

## Latino Housing Quality in 2017: A Snapshot of the American Housing Survey

On September 6, 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released new housing data on a wide range of housing data, including indicators of housing and neighborhood quality and housing costs. While many families struggle with the rising cost of housing, the intersection of discrimination, a tight housing market, and lack of affordable housing pushes families of color disproportionately into high housing cost burdens and unhealthy housing conditions. The data shows that Latinos\* pay more for smaller and lower-quality housing, in lower-quality neighborhoods, than non-Hispanics.

In 2017, 36.9 million American families spent more than 30% of their income on housing, placing “cost burdens” on their ability to afford quality food or build wealth.<sup>1</sup> A lack of affordable housing options can affect a families’ ability to afford other essential expenses and can create serious financial strains. For example, low-income families who face difficulties paying their rent or mortgage or their utility bills are less likely to have a usual source of medical care and are more likely to postpone needing treatment than those who have more affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>

The link between housing and one’s health is a strong one; housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all affect health outcomes, as do physical and social characteristics of neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> When children and families live in safe neighborhoods and low crime they are able to live healthy and thrive. Conversely, living in an unsafe neighborhood is associated with higher instances of food insecurity and obesity.<sup>4</sup> Further, substandard housing conditions such as water leaks, poor ventilation, dirty carpets, and pest infestation has been associated with poor health outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Exposure to poor housing conditions, unsafe environments, and environmental toxins are particularly damaging to children, especially in their early developmental years.<sup>6</sup>

Using data from the 2017 Affordable Housing Survey, this fact sheet examines the status of affordability, size, and quality of housing and neighborhood safety for Latinos.

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\* 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.

## Affordability of Housing

In 2017, half of Latinos paid \$1,080 a month or 28% of their income for their housing costs. Paying more than 30% of one's income on housing costs greatly impacts a families' household budget and their ability to afford quality food or build wealth.

Latinos paid more (5%) per month on their housing than non-Latinos (\$1,029) and Latinos also spent more of their income on housing (27.3%) than non-Latinos (22%).<sup>7</sup>

## Housing Size

In 2017, the median Latino home or apartment was 1,200 square feet, while the median non-Latino home or apartment was 1,500 square feet—a difference of 25%. More than half of Latinos had less than 450 square feet of space per occupant in their house or apartment, while more than half of Latinos had more than 750 square feet per person.<sup>8</sup>

## Housing Quality

In 2017, Latinos were twice as likely to live in severely inadequate housing than non-Latinos (2.04% compared to 0.97%). Severely inadequate housing is considered to be housing that has had water leaks, holes in the floor, large cracks in the walls and ceiling, peeling paint, and visible rats. Specifically:

- 22.44% of Latinos reported that they had cockroaches in their home, compared to 11.08% of non-Latinos.
- 3.67% of Latinos encountered exposed wiring in their residence, compared to 2.54% of non-Latinos.
- 4.34% of Latinos reported having mold in their dwelling—almost double that of non-Latinos at 2.92%.<sup>9</sup>

## Neighborhood Quality

In 2017, nearly one-in-six Latinos reported that they lived in a neighborhood which had bars on the windows of nearby homes or businesses, almost three times the rate of non-Latinos (5.74%).<sup>10</sup>

7.66% of Latinos reported having vandalized or abandoned buildings in their neighborhood, compared to 5.42% of non-Latinos.<sup>11</sup>

12.23% of Latinos reported living in a neighborhood with trash, litter, or junk on the streets, double that of non-Latinos (6.67%).<sup>12</sup>

Finally, 40% of Latinos reported living in a neighborhood with a lot of petty crime, and 9.90% of Latinos reported living in a neighborhood with a lot of serious crime. While only 15.07% of non-Latinos reporting living in a neighborhood with petty crime and 5.47% reported living in a neighborhood with serious crimes.<sup>13</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “American Factfinder: Tenure by Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.” [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_B25106&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_B25106&prodType=table).
  - <sup>2</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Housing and Health.” May 2011. Accessed October 17, 2018. [https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue\\_briefs/2011/rwjf70451](https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70451).
  - <sup>3</sup> Hernandez, Diana & Sugila, Shakira. “Housing as a Social Determinant of Health.” June, 2018. Accessed October 23, 2018. <https://healthequity.globalpolicysolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Housing2.pdf>.
  - <sup>4</sup> PolicyLink and The Food Trust. “The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters.” Accessed October 17, 2018. [http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/grocerygap.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/grocerygap.original.pdf).
  - <sup>5</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Housing and Health.” May 2011. Accessed October 17, 2018. [https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue\\_briefs/2011/rwjf70451](https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70451).
  - <sup>6</sup> The Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative, and The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. “Housing Stability and Families Health: An Issue Brief.” Accessed October 17, 2018. [http://barhii.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Housing\\_Stability\\_and\\_Family\\_Health.pdf](http://barhii.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Housing_Stability_and_Family_Health.pdf).
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid.