

Anti-Immigrant Attitudes Worsen Health in Latino Children

Latino children are more likely to develop chronic health conditions in states with anti-immigrant policies and attitudes.

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Latino children who live in states with more anti-immigrant prejudice and policies are more likely to have mental health or chronic physical health conditions, according to a new study published in [Pediatrics](#).

Research has shown that Latino [children](#), who make up about a quarter of children in the United States, are more likely to develop health conditions such as respiratory illnesses and obesity compared with white children, according to a [CNN article](#). These health disparities can be partly attributed to systemic prejudice and anti-Latino rhetoric, which are thought to negatively impact children's health.

Coauthored by [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) researchers, the study utilized data on nearly 18,000 Latino children ages 3 to 17 from the National Survey of Children's Health conducted between 2016 and 2020.

The study found that Latino children living in states with higher levels of systemic inequities were more likely to develop [chronic health conditions](#) such as [asthma](#) and [diabetes](#) as well as [mental health](#) conditions. Alaska, Alabama and Nebraska had the highest levels of inequities.

Lead study researcher Natalie Slopen, ScD, an assistant professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said this study is among the first to research the impact of larger social and systemic factors on Latino children's health.

"Our hope is that these findings can inform future studies to identify macro-level approaches to address health inequities," Slopen told [CNN](#).

Pediatrician Ilan Shapiro, MD, a chief health correspondent and medical affairs officer at Altamed, a California-based community health network, told CNN that the study results were not surprising, adding that he has "seen this play out everywhere I've practiced medicine: Illinois, Florida, now California."

Shapiro noted that when Latino children have proper access to medical services as well as to affordable food and housing, their health improves. Shapiro emphasized that the study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which only exacerbated health disparities in Latinos.

Shapiro emphasizes the need for action to address these inequities. “Not acting on this information is like having a positive screening test for cancer, knowing what the treatment is but not doing anything with it,” he told CNN. “We have a choice, and we need to choose to create better systems.”

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