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***¿Cómo Están los Niños?* New Study of California's Latino Children Finds Striking Differences in Health and Well-being Within This 4.7 Million-and-Growing Population**

**PALO ALTO** – A comprehensive new study of California's Latino children paints a complex picture of their health and well-being—and finds striking differences within a 4.7 million-strong population that comprises more than half of all the children in the state.

More than 94% of these children were born in the United States. And while more Latino children live in poverty, are uninsured and have higher rates of obesity than their white counterparts, Latino children have comparable access to preventive health care and most of their parents report them as being in "good" or "excellent" health.

However, the researchers also found that children living in "linguistically isolated" families, where Spanish is primarily spoken, face far greater challenges in health access and educational achievement compared to children in families where both English and Spanish are spoken.

[See the full study>>](#)

The study was conducted by researchers from the university-based [Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative](#) and commissioned by the [Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health](#). The researchers examined data on physical health, as well as on family, school and neighborhood environments, to create a picture of the current status of Latino children in the state.

The study is intended to provide data for policymakers and advocates working both to improve the current health and well-being of Latino children and to ensure a healthy future population for California.

"Health is such a critical component of future success for California's Latino children. If they don't achieve their full potential, it will be a terrible economic burden for the state," said Dr. Fernando Mendoza, professor of pediatrics at the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford and one of the health experts consulted for the study. "This study shows the need to develop policies that improve access to health care, address language and cultural barriers to better health, and ameliorate the harmful health effects caused by poverty."

Among the key findings:

- \* More than 94% of Latino children in California are U.S. citizens.
- \* More than 370,000 Latino children in the state have no health insurance, despite being eligible for government-funded programs. Undocumented immigrants may avoid enrolling their children, the majority of whom are U.S. citizens, in programs out of fear the family's immigration status will be discovered in the process. Limited English proficiency may also contribute to a lack of knowledge or understanding about eligibility and the enrollment process.
- \* One in four Spanish-speaking households in California is considered "linguistically isolated," meaning that no one in the household age 14 or older is conversant in English. Spanish-speaking parents of young children may have difficulty navigating and engaging in their child's school and the health care system, resulting in increased health risks for their children.
- \* More than 30% of Latino children from linguistically isolated (primarily Spanish-speaking) households live in a "working poor" household, with parents who have incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level despite full-time employment.
- \* About 58% of Latino children from linguistically isolated households use a community or government clinic or a community hospital as a usual source of care, a much higher rate of use than white children (15.3%) or Latino children from English-speaking households (17.9%).
- \* Latino children fare as well as or better than white children when it comes to family practices that indicate a home environment that promotes children's health. For example, Latino children from primarily Spanish-speaking households eat meals together with their family every day more often than white children, and are more likely than white children to live in a household where no one smokes.

The California findings are largely consistent with those of a recently released [national study of Latino children](#), which noted lower rates of health insurance among Latino children compared to white children and raised concerns about persistent health disparities, but also highlighted solid gains in educational achievement.

The California study's authors highlight policies that may improve the health and well-being of California's Latino children, including:

- \* Support early childhood education for every Latino child as a pathway to school readiness, educational success and better health.
- \* Increase support for community health centers in Latino communities.
- \* Increase enrollment of all eligible children in school nutrition programs, food stamps, WIC, Medi-Cal and other programs to increase access to health care and nutritious food.

\* Support adult literacy programs and adequate translation services in the health care system to improve children's health outcomes.

"Latino children have the same potential for health and well-being as other children, but many face barriers to achieving that potential," said the study's lead author, Christina Bethell, director of the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. "The goal of this report is to help identify those barriers, as well as particular strengths of California's Latino families, to help policymakers, advocates and health providers ensure a healthier future for the children who will comprise a majority of California's citizens."

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**About the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health:** The [Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health](#) is a public charity, founded in 1997. Its mission is to elevate the priority of children's health, and to increase the quality and accessibility of children's health care through leadership and direct investment. The Foundation brings key children's issues to public attention by providing wide-ranging, up-to-date data and by tracking the status of California's children over time through its website, [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org). The Foundation also invests in [efforts that promote better systems of care in California](#) for children with special health care needs. The Foundation is the sole fundraising entity for Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford and the child health programs at Stanford University School of Medicine.

**About the Child and Adolescent Health Measure Initiative:** The [Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative](#) (CAHMI), founded in 1997, is a research and policy group that focuses on the development, implementation, and strategic dissemination of data based on measures of child and adolescent health and health care quality. The CAHMI is committed to advancing patient-centered innovations by putting children, youth and families at the center of quality measurement and improvement.

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