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Media Relations

August 12, 2015

UNH Research Finds Many Hispanic Infants Born into Poverty

DURHAM, N.H. – Hispanics accounted for the majority of U.S. population growth over the past decade -- driven not by immigration but by births -- and poverty risk for this growing number of infants is high, especially in rural areas and new destinations, according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire.

Nearly 25 percent of all U.S. births are now to Hispanics. This new study focuses on how many of these Hispanic infants begin their lives in poverty. The researchers estimate that the overall risk of a Hispanic infant being born into poverty is nearly 2.8 times greater than the risk for a non-Hispanic white infant. In total, they find that one-third of all Hispanic infants are born into poverty. These poor Hispanic infants face clear developmental challenges that threaten their integration into society and America's future.

The research was conducted by Daniel Lichter, Ferris Family Professor in the departments of policy analysis and management and sociology at Cornell University and a policy fellow at the Carsey School; Scott Sanders, assistant professor of sociology at Brigham Young University; and Kenneth Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey School and professor of sociology.

The researchers also found that only 12 percent of Hispanic infants born into poverty reside in families accessing government cash assistance, because many of them have immigrant parents who are unaware of or ineligible for government assistance. About one-half of the families of poor Hispanic infants receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program dollars (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) though virtually all are eligible. For both cash assistance and SNAP the proportion of all poor Hispanic infants receiving benefits is lower than the overall proportion of poor infants receiving assistance.

“Our findings suggest that a disproportionate share of newborn Hispanic infants start life well behind the starting line, living in fast-growing boom towns where they may never catch up,” the researchers said. “Policy makers may sometimes forget that the disadvantages faced by low-wage, low-skill immigrant Hispanic workers are often most keenly felt by their U.S.-born infants and children who, through no fault of their own, suffer the immediate and long-term consequences of low family income and concentrated poverty. The Hispanic infants who will help reshape America's future require public policy attention now.”

The full analysis can be found here: <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/behind-starting-line>.

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit

sectors.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

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