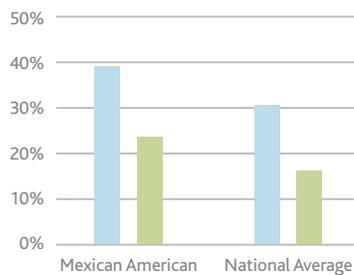


# Obesity and Latino Children

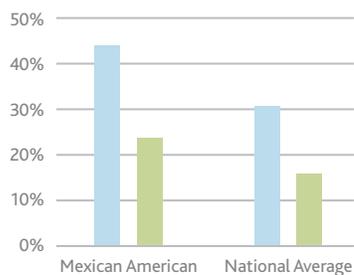
Context and figures for a generation at risk

According to the [2010 Census](#), U.S. residents of Mexican origin make up the vast majority (63%) of the Hispanics living in the country. These childhood obesity graphs illustrate the current state of obesity for Mexican Americans in comparison to the national average.

## AGES 6–11



## AGES 12–19



Overweight Obese

Source: CDC: [Battling Childhood Obesity](#)

## Background

Obesity among Latino children and adolescents is a public health crisis threatening the future of the fastest growing population group in the country. Given the current trajectory, this generation of Latinos could be the first Americans to have a life expectancy shorter than that of their parents (*At Risk*, 113\*).

Diet and exercise patterns in Latino communities are key factors to the rise in obesity. Many Latino households have a greater tendency to consume unbalanced diets and have limited access to supermarkets. Others experience decreased participation in physical activity due partially to poor neighborhood safety and barriers to access.

One of the more comprehensive sources of information about Latino children and the problems associated with obesity and related illnesses is *At Risk: Latino Children's Health*, edited by Rafael Pérez-Escamilla and Hugo Melgar-Quíñonez, published by Arte Público Press, Houston. Most of the data in this fact sheet is drawn from that publication.

\**At Risk: Latino Children's Health* (Arte Público Press, 2011)



# 46%

OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN  
BOYS AGED 12–19 ARE  
OBESE

Source: *At Risk*, 115

LATINO  
NEIGHBORHOODS  
HAVE

# 1/3

AS MANY  
SUPERMARKETS  
AS OTHER  
NEIGHBORHOODS

## Context and Comparative Obesity Rates

- 22% of children in the U.S. today are Latino; it is estimated that 35% of children will be of Latino origin by the year 2050 (*At Risk*, 39).
- Recent data shows that 9.9% of U.S. children do not have health insurance. Among Latino children, roughly 17% lack coverage (*At Risk*, 39).
- If current trends persist, half of all Latino children born after 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes during the course of their lives (*At Risk*, 113).
- Nationally among children ages 6–11, 30.3% are overweight and 15.3% are obese. Among Mexican-American children, 39.3% are overweight and 23.7% are obese (*Centers for Disease Control: Battling Childhood Obesity*).
- Nationally among adolescents ages 12–19, 30.4% are overweight and 15.5% are obese. Among Mexican-American adolescents, 43.8% are overweight and 23.4% are obese (*CDC: Battling Childhood Obesity*).
- Obesity rates among Mexican-American boys are the highest of any group of American boys at 46% of those ages 12–19; 44% of those ages 6–11; and almost 33% of those ages 2–5 (*At Risk*, 115).
- Obesity rates among Mexican-American girls are similarly high at 42% of adolescent girls and 39% of those ages 6–11 (*At Risk*, 115).

## Diet

- Latino infants and toddlers typically consume more sweet fruit-flavored beverages than their non-Hispanic counterparts (*At Risk*, 89).
- Television advertising influences Latino families to spend more money on snack foods and provide more high-fat foods to their children (*At Risk*, 90).
- Minority and poor urban neighborhoods often have limited access to supermarkets and more fast food restaurants. Latino neighborhoods have roughly one-third as many supermarkets as other neighborhoods (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youths*).
- Latino high school students have more access to fast food at school than their peers. They have the option to select brand-name fast food from their high school cafeteria a la carte line an average of two days a week, compared to once a week for African-American and Caucasian students (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youths*).



## Exercise

- In the *Viva La Familia* study of 897 Latino children, 87% of 4–8 year olds engaged in at least one hour per day of physical activity (as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). But among Latino adolescents ages 12–19, only 37% engaged in that recommended amount of physical activity (*At Risk*, 92).
- More than 41% of Latino parents reported neighborhood safety as a key reason for a lack of physical activity. Other factors included a lack of opportunities, transportation difficulties and the cost associated with participation in organized physical activities (*At Risk*, 9).
- 25.9% of Hispanic youth ages 9–13 are involved in physical activity outside of school compared to 46.6% of Caucasian youths of the same age (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Overweight and Obesity Among Latino Youths*).

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To learn more about the DAY WITHOUT SUGAR challenge visit:  
[www.latinoteca.com/day-without-sugar](http://www.latinoteca.com/day-without-sugar)

