

## ISSUE 1: FOOD INSECURITY WITHIN THE LATINO COMMUNITY\*

Nearly 49 million Americans live in households that are considered food insecure, that is, people living in the home do not have “access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”<sup>1</sup> Latino<sup>†</sup> families are disproportionately affected, experiencing some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the United States. Food insecurity can have lasting impacts on children’s health; when access to nutritious food is limited, healthy growth and development may be at risk. With Hispanic families experiencing some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the United States, this problem is a real threat to the health and well-being of Latino children.

### Food insecurity affects almost one in four Hispanic households.

- In 2013, 14.3% of all U.S. households were food insecure.<sup>‡</sup> Food insecurity rates were more than double for Hispanic (23.7%) and Black (26.1%) households compared to White (10.6%) households in 2013. Hispanics made up more than one-fifth (21.2%) of all food-insecure households.

### Rates of food insecurity are higher among Latino and Black households with children.

- In households with children younger than age 18, more than one-quarter of Latino (28%) and nearly one-third of Black (32.6%) households were food insecure. About one in seven (14.4%) White households with children younger than 18 were food insecure in 2013.
- In 2013, there were 4.7 million Hispanic children living in food-insecure households, representing close to one-third (29.9%) of all children in food-insecure families.

### FOOD INSECURITY DEFINED

*Food insecurity:* Households for whom “access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources” at times during the year.

*Food insecurity with hunger (very low food security):* Food-insecure households that experience “disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake” at times during the year. When these conditions are experienced by children, the household is categorized as having *very low food security among children*.

Source: Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013*, Economic Research Report 173. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC, 2014.

\* This profile was authored by Minerva Delgado, Consultant to the Health Policy Project in NCLR’s Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation (ORAL), with substantive input, direction, and oversight from Samantha Vargas Poppe, Associate Director, Policy Analysis Center, and Steven Lopez, Manager, Health Policy Project. It is an update of a document originally released in 2010 and authored by Kara D. Ryan. NCLR is the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. This brief was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The findings and conclusions presented are those of the author and NCLR alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of our funders. Permission to copy, disseminate, or otherwise use information from this paper is granted, provided that appropriate credit is given to NCLR.

† The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. Unless otherwise noted, estimates in this document do not include the 3.7 million residents of Puerto Rico. Comparison data for non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks will be identified respectively as “Whites” and “Blacks.”

‡ Unless otherwise noted, all statistics in this document are derived from Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013*, Economic Research Report 173. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC, 2014; and Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013: Statistical Supplement*, Administrative Publication 66. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC, 2014.

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### Latino families with children are more likely to experience food insecurity with hunger.

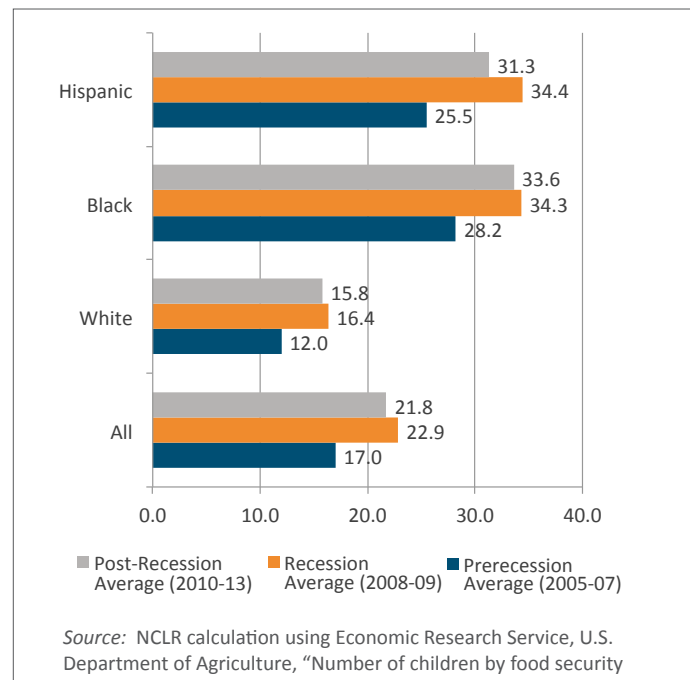
- Hispanic children are more than twice as likely as White children to be living in households that experienced food insecurity with hunger.
- Latinos account for almost one-third (31.1%) of all households with children who had food insecurity with hunger.

### Recovery from the Great Recession has not yielded a substantial reduction in Latino children's food insecurity rates.

- Food insecurity rates among all children increased significantly during the Great Recession. There has been improvement since, but these rates have not returned to prerecession levels for any racial/ethnic group.
- For Latino children, food insecurity rates increased from 26% in the prerecession period to 34% during the recession and have since decreased to 31% in the post-recession period. See Figure 1 for average rates of food insecurity by race/ethnicity from 2005 to 2013.

These consistently high rates of food insecurity among Latino families have serious implications for the health and nutrition of Latino children.

**Figure 1:**  
Average Percentage of Children in Food-Insecure Households by Race/Ethnicity and Recession Time Period, 2005–2013



Source: NCLR calculation using Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Number of children by food security status of households and selected household characteristics," *Household Food Security in the United States*. Washington, DC, 2005–2013.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013*, Economic Research Report 173. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC, 2014.