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COVID-19 Punishes Latinos for Hard Work and Larger Families

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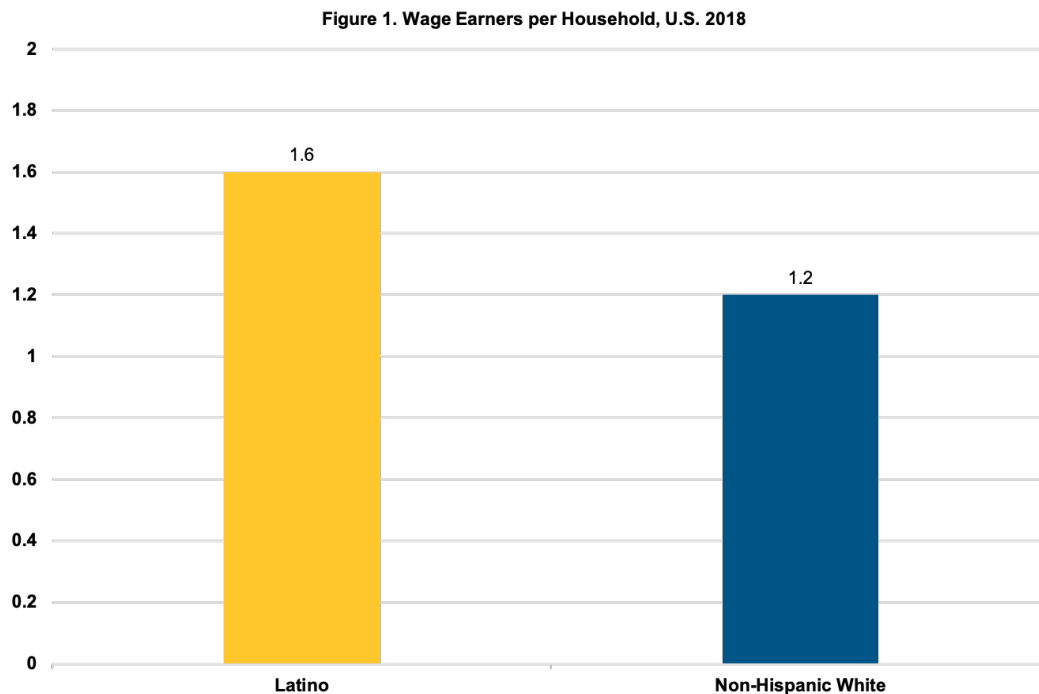
ABOUT CESLAC

Since 1992, the UCLA Health Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture (CESLAC) has provided cutting-edge, fact-based research, education, and public information about Latinos, their health, their history, and their roles in California society and economy.

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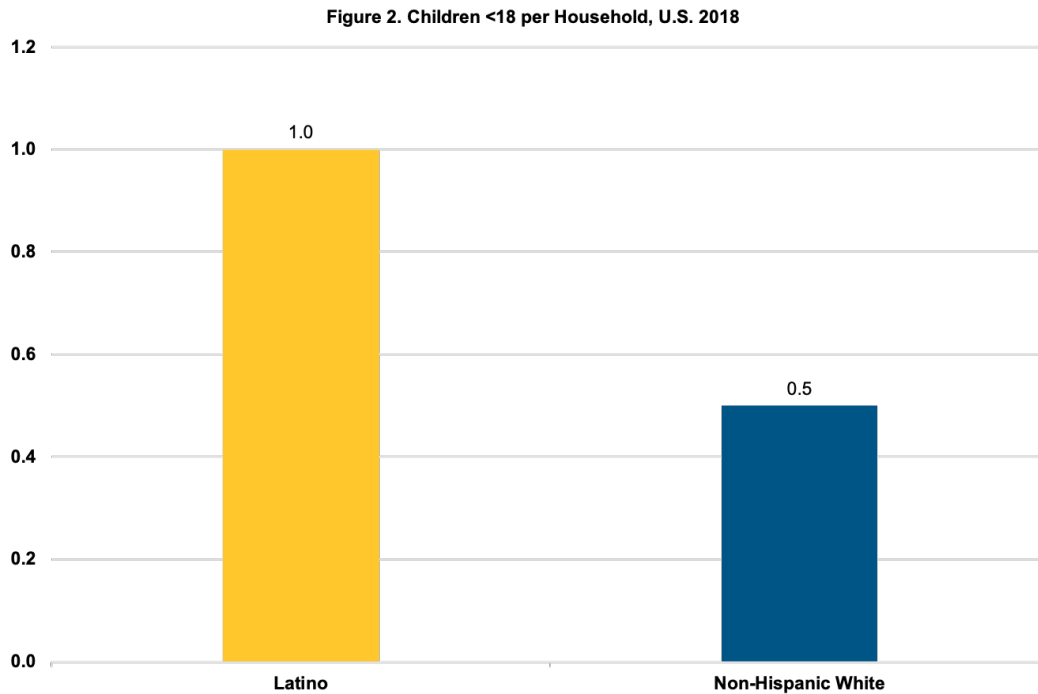
Latinos in the U.S. have created the world's eighth-largest economy. How did they do it? Essentially, through hard work and strong families. Yet these very elements that enabled them to build the world's eighth-largest economy also make Latinos a special target of COVID-19.

Latinos' strong work ethic means that Latino households have more wage earners per household than non-Hispanic white households. Nationally, Latinos have an average of 1.6 wage earners per household, compared to 1.2 for non-Hispanic white households. This means that Latino households have more adults leaving the house every day, who are then often exposed to coronavirus-positive clients and co-workers during work hours. See Figure 1.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Consumer Expenditures in 2018*. May 2020.

Moreover, these Latino wage earners then go home to households that have more children in them. There are, on average, 1.0 children per Latino household, and only 0.5 children per non-Hispanic white household. See Figure 2.

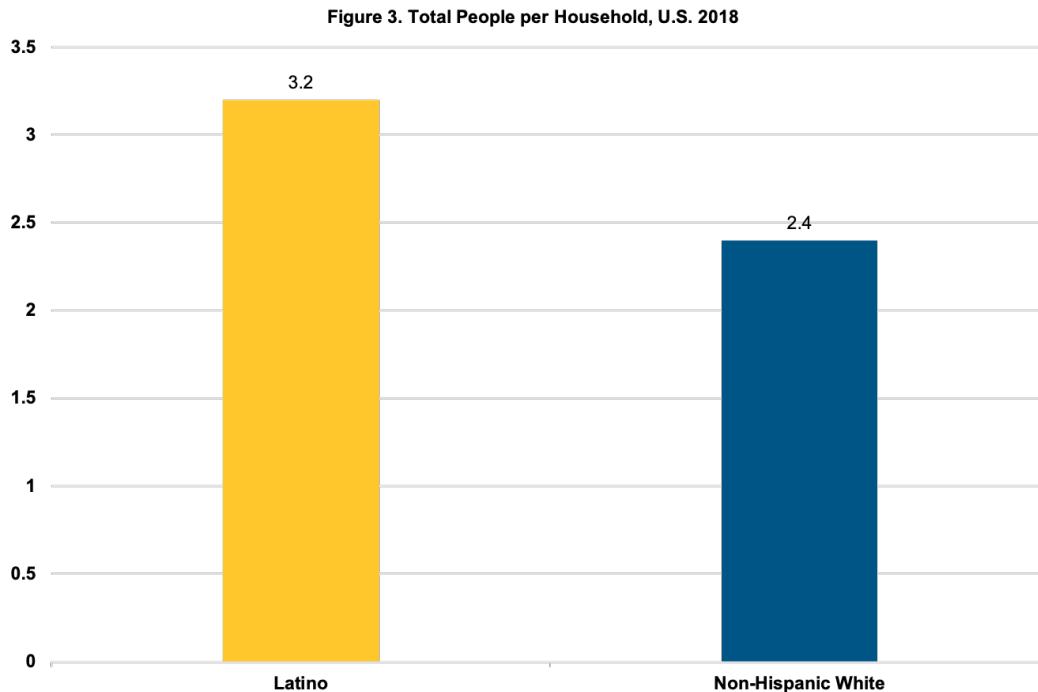


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Consumer Expenditures in 2018*. May 2020.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has noted that up to half of COVID-infected children may be asymptomatic; that is, they have the virus, but do not show symptoms that would put them under surveillance. (CDC 2021)

Therefore COVID-19 has two increased opportunities to infect Latino households: more wage earners who can be exposed to the virus at work and bring the infection home with them, and more children who can spread infection to family members while remaining asymptomatic themselves.

Because they typically have more wage earners and more children, Latino households contain nearly one more person per unit than non-Hispanic white households. See Figure 3.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Consumer Expenditures in 2018*. May 2020.

So, in effect, COVID-19 punishes Latino households for working hard—which exposes more wage earners to infection—and for having more people, especially children, per household.

Since March of 2020, Latinos have held many of the essential jobs that have kept California well-fed and functioning. Unfortunately, their reward has been the highest rate of infections and deaths in the state.

References

CDC 2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Information for Pediatric Healthcare Providers. December 30, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html>

Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020. *Consumer Expenditures in 2018*. BLS Reports, May 2020.

For more information, or to arrange a telephone interview with the Center’s Director, David E. Hayes-Bautista, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Medicine, please contact Adriana Valdez, at (310) 794-0663 or cesla@ucla.edu.