, there are extensive data and significant research identifying their strengths and challenges, and informing decisions about how to promote their healthy development. This is less true when it comes to Hispanic children. As a result, the nation's knowledge of a large, diverse, and fast-growing group of American children is decidedly incomplete. These gaps hinder our ability to invest wisely in their well-being.

At Child Trends, we have been generating knowledge about America's children for 35 years. As a nonpartisan, nonprofit research center, our mission is to improve the lives and prospects of all children and youth through rigorous research to inform decision making. In June 2014, in keeping with that mission, we launched the Child Trends Hispanic Institute to help fill gaps in the nation's understanding of Hispanic children and youth.

The pages that follow present a rich and nuanced statistical portrait of America's Latino children, drawn from the latest nationally-representative data. It is a complex picture. Some facets will be familiar, while others are less well known. All have important economic and social implications, particularly with respect to education as the pathway to fulfilling aspirations and to full participation in the life of the nation.

Among Hispanic children and youth, there are many positive trends. In highlighting these, our intention is not to overlook serious threats to the well-being of the many Hispanic children who are poor, struggling in school, or fleeing violence. Our intention is to widen the lens, because America's Hispanic children are a bigger and more diverse group, and are more rooted in our nation's culture, than recent headlines might suggest. In the midst of many troubling indicators, there are enduring strengths upon which to build, and impressive, but often overlooked, signs of progress.

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Carol Emig  
President  
Child Trends

## Introduction



Of the 74 million children in the United States today, 17.5 million are Hispanic.<sup>a</sup> They are the largest racial/ethnic minority group of children, and also the fastest-growing. Today, one U.S. child in four is Hispanic; by 2050, it will be more than one in three, about equal to the proportion who will be non-Hispanic white.<sup>1</sup> Hispanic children represent a significant portion of tomorrow's workforce and taxpayers—our shared future.

Virtually all of America's Latino children—more than 90 percent in 2013—are U.S.-born citizens. More than 40 percent have roots in this country that extend beyond their parents' generation.<sup>b</sup> While the majority (70 percent) have family origins in Mexico, the heritage of America's Latino children also takes in Puerto Rico (a U.S. territory), Caribbean countries, countries in Central and South America, and Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Today's generations of Hispanics are gaining ground and, as with many trends, the evidence is clearest when we look at children:

- On important social-emotional skills, young Latino children enter school on a par with, or even exceeding, their non-Latino peers.
- The majority of Latino children live with two parents, which offers a firm foundation for emotional and economic well-being.
- As it has been for so many other Americans, education is a ladder to success for Latinos. More young Latino children are enrolling in early education programs.<sup>3</sup> Latino students are posting solid gains on national assessments in key subject areas.<sup>4</sup> More Latinos than ever before have a high school diploma,<sup>5</sup> and record numbers are enrolling in post-secondary education.<sup>6</sup>
- More of America's Hispanic youth are taking responsibility for their own well-being, as indicated by falling rates of cigarette smoking<sup>7</sup> and teen pregnancy.<sup>8</sup>
- For many Hispanic children, strong family traditions anchor their upbringing. For example, Latino children are more likely than children in other racial/ethnic groups to eat dinner with their families six or seven nights a week.<sup>9</sup>
- Hispanic teens match or even exceed their peers in other racial and ethnic groups in their avid use of technology.<sup>10</sup>

While these gains are impressive, as a group America's Latino children still face some stark challenges that, from an early age, place them at a disadvantage, relative to many other children in the U.S.:

- Pre-eminent is the challenge of poverty: nearly one-third of Latino children live below the poverty line, and a roughly equal share, while not poor by official definition, has family incomes just adequate to meet basic needs.<sup>11</sup> America's Latino children disproportionately live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty,<sup>12</sup> where poor housing, poor schools, and crime further threaten their well-being.<sup>13</sup>
- For reasons that are complex, many Hispanic children start school inadequately prepared to meet that institution's expectations.<sup>14</sup> Issues of language and culture, and possible disconnects between families and schools, can hinder academic achievement for many Hispanic students.<sup>15</sup>
- Despite notable progress in health insurance coverage,<sup>16</sup> close to 15 percent of Hispanic children did not have a well-care visit in the last year.<sup>17</sup> As children or adolescents, many Hispanics are overweight or obese,<sup>18</sup> and rates of substance abuse,<sup>19</sup> interpersonal violence,<sup>20</sup> and depressive symptoms<sup>21</sup> are high.

<sup>a</sup>Throughout this report, we use the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" interchangeably. The Census Bureau gives survey respondents the option of identifying themselves (or their minor children) as having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin."

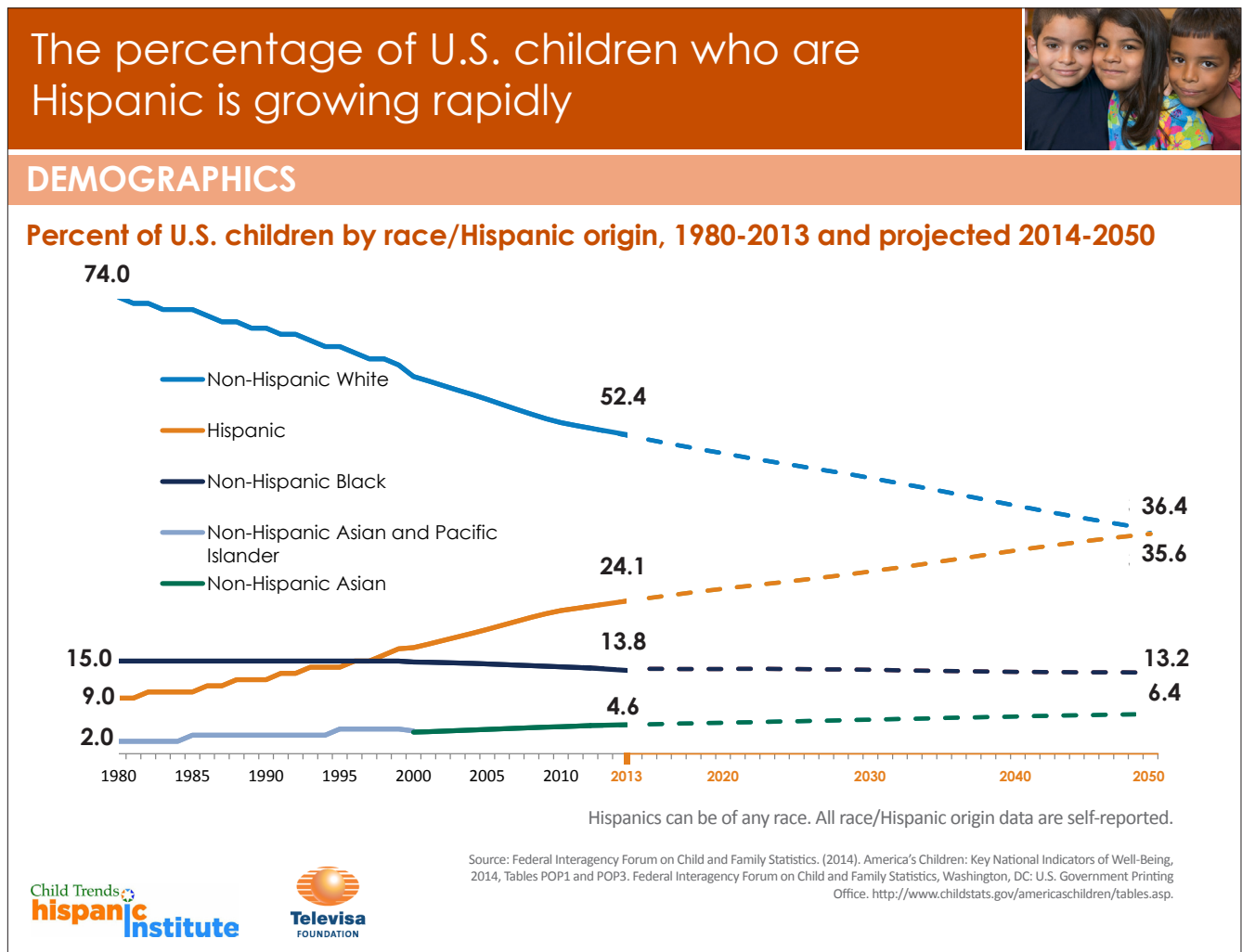
<sup>b</sup>The Census Bureau defines "country of origin" as "the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States." As with all Census data, this information is self-reported. The Census Bureau additionally reports on the "nativity" of household members—whether they were U.S.-born, or foreign-born. The Bureau considers people U.S.-born if they were born in the U.S., Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents. In the case of individuals living with their parents, there is also information on parents' nativity status; no information on place of birth is reported for earlier generations.

As we look forward, the considerable strengths of Latino children and their families are a strong basis for further gains. Some promising examples already evident from research include the generally strong social-emotional skills of young Latino children;<sup>22</sup> the advantages that accompany knowing two languages;<sup>23</sup> and the social ties within and among Latino families that can buffer adversity and promote success.<sup>24</sup> Capitalizing on these assets holds the promise of a brighter shared future for all Americans.

## America's Hispanic Children: Gaining Ground, Looking Forward

### The new demographics: A landscape of rapid change

The United States is a relatively young nation, but in this its third century, it is seeing unprecedented change in the makeup of its population—and, particularly, its children. Reflecting trends that are truly global, the people of the United States are more diverse—in national origins, color, and language background—than ever before in our history. Hispanics comprise the single largest share of this new diversity, and Hispanic children<sup>c</sup> lead the way.

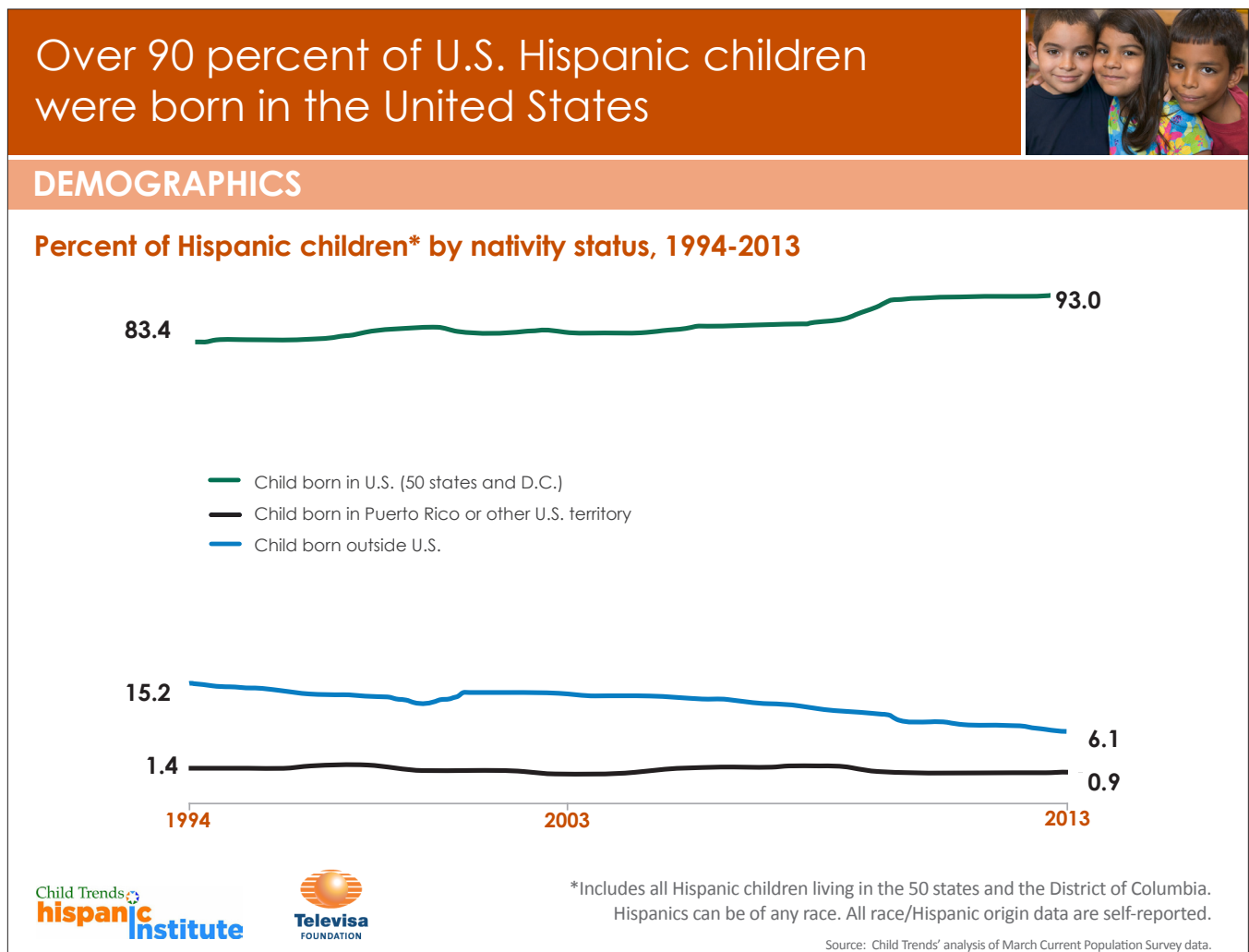


<sup>c</sup>Unless otherwise noted, references to “children” include ages birth through 17; “youth” (generally, ages 16-19) and “young adults” (ages 20-24) are referred to separately.

This diversity is reflected in the rapidly changing demographic landscape of our country. Latino children figure prominently in this landscape, and will play a key role in shaping our country's future. Preparing for and understanding the implications of our shared future begins with an understanding of who America's Latino children are, and how they are faring.

**One in four children in the U.S. today is Hispanic.** Today, descendants of Hispanic families that settled in the lands that now make up the Southwestern United States, together with more recent arrivals from the primarily-Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, and Spain, comprise our Hispanic population. Hispanics are nearly one in four of U.S. children —17.5 million, as of 2013. The percentage of the child population that is Hispanic has more than doubled over the last three decades. By 2050, the share of children who are Hispanic is projected to pull even with the proportion who are white—each accounting for about one-third of the total child population.<sup>25</sup>

**Nearly all Latino children were born here in the U.S.** Nearly all Latino children—over 90 percent—were born here in the United States. In fact, much of the recent growth in the Latino population has been a result of births to families already living here, rather than immigration.<sup>26</sup>



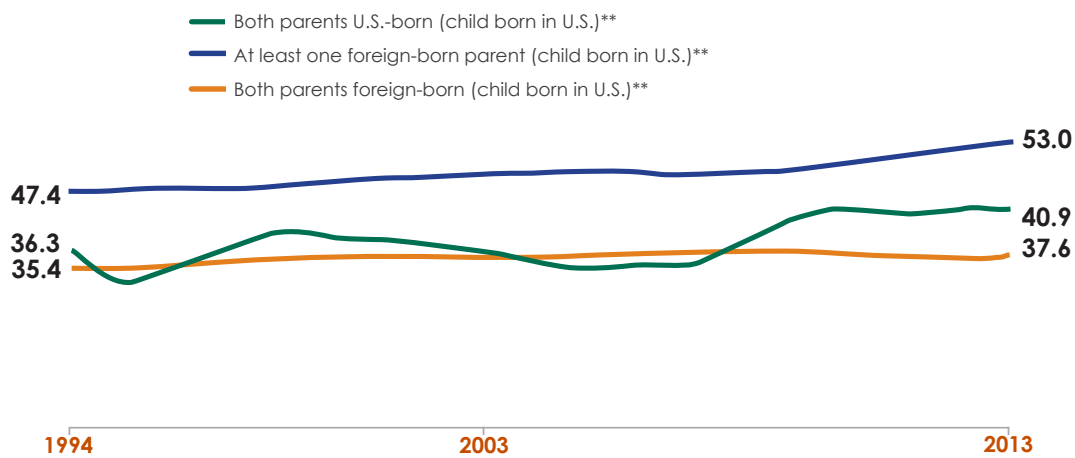
**However, for many Hispanic families, immigration is an important feature of their experience.** While the great majority of Latino children are U.S. citizens, many have family members who immigrated to the United States. This includes those who are legal permanent residents, naturalized citizens, or lack legal status. As of 2013, more than half of Latino children have at least one parent who was born outside the United States.<sup>27</sup> Thus, while most Latino children today are not themselves immigrants, for many of their families the immigrant experience is a recent reality.

## More than half of U.S. Hispanic children have a foreign-born parent



### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Percent of Hispanic children\* by parents' nativity status, 1994-2013



\*Includes all Hispanic children living in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.  
 \*\*U.S.-born refers to the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories. Percentages sum to more than 100, because categories are not mutually exclusive. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.



Source: Child Trends' analysis of March Current Population Survey data.

**Increasing diversity in the Hispanic child population:** Throughout today's world, old boundaries are blurring as families everywhere seek educational and occupational opportunity within a global marketplace. Within the Hispanic population itself, there is great diversity—of longevity in this country, of national origin, and in their level of cultural integration.

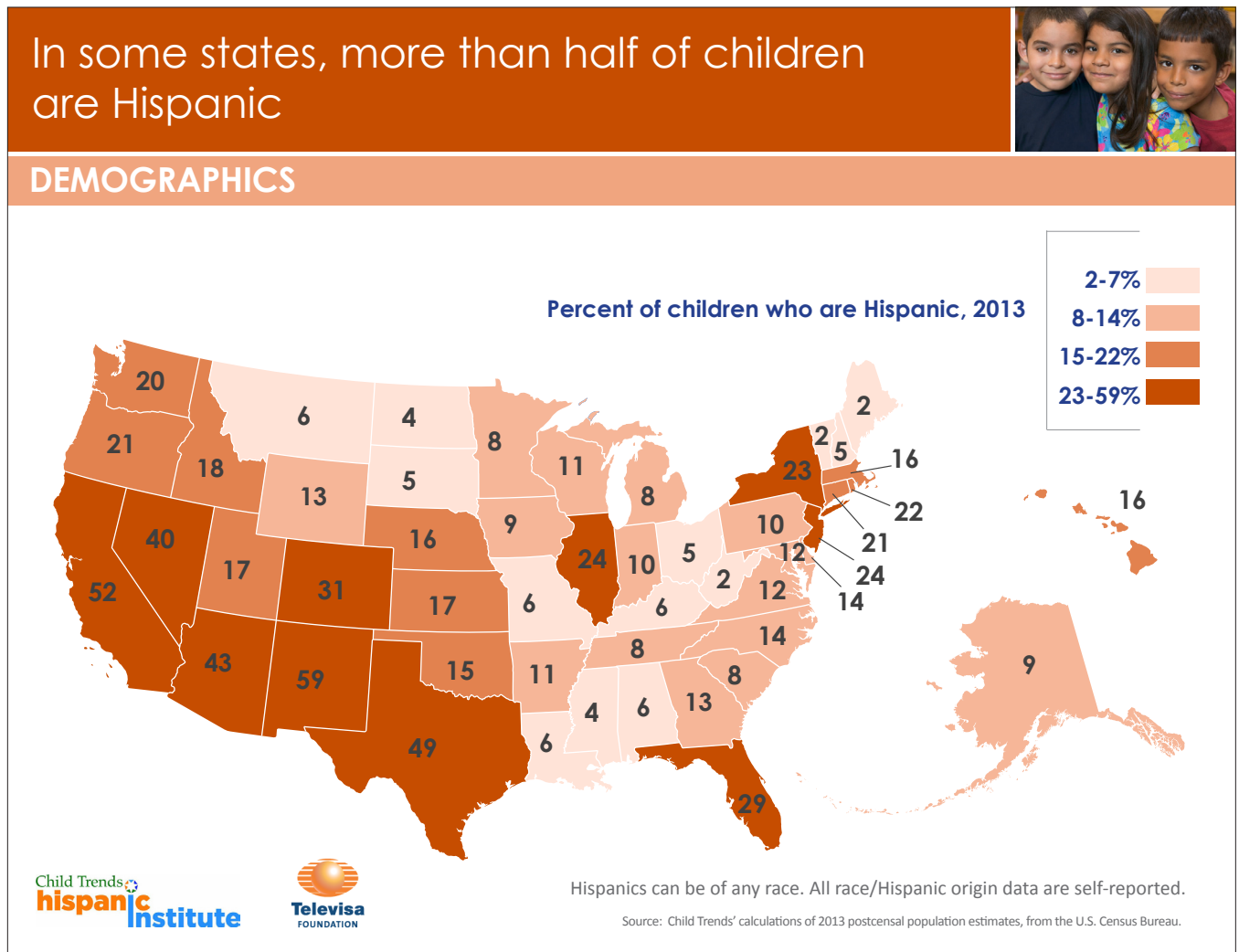
Among U.S. Hispanic children, seven in ten have Mexican heritage. The next-largest group is those whose heritage is Puerto Rican, followed by Salvadoran, Dominican, Cuban, other countries in Central America, and South America.<sup>28</sup> Far from homogeneous, the experiences of Hispanic children often reflect their specific national origins: children from Central America typically come from rural areas, and their families have often fled violence and poverty. Cubans and South Americans, on average, are among the economically better-off. Dominicans and Mexicans—in spite of their longstanding ties to this country—experience the most residential segregation, while all Hispanic groups, excepting South Americans, disproportionately live in disadvantaged neighborhoods.<sup>29</sup>

In this report, we will refer to U.S.-level data on Hispanic children, while acknowledging that treating them as a single group likely masks a great deal of diversity in how different subgroups are faring. Unfortunately, virtually no national data systems are currently designed to allow disaggregation of well-being indicators by a child's country of origin.<sup>30</sup>

**The diversity of Latino children varies by region.** While in most regions of the U.S. the majority of Latino children have Mexican heritage, in the Northeast, children from Central and South America predominate, followed by Puerto Ricans, with Mexicans in a distant third place. The South holds not only the largest share of Cuban children, but also the second-largest share of Puerto Rican children.<sup>31</sup> The extent to which Latinos tend to live in neighborhoods with other Latinos varies, but more than half do not live in predominantly Latino communities.<sup>32</sup>

Hispanic children are part of every state's future. In New Mexico and California, they are already a majority of children.<sup>33</sup> Some regions—the Southwestern states, California, Texas, Florida, and the metropolitan areas of the Northeastern states—have long histories of Hispanic settlement. But other regions have seen more recent and rapid change: among them, several states in the Midwest (Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota) and South (Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina).<sup>34</sup>

And places where Hispanics are traditionally concentrated are changing, too: in New York City, Puerto Ricans have lost nearly 40 percent of their share of the total Hispanic population (from 50 percent in 1990, to 31 percent in 2010), and Mexicans have more than tripled theirs (from four to 15 percent). In Miami, the share of Hispanics who are Cuban has fallen by 11 percent (from 62 to 55 percent), while South Americans have increased their share by one-third (from 12 to 18 percent).<sup>35</sup>

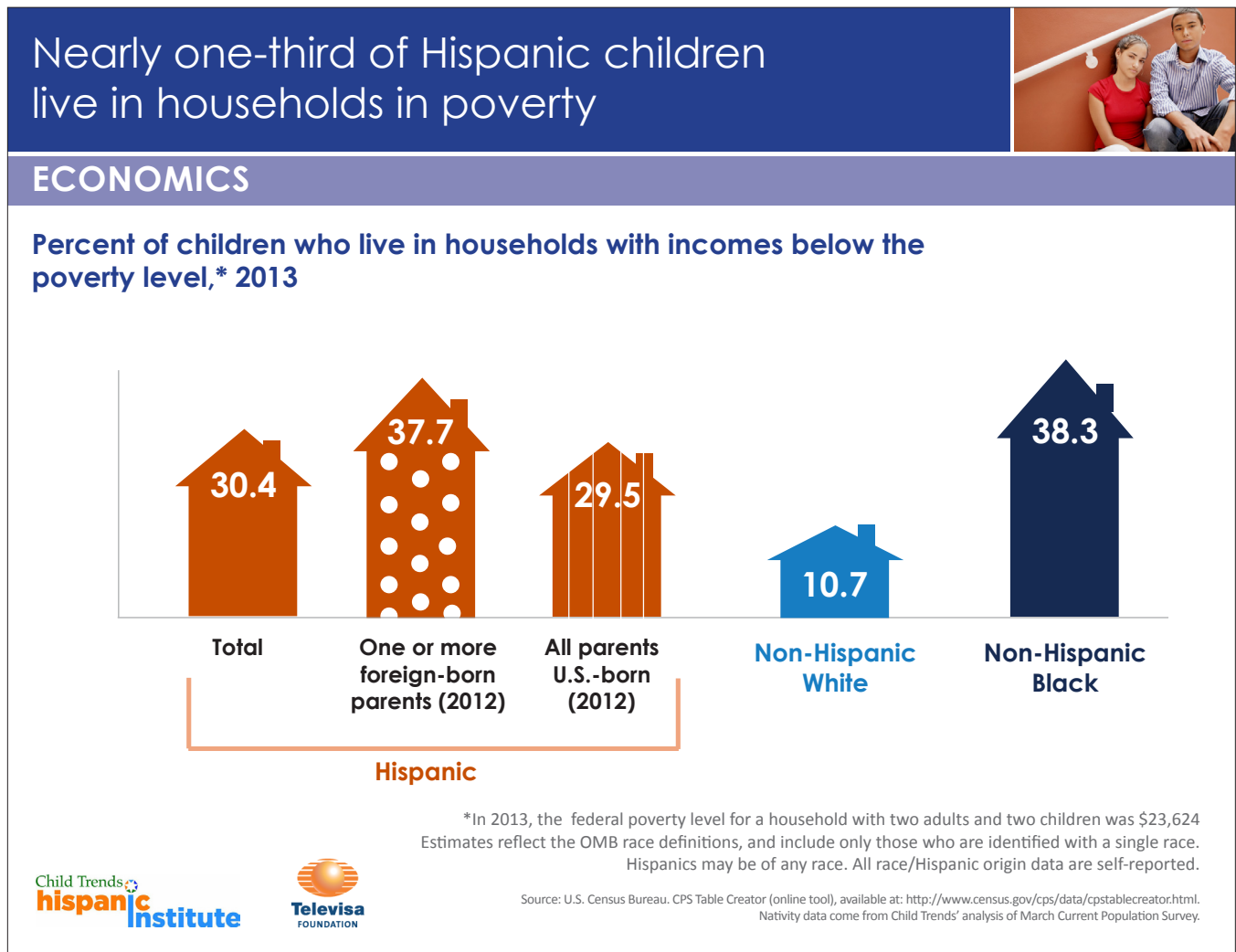




## Economic well-being: Investing for a shared future

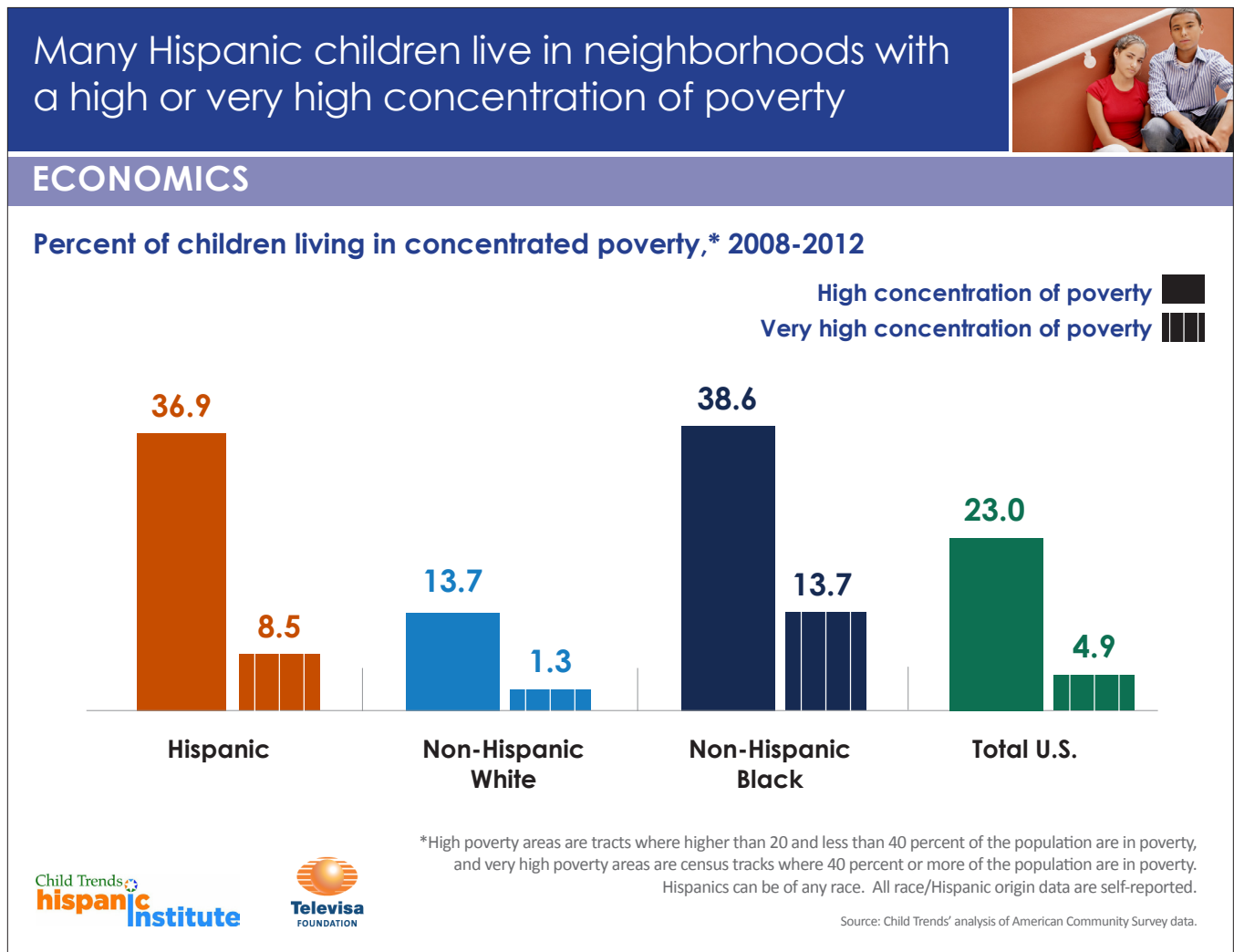
We do not have to look ahead to see progress toward a more diverse picture of prosperity in the United States. Hispanics are rapidly expanding their roles in U.S. society, and through their numbers are making their mark on the economy as consumers and producers. From the entertainment industry to the Supreme Court, and from academe to corporate board rooms, Hispanics have gained prominence and contributed new and vibrant strands to our nation's cultural fabric.

**Economic security is precarious for many Hispanic children.** At the same time, many Hispanic families struggle to get ahead. The majority of Hispanic children (62 percent) live in low-income families—conventionally defined as those with incomes less than twice the federal poverty level, where many experts believe families can just meet basic needs. Roughly one in three Hispanic children lives in poverty. And one in eight lives in deep poverty (family income less than half the poverty line).<sup>36</sup> The disparity between Hispanic children and white children in economic well-being is greatest when it comes to those in married-parent families: just one in nine white children living with married parents is in poverty, whereas for Hispanic children it is more than one in five.<sup>37</sup> Poverty is also higher among Hispanic children who have at least one foreign-born parent, compared with those who have two U.S.-born parents.<sup>38</sup>



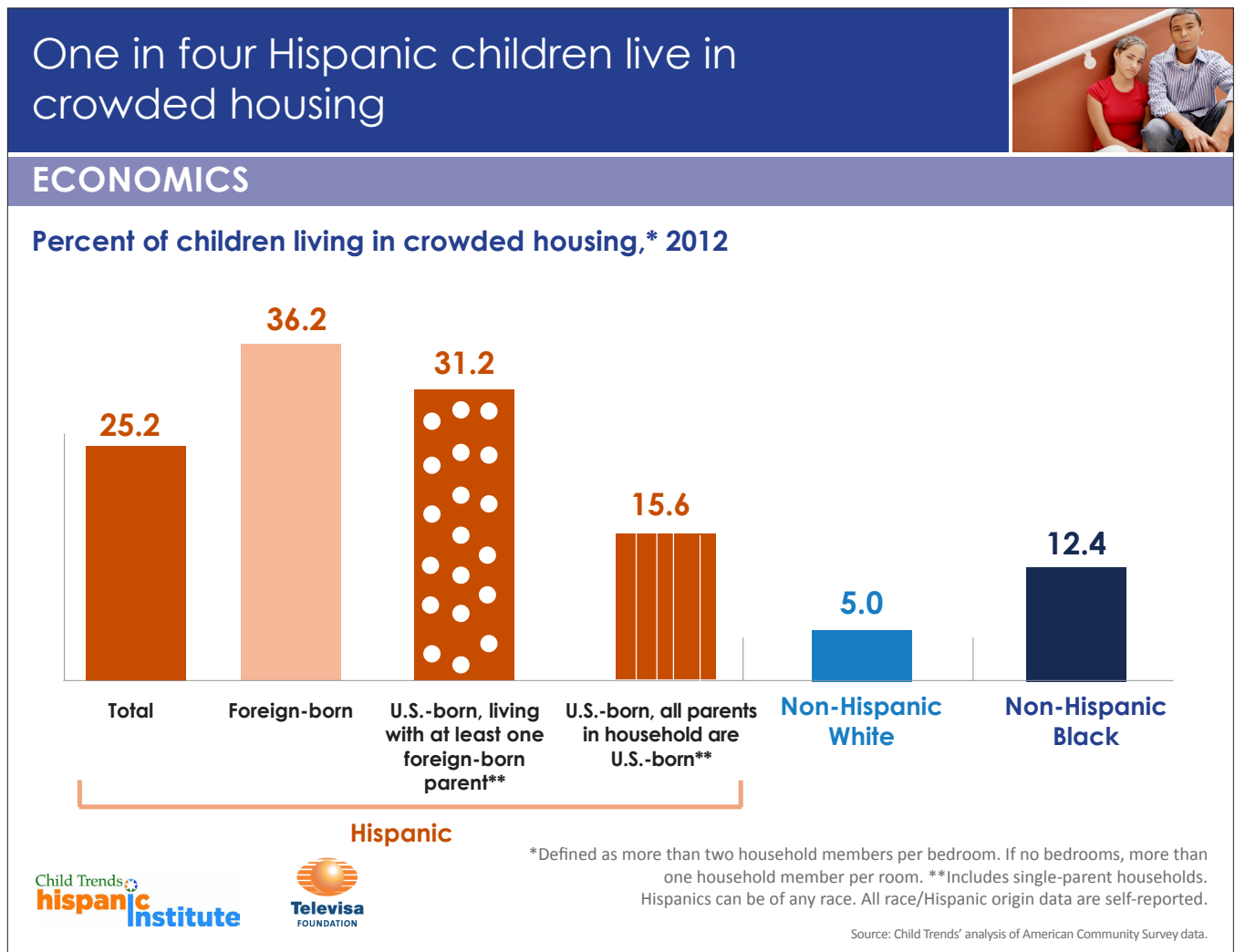
Children who experience poverty are at a higher risk for many negative outcomes: poor health, lower school performance, delinquent behavior, unemployment, and dependence on public assistance. Prolonged economic hardship acts as a form of chronic stress, jeopardizing children's brain development and contributing to their susceptibility to disease.<sup>39</sup> Research on the well-being of Hispanic children does not always control statistically for the fact that poverty looms large in their experience as a group. Thus, findings of disadvantage (for instance, in academic achievement, or health) may reflect the effects of low income.

**Many Latino children live in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty.** Over a third of all Latino children live in *neighborhoods* of concentrated poverty,<sup>40</sup> where the preponderance of low educational attainment among adults, lower-quality housing, lower-quality schools, and crime all constrain their opportunities.<sup>41</sup> A majority (52 percent) of Latino children live in neighborhoods that, according to their parents, are “always” safe, while 23 percent live in neighborhoods parents consider “never” safe.<sup>42</sup>

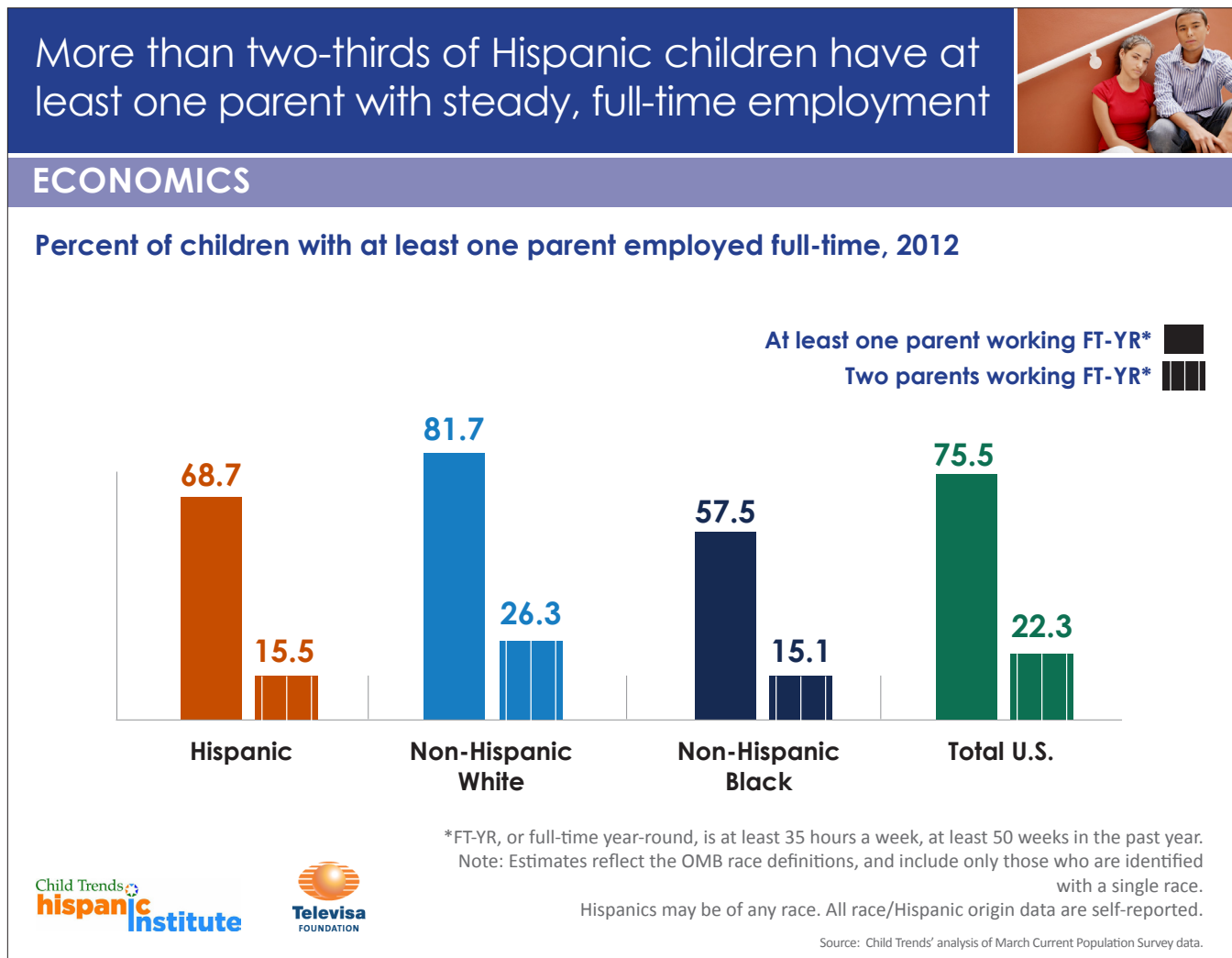


**Many Hispanic children live in crowded housing.** One in four Hispanic children shares a bedroom with three or more family members—a proportion five times higher than among non-Hispanic white children. Hispanic children with at least one foreign-born parent, and children from Mexican or Central American families, are much more likely to experience crowded housing.<sup>43</sup>

Although crowded housing is often a byproduct of poverty, such living arrangements may reflect cultural traditions and can offer children benefits, such as access to a greater number of adults to help care for them and opportunities to interact with multiple generations. However, crowded living conditions can also impose burdens, both practical and emotional, on children and parents, negatively affecting child health and behavior, and parenting. In general, in homes where families are crowded, parents are less responsive to infants and toddlers, and more likely to use punitive discipline.<sup>44</sup> Crowding has also been associated with children’s health problems, including respiratory conditions, injuries, and infectious diseases, and with young children’s food insecurity.<sup>45</sup>



**Employment among parents of Latino children.** More than two-thirds of Latino children have at least one parent who works full-time, all year (and one in six has two parents working full-time).<sup>46</sup>



**Latino youth also make significant contributions to their families' economic security.** One in ten Latino high schoolers is employed, as are nearly half (45 percent) of those enrolled in college. Of those not enrolled in school, six in ten are working.<sup>47</sup>

**On the other hand, many Hispanic youth are not in the labor force.** The labor market prospects for all young people (youth and young adults) have taken a hit in recent years. In 2011, among Hispanic teens (ages 16 to 19), more than half, and, among young adults (20 to 24), nearly a third were part of the “under-utilized” labor force (which includes those who had given up looking for work, and those having to suffice with part-time work, as well as those who were unemployed).<sup>48</sup> Hispanic young men (ages 16 to 19) have more work experience than their peers, which improves their employment prospects overall, but this group has been less successful in gaining full-time jobs.<sup>49</sup>

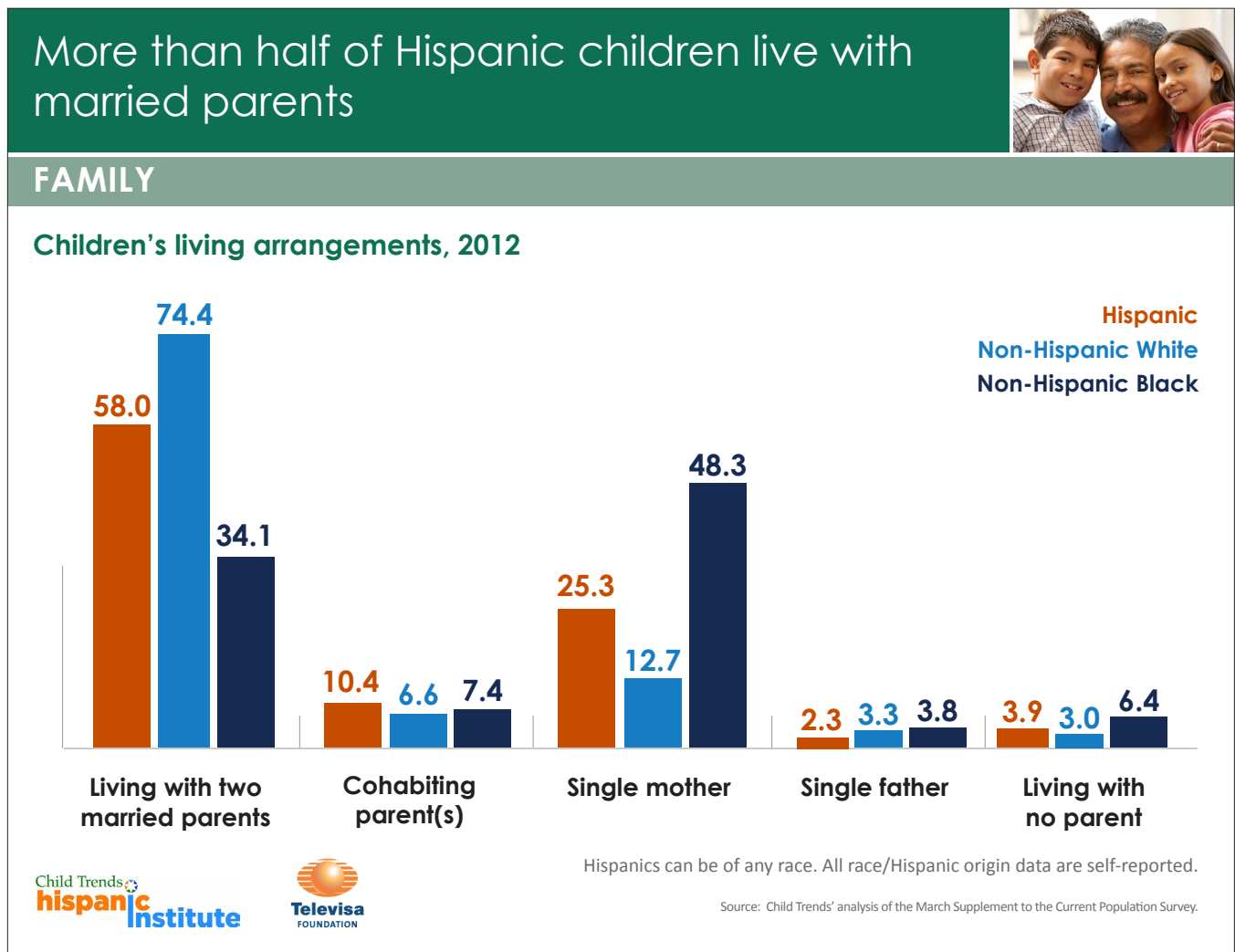
Of particular concern are youth who are neither employed nor enrolled in school. While there are multiple pathways to success, the consequences of unemployment, under-employment, or not acquiring post-secondary education can be damaging and enduring. Youth neither enrolled in school nor working are less likely to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and are at risk for multiple additional poor outcomes. As of 2012, one in ten Hispanic 16- to 19-year-olds was in this category.<sup>50</sup>

Society suffers when prosperity is not widely shared. The logic of the new demographics is that, when the nation fails to nurture Latino children, it fails to nurture one-quarter of the workforce of the next generation—the proportion of the workforce in 2050 that is projected to be Latino.<sup>51</sup>

## Families: The shared foundation

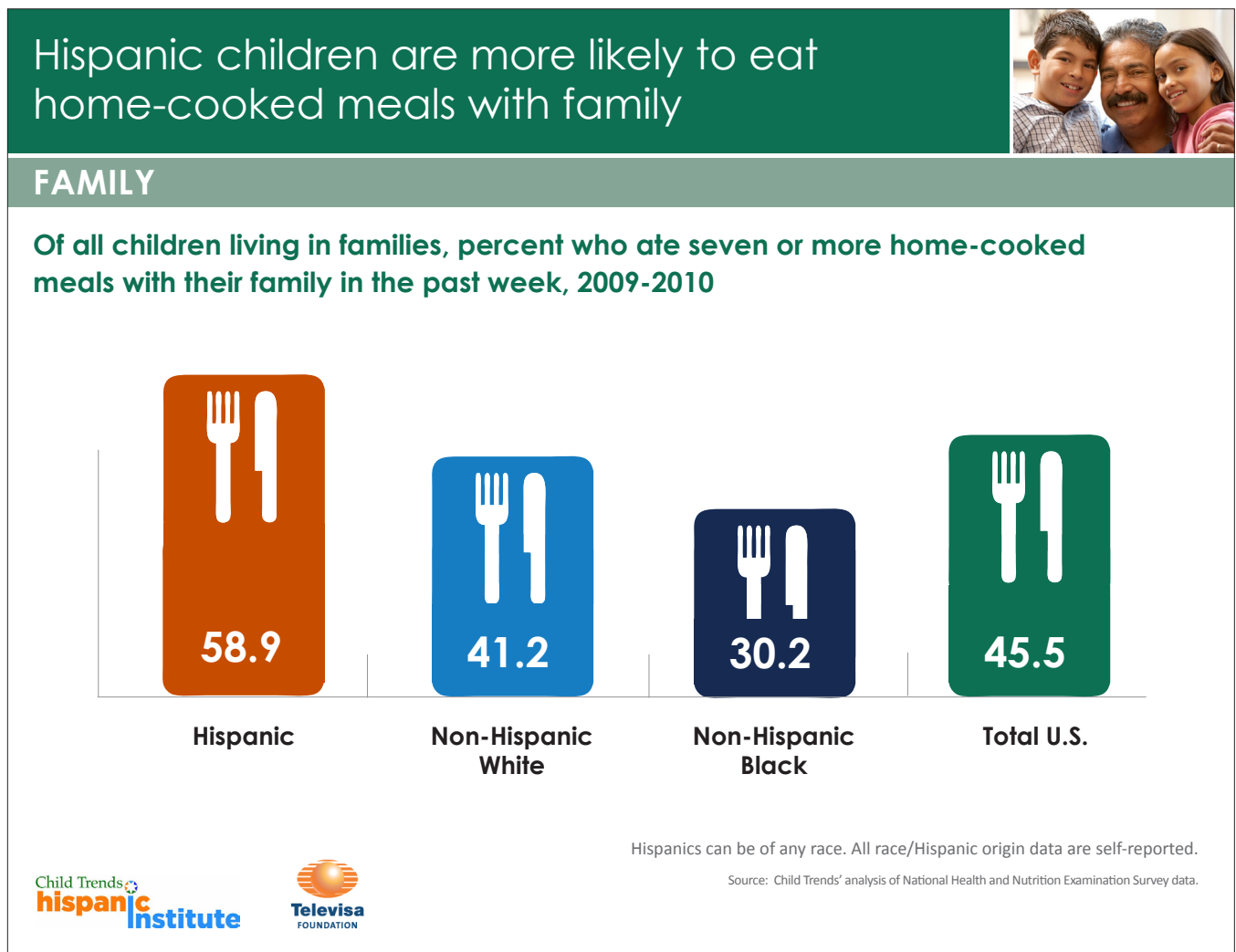
We all gain ground when we build on positive values. Families are a society’s foundation, and many believe the lessons learned as children, at home, are often the ones that endure. For most Latinos, there are few things that are more important than family. Eight in ten U.S. adults, according to a 2012 survey, agree that immigrants from Latin American countries have “strong family values.” And among Latinos themselves, more than 90 percent of adults consider “being a good parent” to be “very important.”<sup>52</sup> Two-thirds of Latino teens say their parents praise them for good behavior nearly every day—a higher percentage than either white or black teens report.<sup>53</sup>

**Most Hispanic children live with both parents.** Nearly six in ten Hispanic children (58 percent) live with two married parents. One in ten lives with two cohabiting adults, at least one of which is a biological or adoptive parent. Around one in four lives with their mother only, and small percentages live with their father only, or with neither of their parents (less than five percent in each case).<sup>54</sup>



**Maintaining family bonds through shared family meals.** Traditional virtues within Latino families emphasize the efforts parents make on behalf of their children (*sacrificios*), and the importance they place on seeing that a child is well brought-up (*bien educado*), with attention to proper social behavior and showing respect (*respeto*) for elders and others in a position of authority. The closeness of family ties—and, even more, solidarity—has for years been a source of strength among the Latino community.<sup>55</sup>

One important opportunity to develop strong parent-child relationships and family connectedness is around family meals. Like other forms of parental involvement, frequent family meals are associated with positive behavioral outcomes for both children and teens, regardless of ethnicity. Eating with parents can also have a positive influence on the nutrition and eating habits of adolescents. Latino children are more likely than their white or black peers to eat a meal with family members six or seven days in a week.<sup>56</sup> Latino children are also more likely than either black or white children to share a family meal that is home-cooked.<sup>57</sup>



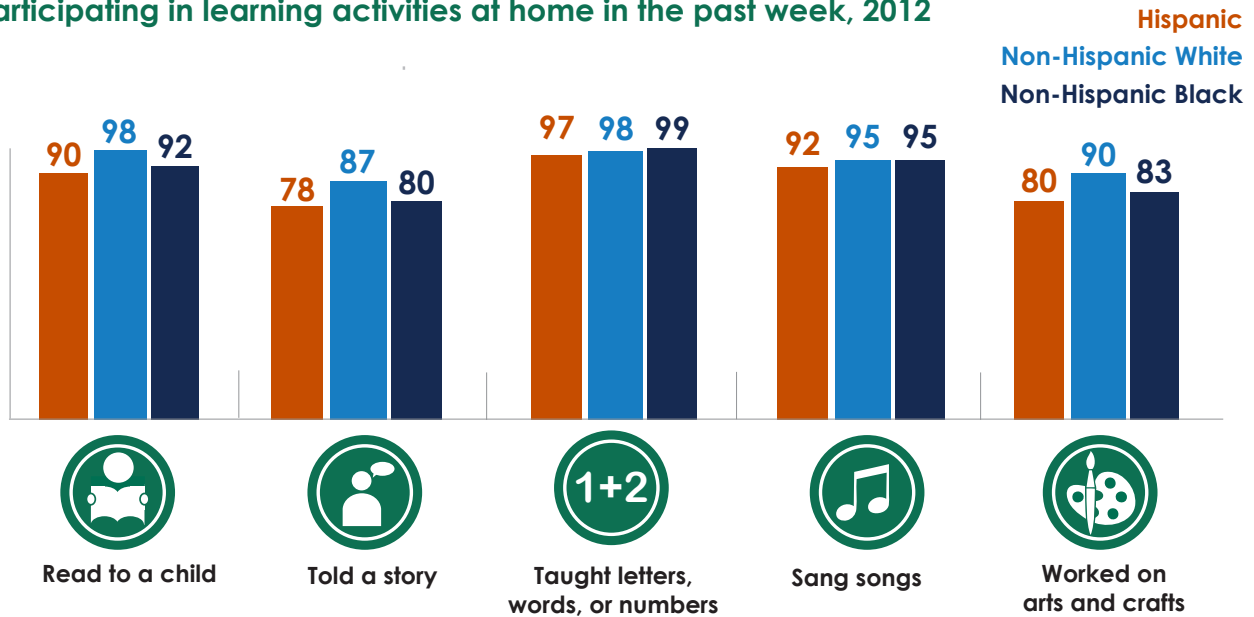
**Promoting early literacy and parental involvement.** Latino parents of young children (ages three to five) read, tell stories, sing, work on arts and crafts, and teach letters and numbers, with them on a regular basis.<sup>58</sup> However, research finds that, as a group, Latinos are less likely than white parents to read daily to young children: a little more than a third of Latino children have parents who do so, compared with two-thirds of white children. Thus, some parents are missing an opportunity to promote early literacy skills that can help their children get a strong start in school.<sup>59</sup>

# At home, most preschool-aged Hispanic children do key learning activities, with parents



## FAMILY

Percent of children not yet in kindergarten (3-5) whose parents reported participating in learning activities at home in the past week, 2012



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Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.  
Source: Mamedova, S., Redford, J., Zukerberg, A. (2013). Early childhood program participation, from the National Household Education Surveys program of 2012. (NCES 2013-029). National Center for Education Statistics.

On the other hand, nearly two-thirds of Hispanic teens have parents who say they can “share ideas or talk about things that really matter” with their teens.<sup>60</sup>

**Family stress affects child development.** While such values anchor their traditions and represent a great asset, some Latino families face serious challenges. Because of the need to relocate to find employment, the disruptions caused by violent conflict in their countries of origin, or unresolved legal issues surrounding immigration, some Latino children experience separations from one or more family members. And, even when families are together, these strains can contribute to anxiety and stress, and can operate to dissuade family members from seeking the help they need—particularly from institutions such as health care systems, schools, and other social services.<sup>61</sup> Recent developments in brain science have highlighted the negative effects on children’s healthy development that can result from trauma. Traumatic events—which can result in toxic levels of stress—include parental separation or divorce, parental incarceration, and experiencing or witnessing violence, among others.<sup>62</sup>

Our country’s shared future depends in part on how well we act to strengthen families to ensure that the potential in all our children is realized. Hispanic families, in particular, hold a great deal of social capital that can be leveraged to build awareness of family-friendly activities and services within communities, share information on opportunities for education and employment, and improve the quality of communities.

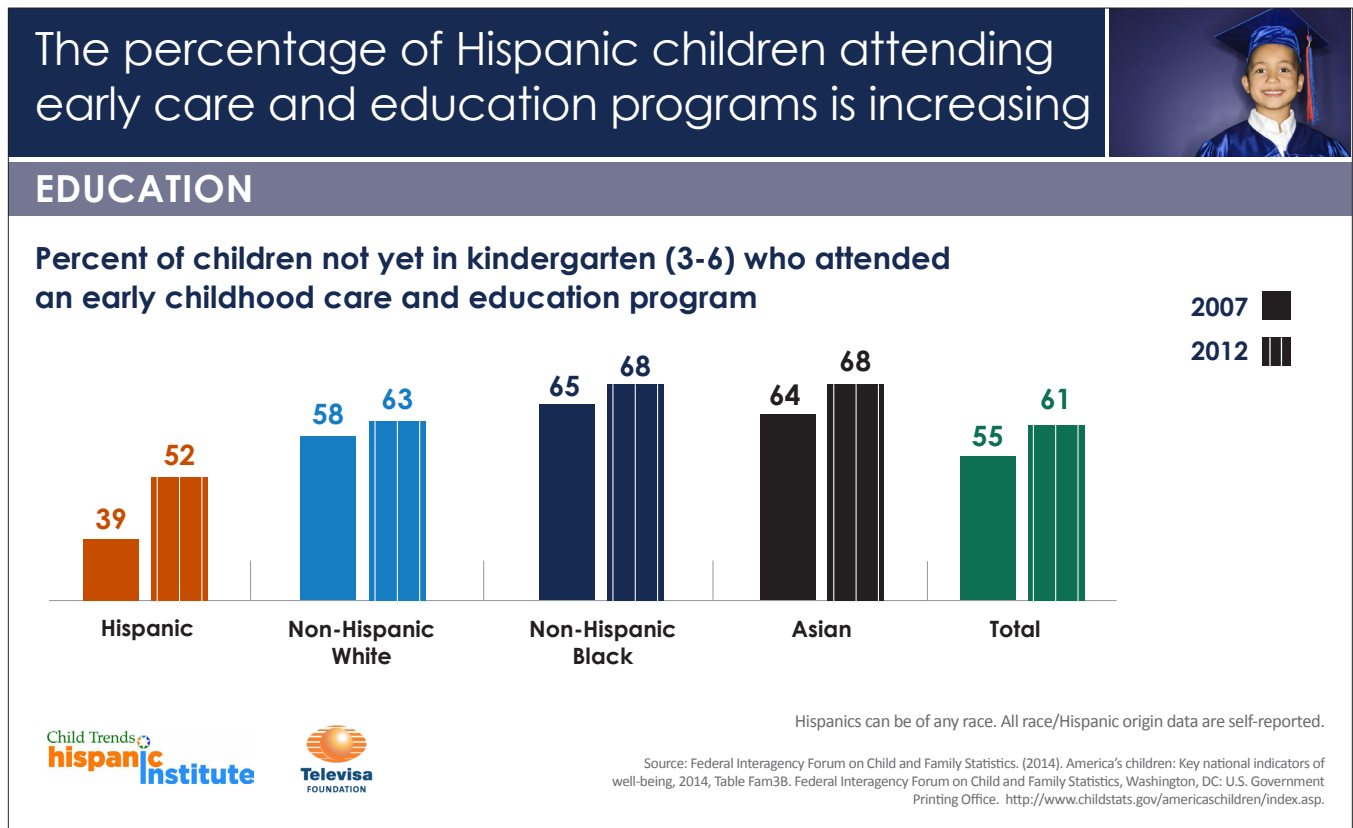
## Educating for the shared future

In the United States, education has historically provided the means by which to get ahead. Those who are better educated are more likely to get jobs, earn more money, stay healthy, and live longer. And, they are more likely to have children who follow a similar path.

Latinos in the United States place a premium on the value of education. For instance, nearly nine in ten say a college education is extremely or very important, compared with eight in ten of the overall population.<sup>63</sup> But, like many immigrant communities, some Latinos struggle to navigate aspects of a system they are unfamiliar with, and that sometimes fails to “speak their language” (culturally as well as literally).

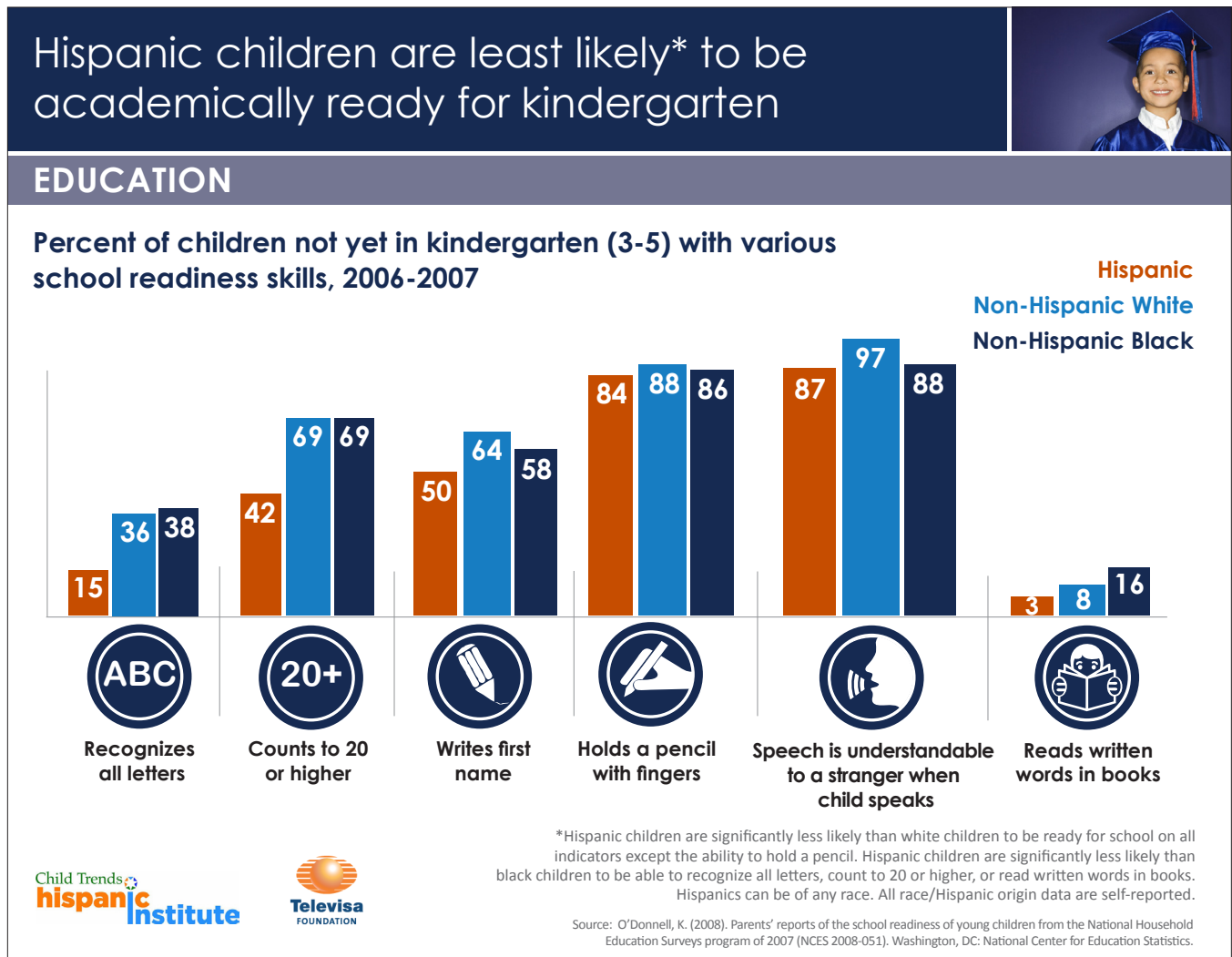
The eagerness of Hispanic youth (and their families) to improve themselves through schooling is evident—in falling high school dropout rates, in record rates of post-secondary enrollment. But some critical supports are lacking. At the front end, too many young Hispanic children enter kindergarten without some of the skills necessary to make optimal progress in school. And at the back end, too many young adult Hispanics fail to complete the college education they start and obtain the degree that will boost their life chances. In the intervening years, the academic achievement of Hispanic students—while improving over time—still trails that of their white peers.

**Participation in early care and education programs.** Young children’s participation in some form of non-parental care (home- or center-based) has become increasingly common in the United States, and research finds that such programs can benefit children’s development and help prepare them for school, provided they are of sufficient quality. Recent data show that participation by Latino children in early education programs has increased by a third since 2007 (reaching 52 percent, as of 2012); however, their participation still trails that of white and black children.<sup>64</sup> Latino preschoolers whose mothers are employed are most likely to be cared for at home by a relative, or remain in parental care. They are less likely to be enrolled in center-based care or in home-based care by a non-relative.<sup>65</sup> Regrettably, for Latino as well as for non-Latino children, we know little about the quality of care children receive, regardless of the setting.





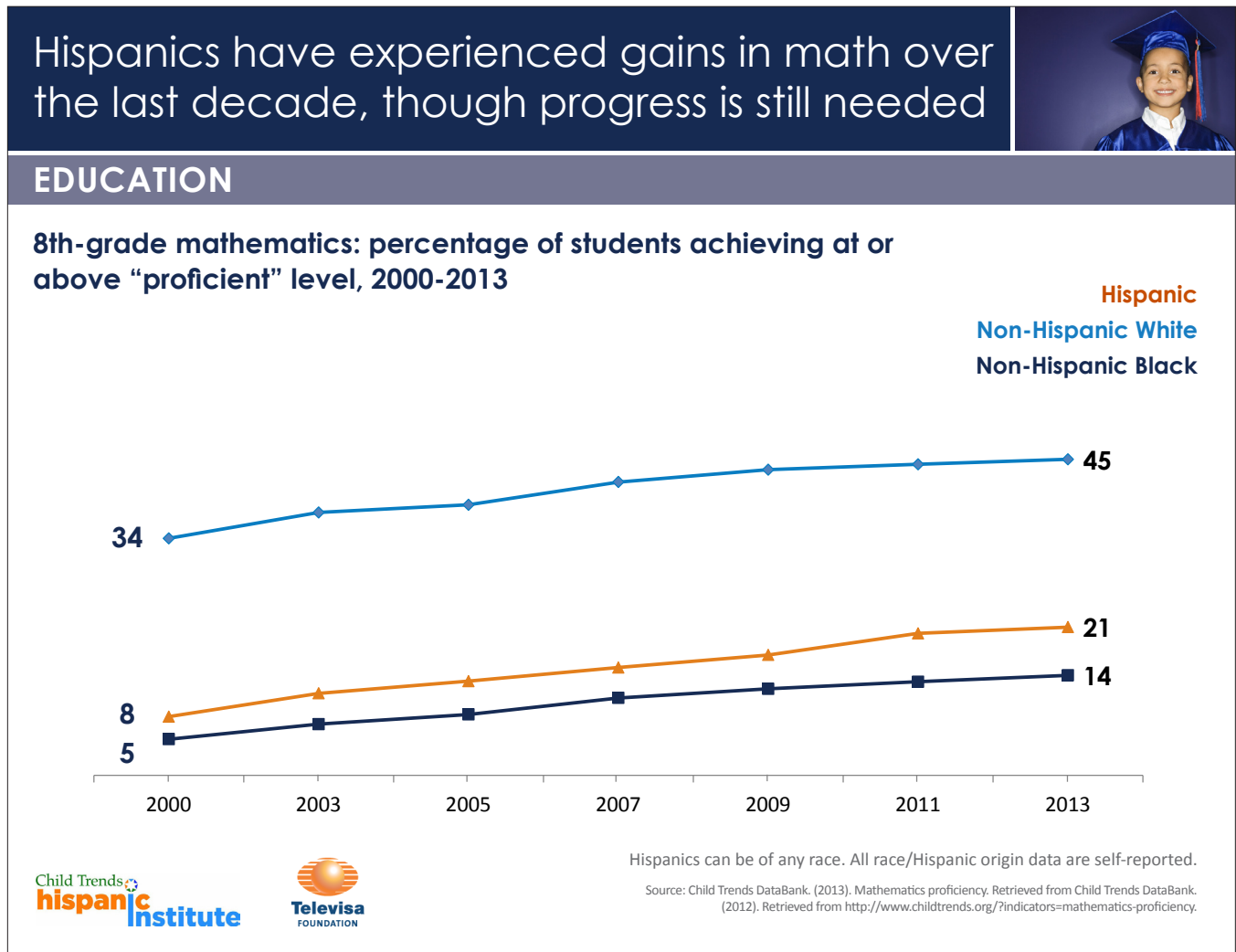
**School readiness of Hispanic children.** As we consider readiness for school, we do well to bear in mind that, in 17 states, at least one in five kindergartners is Latino.<sup>66</sup> It is also important to think about children's readiness for school as *multi-dimensional*. On the one hand, on some measures of parent-reported readiness for kindergarten, Hispanic children compare unfavorably with their non-Hispanic counterparts.<sup>67</sup> Hispanic children start school less likely than their white peers to know their alphabet or numbers, write their names, or read written words. Research shows that these school readiness skills help to set the stage for later learning and school success. High rates of poverty may be among the factors that influence these disparities, as well as Hispanic children's lower participation in preschool programs.



On the other hand, research finds that young Latino children enter kindergarten with social-emotional skills that are well-developed—sometimes even ahead of other children's.<sup>68</sup> Social-emotional learning (sometimes referred to as non-cognitive skills) encompasses important competencies such as self-control, positive interpersonal communication, and solving problems without physical conflict. Many educators consider these skills to be of equal importance with academic competence when it comes to students' success.<sup>69</sup> The data may reflect that, among some Latino parents, children's socialization is prioritized over those skills that are strictly academic.

**Gaining ground academically, although disparities persist.** There have been substantial gains in Hispanics' students' performance on national assessments of math, reading, science, and writing over the last decade. The percentage of Hispanic students who score as proficient or above in math achievement has more than doubled over the last decade, though they are still a minority.<sup>70</sup>

However, deficits in school achievement, evident in the early grades, tend to widen over time, in the absence of effective intervention. At fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades, Hispanic students lag behind white students in reading, science, and writing, and, in fourth and eighth grades, in math (a common assessment is not administered in twelfth grade).<sup>71</sup> Hispanic children are also less likely than black children to spend an hour or more per weekday reading for pleasure.<sup>72</sup>



**Many Latino children have parents who do not speak English well.** The issue of language often comes up in discussing the acculturation of Latino families and their children. A two-generation approach is appropriate here. Most Latino children (87 percent) speak English very well.<sup>73</sup> But not all of their parents are comfortable using English. In fact, in the case of half (53 percent) of Latino children who live with both parents, at least one parent does not speak English very well.<sup>74</sup> To the extent that Latino children depend on their parents to navigate for them—to obtain essential goods and services—their children may also be disadvantaged. Service agencies can support Latino families by developing their capacity to address cultural difference, as well as by connecting parents, where appropriate, to programs that provide English language instruction.<sup>75</sup>

**Latino children make up the majority of dual language learners,** a large and growing group, defined as those who are acquiring two languages simultaneously. The research evidence is clear that bilingualism confers numerous advantages: despite some inevitable stumbles in the early phases of learning, children’s familiarity with both languages (and both cultures) has cognitive, social, and emotional benefits, and will offer many advantages in today’s increasingly global workplace.<sup>76</sup> The majority of kindergartners who are dual language learners are Latino.<sup>77</sup>

Young children are remarkably quick learners; nevertheless, before they become fully adept in English, this group may pose challenges for teachers and staff in early education programs. Older children may need a different set of supports for learning a second language while maintaining their original linguistic and cultural ties. Research has shown that, with adequate preparation, schools and teachers can meet the needs of bilingual children.<sup>78</sup>

**School engagement among Hispanic families.** School engagement is another arena where practices in some Hispanic families may diverge from norms of the majority culture. Part of the problem—and, therefore, part of the response—seems to be a mismatch, in some cases, between the cultural scripts of Hispanic families and those of schools, which may not have caught up with our communities’ new diversity. While parents generally support their children’s education in many ways, such as providing an enriching environment in the home, U.S. schools have expectations that at times may be at odds with Hispanic traditions.<sup>79</sup>

For example, parents of school-aged children are typically encouraged to actively assert themselves in their child’s school experience, by asking the classroom teacher about the curriculum and their child’s progress, advocating for their child’s particular needs and interests, and participating in school-sponsored activities. However, Latino parents’ views of education may be influenced by traditions of respect for authority (*respeto*), which can inhibit behaviors seen as challenging the teacher or school. Add to that the possibility of a language barrier, and potential challenges around job schedules and transportation.

The lesson: increased involvement by Latino parents in the schools’ mission may require a different set of strategies on the part of schools, including calling on some Latino families to provide outreach to their peers, valuing the particular ways in which Latino parents do support their children’s education, and respectfully engaging parents in activities they can do from home.<sup>80</sup>

**Participation in organized out-of-school time activities,** particularly when those are ongoing and supervised by adults, can benefit youth’s social, emotional, and cognitive development, increase the likelihood of their engaging in healthy behaviors, and reduce the chances of their involvement in risky behaviors.<sup>81</sup> Latino children are substantially less likely than their white peers to participate in after-school sports, or in clubs and organizations—a disparity that may represent an important missed opportunity. However, Latino children are more likely than white children to attend religious services at least weekly.<sup>82</sup> Regular attendance at religious services is also associated with a lower likelihood of risky behaviors, and greater likelihood of other forms of positive social participation, such as volunteering.<sup>83</sup>

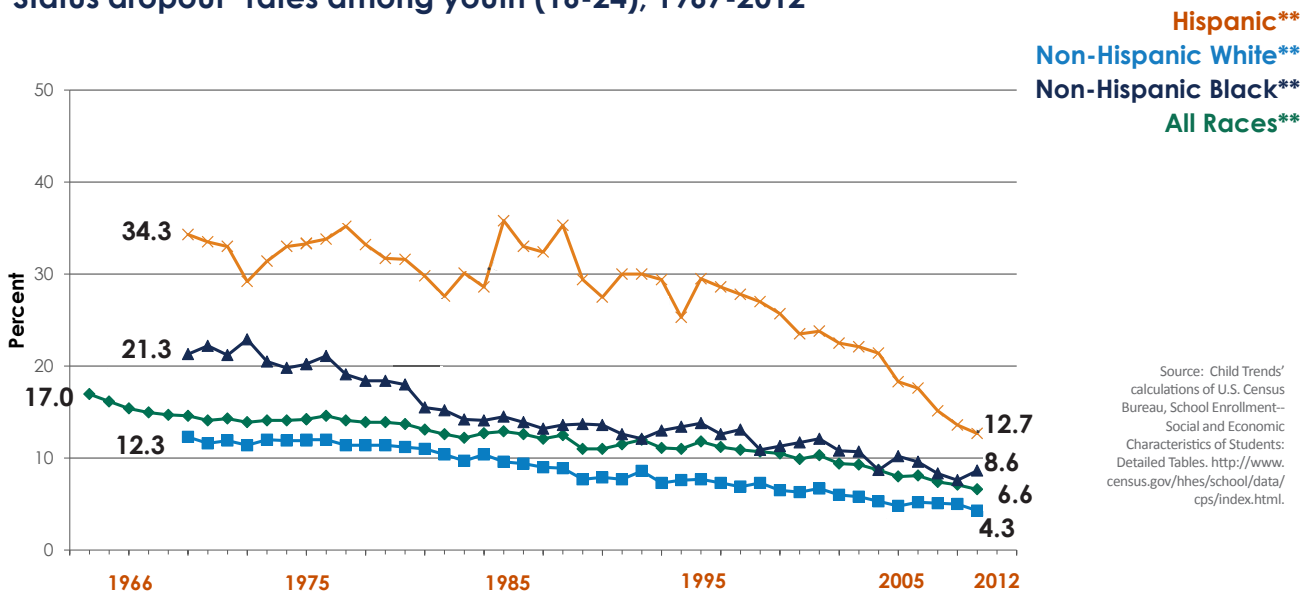
**Latinos have made great strides in improving rates of high school graduation and reducing rates of dropout.** In 1980, one-third of Latino youth, ages 16 to 24, had not completed high school; in 2012, only 13 percent had not—an improvement of more than 60 percent.<sup>84</sup> This is a success story that deserves greater recognition. However, among Latinos enrolled in ninth grade in 2007-08, just 73 percent graduated four years later, compared with 86 percent among white students.<sup>85</sup>

# The high school dropout rate among Hispanic youth has declined substantially



## EDUCATION

Status dropout\* rates among youth (16-24), 1967-2012



Source: Child Trends' calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, School Enrollment--Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: Detailed Tables. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/index.html>.



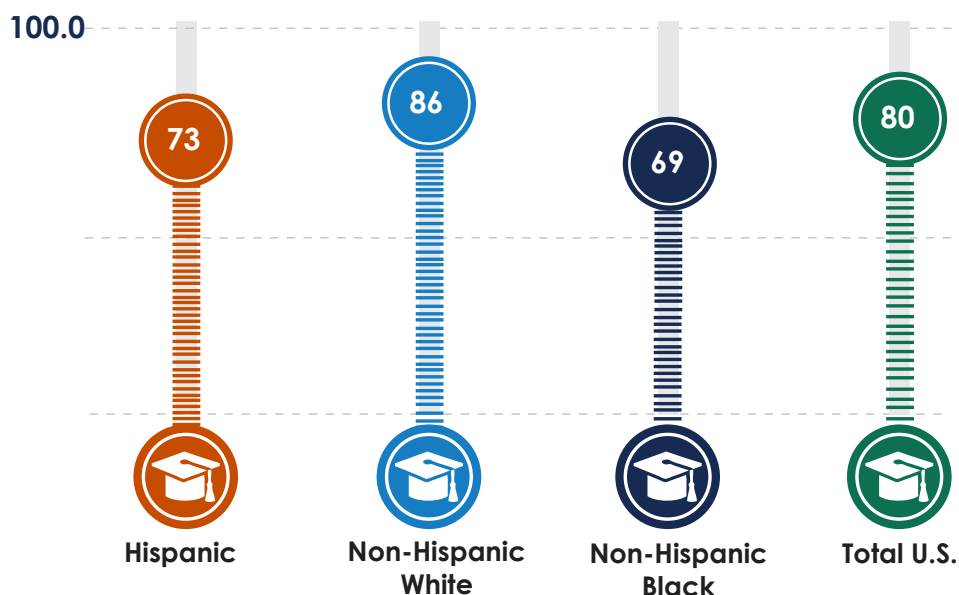
\*The status dropout rate measures the percentage of young adults aged 16 to 24 who were not enrolled in school and had not received a high school diploma or obtained a GED. This measure excludes people in the military and those who are incarcerated, but includes immigrants who never attended U.S. schools. \*\*Due to changes in the race categories, estimates from 2003 are not strictly comparable to estimates from 2002 and before. After 2001, the black race category includes Hispanics.

# More than one in four Hispanic high school freshmen don't graduate on time



## EDUCATION

Public high school four-year on-time graduation rates, 2011-2012



Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

Source: Stetser, M. C. & Stillwell, R. (2014). Public high school four-year on-time graduation rates and event dropout rates: School years 2010-11 and 2011-12. First Look. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf>.

**College is the newest educational frontier for many Hispanics.** Some type of post-secondary education is rapidly becoming a requirement for entry into jobs that pay a livable wage and offer the possibility of career advancement. Hispanic enrollment in post-secondary programs has increased markedly in recent years, so that they are now the largest minority group on college campuses. Among those completing high school, almost half (46 percent) of Hispanics were enrolled in college in 2011. At two-year colleges, Hispanics (as of 2011) made up one in four first-time enrollees.<sup>86</sup>

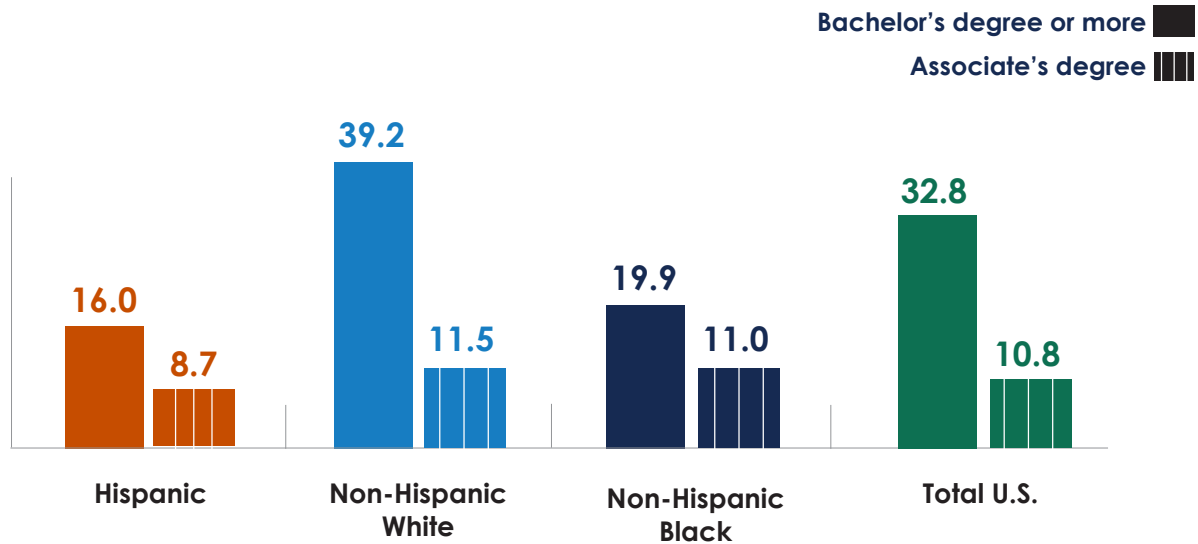
**Record numbers of Hispanics are earning associate and bachelor's degrees.** Many are first-generation college attendees. However, their rates of college completion, among both types of degree candidates, lag substantially behind those of white students. Reasons cited most often by Hispanic students for not completing a college degree are finances, followed by family responsibilities.<sup>87</sup>

# Few young Hispanic adults have completed a post-secondary degree



## EDUCATION

Percent of young adults (25-29) who have completed post-secondary degrees, 2013



Note: Estimates reflect the new OMB race definitions, and include only those who are identified with a single race. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

Source: Child Trends' analysis of October Current Population Survey data.

Today's kindergarteners will be in their early forties by 2050, when Latinos are expected to comprise nearly a third of the U.S. population. Thus, the strength of the country's future workforce will depend on today's investments in facilitating their academic journey. We know, from our centuries-long experience as a country of immigrants, that leveraging their *strengths* accomplishes much more than focusing exclusively on the *deficits* of newcomers.

## A shared future of health

Health is essential for success on all fronts: schooling, career, family. We are learning much that alters an older view of health, focused on communicable disease and the prevention of early death, to one today that emphasizes the threats to healthy living: risky behaviors (for example, alcohol use, and dangerous driving), asthma and other chronic health conditions, inadequate physical activity, and so on.

**As a group, U.S. Latinos begin life with several health advantages**, relative to some other racial/ethnic minority groups: a healthy weight at birth,<sup>88</sup> high rates of breastfeeding,<sup>89</sup> and low infant mortality.<sup>90</sup> According to their parents, more than nine in ten Latino children are in "excellent" or "very good" health.<sup>91</sup> Most live in households where getting adequate amounts of nutritious foods is not a frequent issue; however, 29 percent are in "food-insecure" households—meaning they lack regular and secure access to food.<sup>92</sup>

But some health indicators in later childhood, and adolescence, paint a different picture. Hispanic children have high rates of overweight and obesity,<sup>93</sup> and low rates of physical activity.<sup>94</sup> More than one in five Hispanic youth is obese and more than one in six is overweight. These patterns are reflected in their levels of physical activity, with just over one in four Hispanic males and just over one in six Hispanic females getting the recommended amount of daily exercise. In the teen years, Hispanics' rates of cigarette smoking are on the low side,<sup>95</sup> but rates for substance abuse<sup>96</sup> and binge drinking<sup>97</sup> are high.

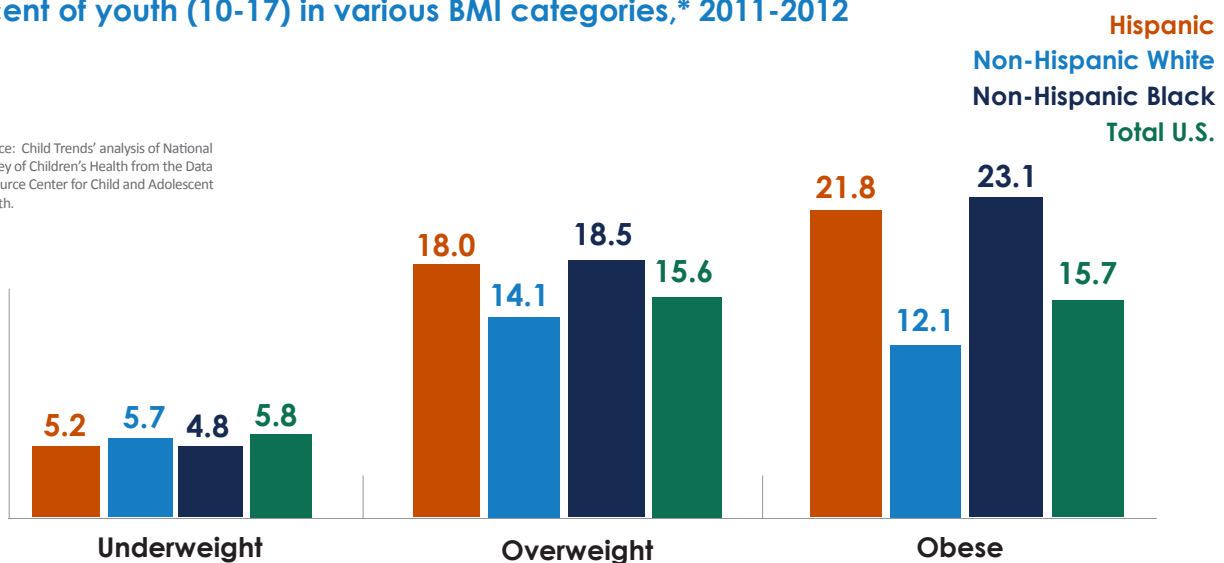
## One-fifth of Hispanic youth are obese



### HEALTH

#### Percent of youth (10-17) in various BMI categories,\* 2011-2012

Source: Child Trends' analysis of National Survey of Children's Health from the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health.



\*BMI is calculated from the child's weight and height. BMI categories are based on the 2000 CDC growth charts, which are based on the distribution of children in national surveys taken between 1963 and 1994. The BMI categories are not based on an "ideal" BMI. Children who were categorized as underweight had lower BMIs than 95 percent of the children of their age and sex in the growth chart sample, while those who were categorized as obese had BMIs that were higher than 95 percent of the children of their age and sex. Those children categorized as overweight had BMIs higher than 85 percent of children of their age and sex, but were not obese. Being categorized as obese or underweight based on BMI is not equivalent to a clinical diagnosis. Height and weight were parent-reported. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.



# Few Hispanic youth exercise daily

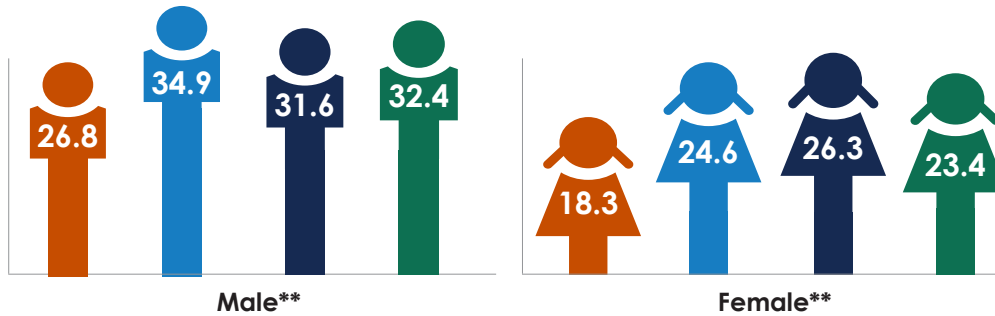


## HEALTH

### Percent of youth (6-17) who participated in physical activity\* every day in the past week, 2011-2012

Source: Child Trends' analysis of National Survey of Children's Health from the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health.

Hispanic  
Non-Hispanic White  
Non-Hispanic Black  
Total U.S.



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FOUNDATION

\*For at least 20 minutes and was strenuous enough to make the child sweat and breathe hard. Activity was parent-reported. \*\*Hispanic males are significantly less likely to exercise every day than white males. Hispanic females are significantly less likely to exercise every day than either white or black females. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

# The percentage of Hispanic 12th graders who smoke or binge drink has gone down

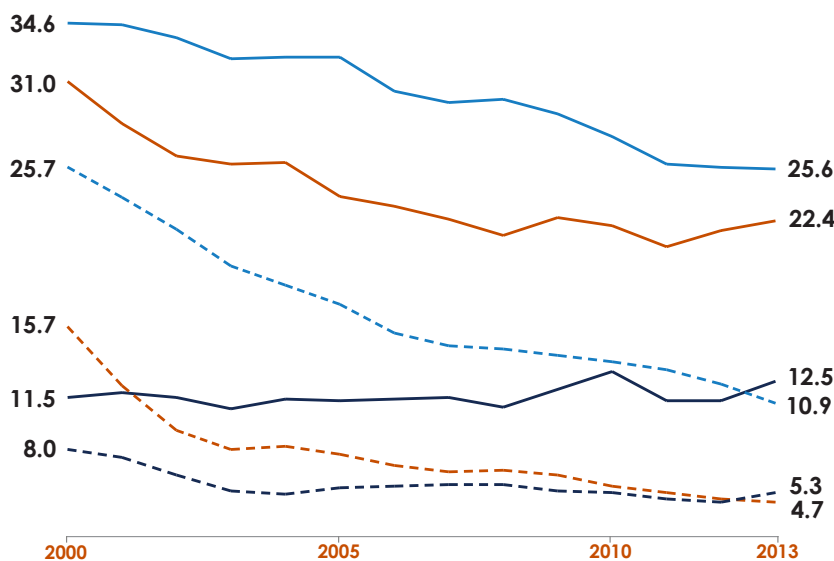


## HEALTH

### Percent of 12th graders reporting daily cigarette smoking, and reporting binge drinking\* within the past two weeks, 2000-2013

Hispanic  
Non-Hispanic White  
Non-Hispanic Black

Binge Drinking —  
Smoking Daily - -



\*Binge Drinking is defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on a single occasion.

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FOUNDATION

Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.  
Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2012). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2013: Volume 1: Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. R01 DA 01411). Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan. Tables D102-D104. [http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-vol1\\_2013.pdf](http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-vol1_2013.pdf).



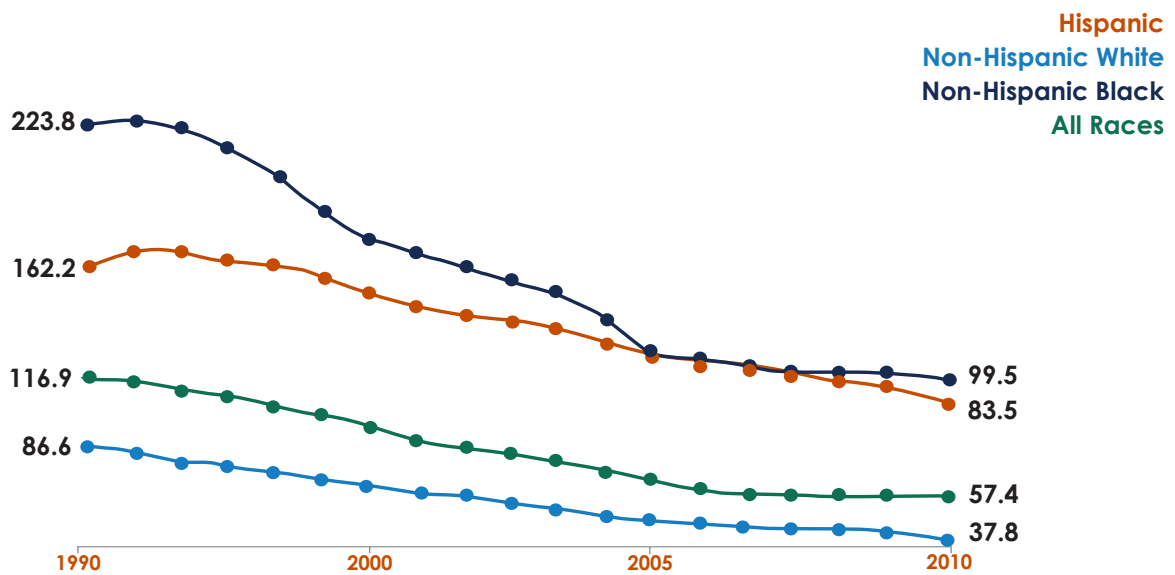
**Sexual activity among Latino teens.** Latino teens are just as likely as white teens to be sexually active (about one in three high school students).<sup>98</sup> Two-thirds of sexually-active Latino teenage boys report using a condom if they are having sex—a proportion significantly higher than among their white peers.<sup>99</sup> However, sexually-active teen Latinas (females) are less than half as likely as white females to report current use of birth control pills (11 and 24 percent, respectively).<sup>100</sup> This disparity may contribute to why Latina teens are twice as likely as white teens to become pregnant—though in recent years they have experienced the greatest decline in pregnancy rates of all racial/ethnic groups.<sup>101</sup>

## Pregnancy rates for Hispanic teens are decreasing, but remain high



### HEALTH

**Pregnancy rates per 1,000 females (15-19), selected years, 1990-2010**



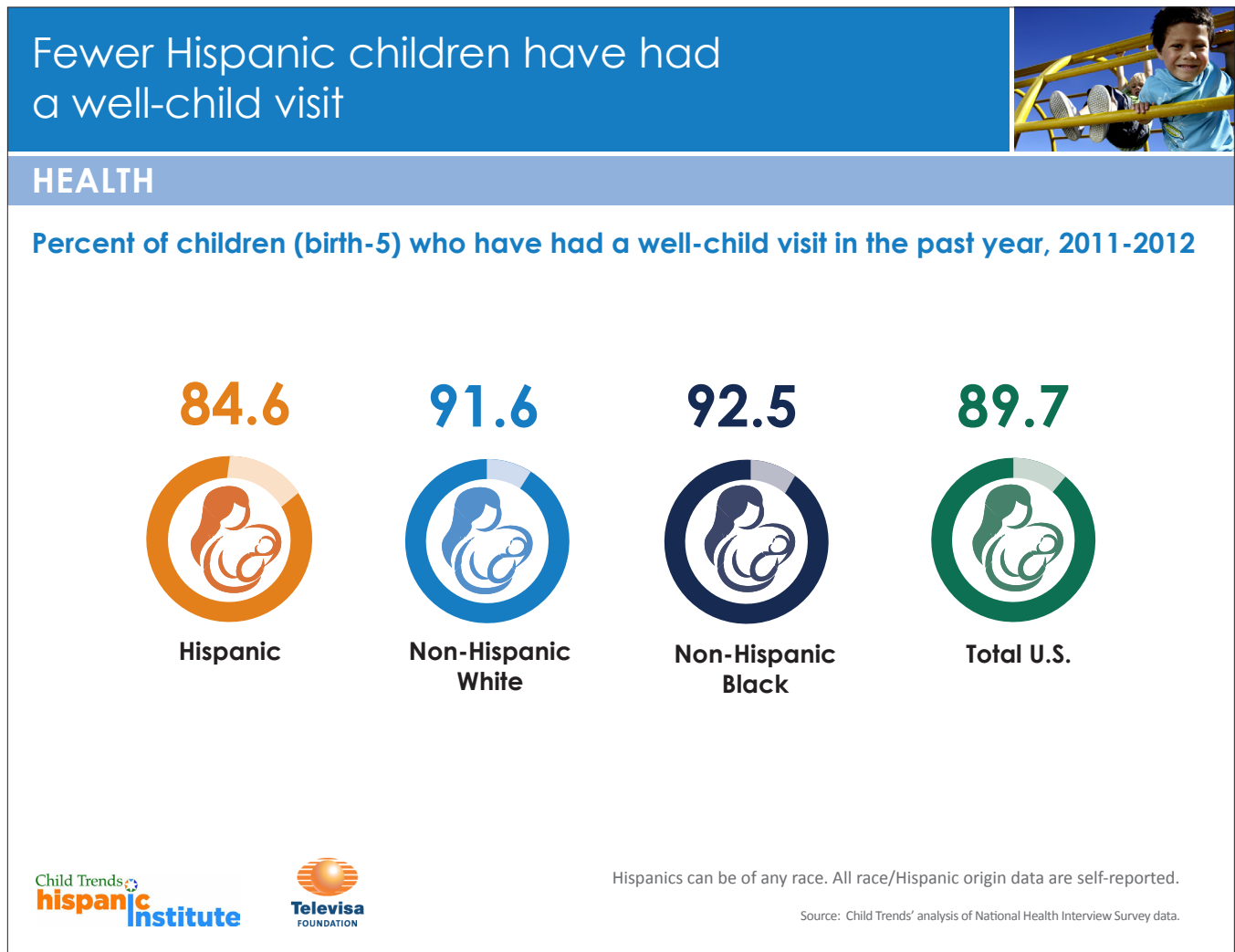
Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

Source: Kost, K. & Henshaw, S. (2014). U.S. teenage pregnancies, births and abortions, 2010: National and state trends and trends by age, race and ethnicity. Guttmacher Institute. Available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPTrends10.pdf>.

**Mental health of Hispanic children.** When it comes to mental health, the data for Hispanic children and youth offer some good and some not-so-good news. More than a third of Hispanic high school students report feeling persistently sad or hopeless—a higher proportion than among white or black students, although this rate is ten percent lower than it was in 1999. Hispanic females are particularly likely to report these feelings—nearly half, in 2013.<sup>102</sup>

When asked to report on children’s adverse family experiences—a list of events that are associated with an increased likelihood of physical and mental health problems—51 percent of Hispanic children have parents who indicate at least one such experience, compared with 44 percent of white children.<sup>103</sup>

**There are likely many reasons behind these health disparities.** One early warning signal is lagging rates for Latinos on well-child visits. During the first few years of life, these are important opportunities for parents to meet with pediatricians, share concerns, and receive guidance on health and developmental issues. As such, well-child visits can catch problems early, or prevent them. Among children ages birth through five, Latinos are the group least likely to have had a well-child visit in the past year.<sup>104</sup>



A related concern is health insurance coverage. Hispanic children are covered at a rate lower than whites or blacks. And, of those Hispanic children who were born outside the U.S., nearly four in ten lack health insurance.<sup>105</sup> Unauthorized immigrant children have the lowest coverage of any group—about one in five are covered.<sup>106</sup>

Fears surrounding immigration status, as well as barriers of language and culture, may also contribute to low rates of access to both health care and health care coverage.

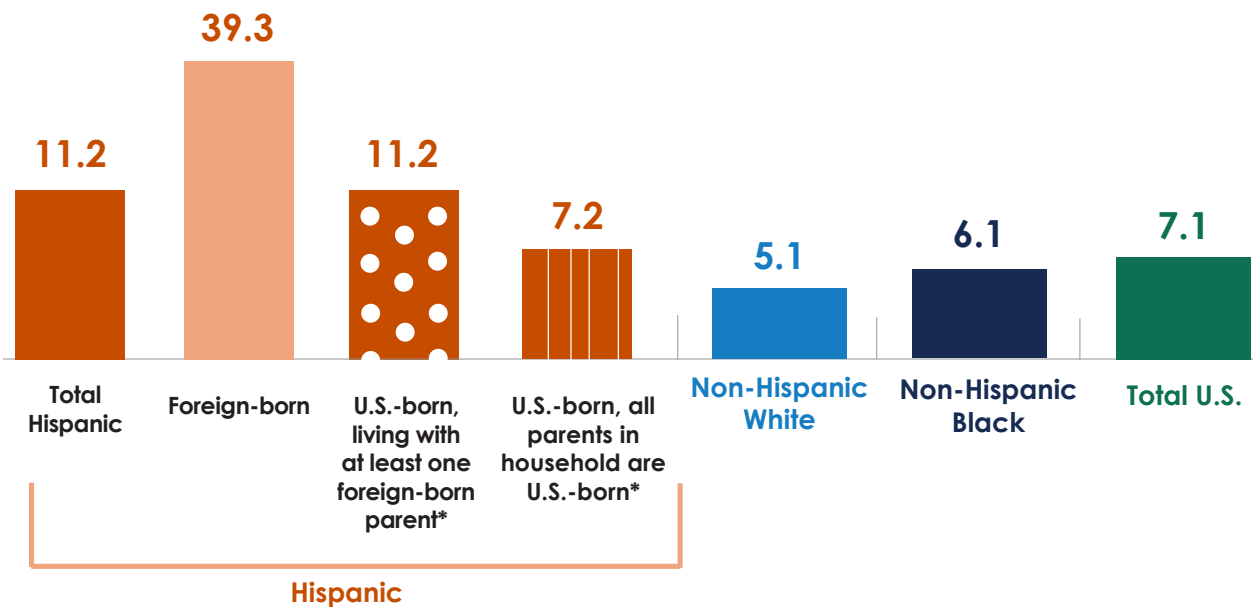
Persistent health disparities threaten our shared future. And a limited focus on prevention may mean that chronic health conditions today will cast a shadow on future individual and collective prosperity.

# Hispanic children are more likely to be without health insurance



## HEALTH

Percent of children lacking health insurance coverage, 2012



Note: Estimates reflect the OMB race definitions, and include only those who are identified with a single race. \*Includes single-parent households. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

Source: Child Trends' analysis of American Community Survey data.

## Media and technology use: Our shared future

Media play an important role in the socialization of all children and youth.<sup>107</sup> These include both the more traditional media of print, radio, and television, and newer technologies, including social media. Young people are typically early adopters of technology, and Latino youth have avidly taken up mobile screen-based devices, including smartphones and tablets. They still watch a lot of television—not a surprise, especially since TV now reflects the Latino experience more than it did in the past.

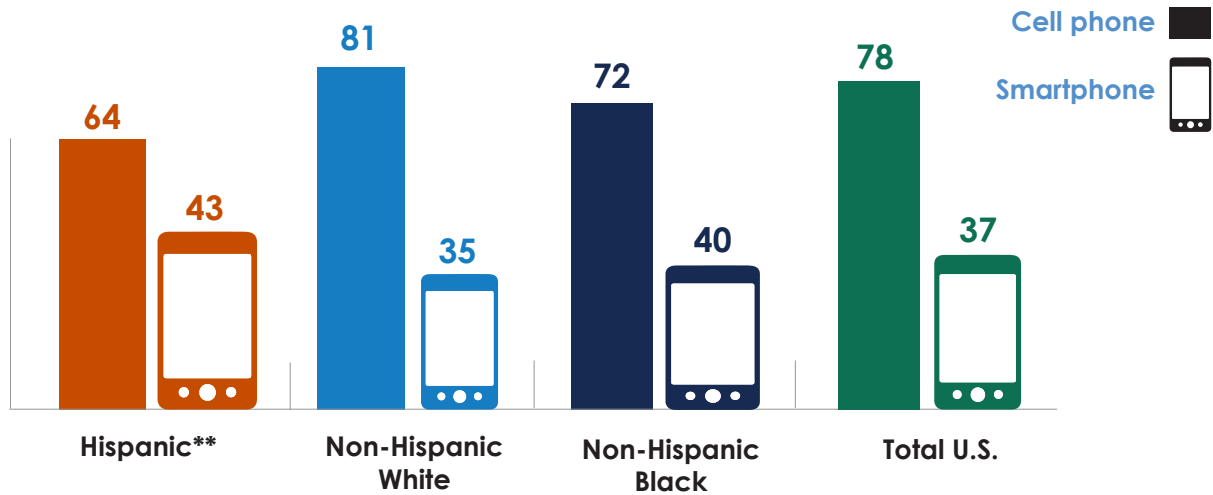
When it comes to the take-up of media and technology, the pace of change has skyrocketed, and much of the available data are already outdated. However, a 2010 survey found few significant differences among Hispanic, black, and white households in rates of access to cell phones (including smartphones), tablets, or computers. Hispanic households were somewhat less likely to have access to the Internet or broadband connectivity.<sup>108</sup>

Hispanic teens are less likely than other teens to own a cell phone, but as likely as others to have a smartphone



## MEDIA USE

Percent of adolescents (12-17) who own a cell phone or smartphone,\* 2012



\*By race/Hispanic origin of parent. Owners of smartphones are also included as cell phone owners.

\*\*Hispanic adolescents are significantly less likely to own a cell phone than white adolescents.

There are no significant differences by race/ethnicity in ownership rates of smartphones.

Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.



Source: Madden, M., Lenhart, A., Duggan, M., Cortesi, S., & Gasser, U. (2013). Teens and Technology 2013. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project.

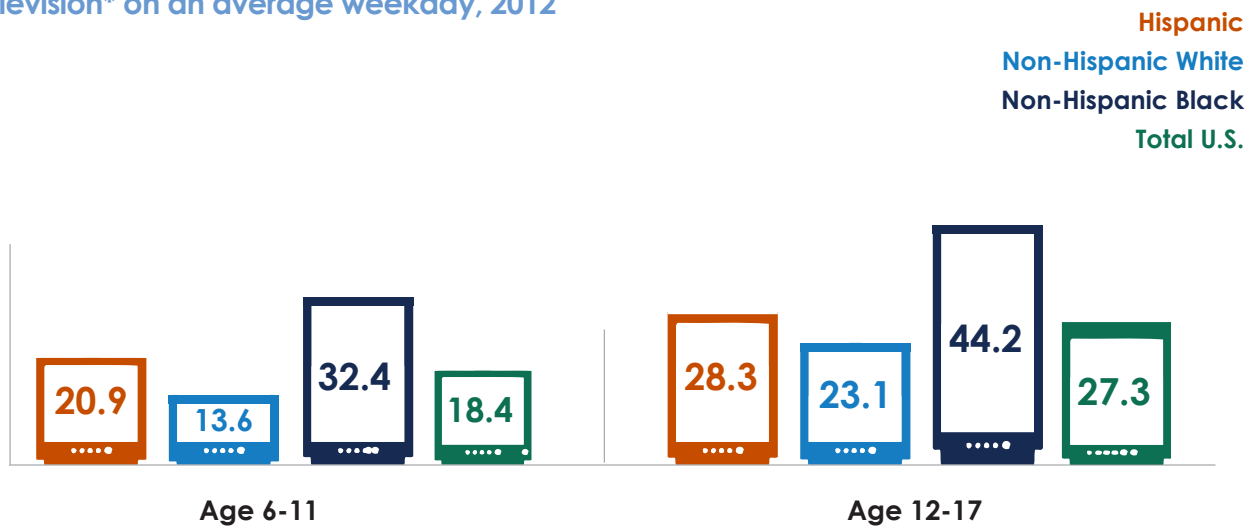
**Latinos' use of technology and the Internet.** Young Latinos use cell phones, tablets, and computers more frequently than older adults, and those who are U.S.-born are more likely to use them than their foreign-born peers. In 2009, across all media devices (TV/movies, computer, music, print, cell phone, and video games), Latinos between the ages of 8 and 18 spent, on average, a total of 13 hours per day on these—more than their black or white counterparts. With the exception of print (books, magazines), use by Latino youth was also higher than whites' on each separate category of media.<sup>109</sup> Data from 2012 show Latino teens are somewhat less likely than their white peers to own a basic cell phone, but equally likely to own a smartphone.<sup>110</sup> Latino middle and high school students are as likely as white students to use the Internet for 10 or more hours per week,<sup>111</sup> and to check social networking sites “almost every day.”<sup>112</sup> Latino children are more likely than their white peers to watch television for more than two hours on an average weekday.<sup>113</sup>

# Like others, Hispanic children watch more TV as they age



## MEDIA USE

Percent of children (6-17) who spend more than two hours in front of the television\* on an average weekday, 2012



\*Includes time watching TV programs or videos, or playing video games. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.



Source: Child Trends' analysis of Monitoring the Future Survey data.

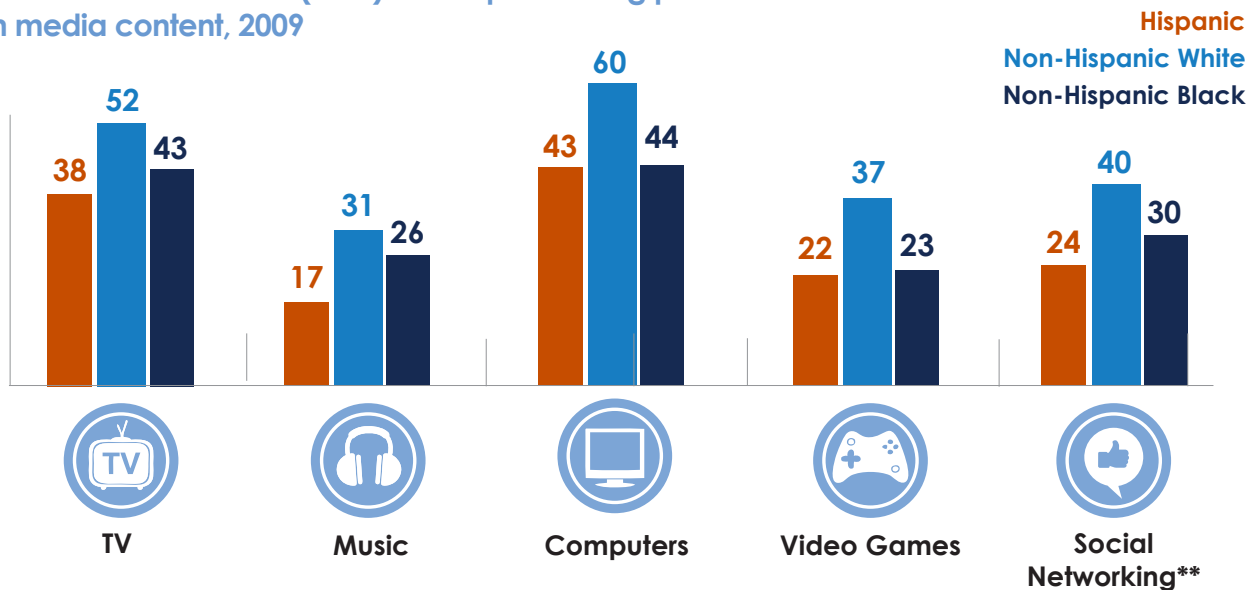
**TV-watching.** For Hispanic families, watching television together may be an important expression of positive intergenerational family bonds.<sup>114</sup> However, many experts recommend that, alongside other family rules, parents set reasonable limits on children's screen time. Such restrictions can help young people better manage their time, and may increase the likelihood that they finish schoolwork, spend some time being physically active, and get adequate sleep.<sup>115</sup> In Hispanic families, fewer parents of adolescents report having rules regarding media content than is the case among families of white adolescents.<sup>116</sup>

# Fewer\* Hispanic youth have parental rules about media content



## MEDIA USE

Percent of adolescents (8-18) who report having parental rules on media content, 2009



\*Hispanic adolescents are significantly less likely than white adolescents to report parental rules about all types of media. Hispanic adolescents are significantly less likely than black adolescents to report parental rules on the content of TV and music, and whether they can have a social networking profile.  
 \*\*Rules about whether adolescent can have a social networking profile. Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.



Source: Rideout, VJ, Foehr, UG, & Roberts, DF. (2010). Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

As many commentators have noted, social media (and the Internet, in general) have great potential both to unite, and to divide.<sup>117</sup> These tools allow us to connect with disparate peoples, viewpoints, arts, and information—challenging us to think critically and, perhaps, to identify common ground. On the other hand, the Internet and social media can be used to further segregate groups—reinforcing rather than challenging our preconceived leanings. Youth, in particular, find a positive identity for themselves by affiliating with those who seem most like themselves.<sup>118</sup>

There is still much more to understand about the effects various forms of media have on the diverse groups of Latino children. Our shared challenge is to use information and the new technology in ways that strengthen ties both *within* and *across* the diverse communities of our nation.

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## Table of Statistically Significant Differences

Section	Slide	Measure	Hispanics, compared to whites	Hispanics, compared to blacks
<b>Economics</b>	crowded housing	total	+	+
	poverty	total	+	-
	concentrated poverty	high poverty	?	?
		very high poverty	?	?
	parental employment	two parents working FTYR	-	0
at least one parent working FTYR		-	-	
<b>Family</b>	family structure	married parents	-	+
		cohabiting parent(s)	+	+
		single mother	+	-
		single father	-	-
		no parents	+	-
	home-cooked meals	total	+	+
	preschool home activities	read to a child	-	0
		told a story	-	0
		taught letters, words, or numbers	0	0
		sang songs	0	0
	worked on arts and crafts	-	0	
<b>Education</b>	school readiness skills	recognizes all letters	-	-
		counts to 20 or higher	-	-
		writes first name	-	0
		holds a pencil with fingers	0	0
		speech is understandable to a stranger	-	0
		reads written words in books	-	-
	mathematics proficiency	2013	-	+
	graduation rate (ACGR)	total	?	?
	status dropout rate	2012	+	+
	post-secondary degrees	bachelor's degree or more	-	-
		associate' degree	-	-
early childhood program enrollment	2012	?	?	
	2007	?	?	
<b>Health</b>	lacking health insurance coverage	total	+	+
	well-child visits	total	-	-
	BMI categories	underweight	0	0
		overweight	+	0
		obese	+	0
	daily exercise	males	-	0
		females	-	-
	smoking and drinking	smoking, 2013	-	0
binge drinking, 2013		-	+	
teen pregnancy	2010	+	-	
<b>Media Use</b>	phone ownership	cell phone	-	0
		smartphone	0	0
	time watching television	age 6-11	+	-
		age 12-17	+	-
	parental content rules	television	-	-
		music	-	-
		computers	-	0
		video games	-	0
social networking		-	-	

**Key:**

? Cannot be determined from data source

+ Hispanics are significantly higher

- Hispanics are significantly lower

0 No significant difference



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