



# The Job Characteristics of Low-Income Hispanic Parents

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## Overview

Parental employment can increase the availability of financial resources that can support children’s development. As such, many publicly funded programs designed to support children in low-income families encourage and support parental employment.<sup>1-3</sup> However, there are additional characteristics of parents’ work that matter for children, characteristics that help determine the availability of non-monetary resources and family dynamics.<sup>4-8</sup> In this report, we describe the job characteristics of employed low-income Hispanic parents across four domains associated with child well-being: job security, work schedule, earnings, and employer-provided benefits.<sup>4</sup> We look at mothers and fathers separately because of the gendered nature of work. Additionally, we examine differences among Hispanics by nativity, and compare the job characteristics of low-income Hispanic parents to those of low-income non-Hispanic black (“black”) and non-Hispanic white parents (“white”).

## Key Findings

- Many low-income Hispanic parents are employed. In any given month in 2013, we estimate that 61 percent of low-income U.S.-born Hispanic fathers and 83 percent of low-income foreign-born Hispanic fathers had a job. In the same year, nearly half of low-income U.S.-born Hispanic mothers had a job, as did 38 percent of low-income foreign-born Hispanic mothers.
- Most working low-income parents have jobs with characteristics that can present challenges to raising children, such as low monthly earnings, nonstandard work schedules (i.e., work schedules outside of daytime hours during Monday through Friday), and limited access to employer-sponsored health insurance. This is true across race, Hispanic ethnicity, and nativity status.
- Some notable findings about the job characteristics of working low-income Hispanic **fathers** include:
  - **Job security.** Latino<sup>a</sup> fathers (U.S.- and foreign-born) have been in their longest-held job for more than four years, on average. Very few (less than 5 percent) working low-income Hispanic fathers (U.S.- and foreign-born) reported having more than one job at the same time.
  - **Work schedules.** Around half of Hispanic fathers (U.S.- and foreign-born) had an irregular or nonstandard work schedule; roughly one quarter of Hispanic fathers worked regular daytime hours with weekend work.
  - **Employer-provided health insurance.** Only half of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers and 35 percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers held jobs that provided employer-sponsored health insurance.
- Some notable findings about the job characteristics of working low-income Hispanic **mothers** include:
  - **Job security.** Twenty-eight percent of foreign-born mothers were at their longest-held job for less than a year,

<sup>a</sup> We use “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably in this paper. Consistent with the U.S. Census definition, this includes individuals having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, as well as other “Hispanic, Latino or Spanish” origins.

as were 35 percent of U.S.-born mothers. Thirteen percent of U.S.-born mothers reported involuntary part-time work—that is, they could not find a full-time job. Very few (less than 3 percent) working low-income Hispanic mothers (U.S.- and foreign-born) reported having more than one job at the same time.

- **Work schedules.** Forty-four percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers and 53 percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers had an irregular or nonstandard work schedule. Foreign-born Hispanic mothers were more likely to work a regular daytime shift with weekend hours (24 percent) than U.S.-born Hispanic mothers (13 percent).
- **Employer-provided health insurance.** Fifty-six percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers had access to employer-sponsored health insurance, compared to 42 percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers.
- There is a substantial subgroup of working low-income Hispanic parents who face stressful working conditions; that is, they have a job(s) with more than one characteristic that is linked to worse child outcomes. Among low-income Hispanic parents:
  - Nearly one third of foreign-born fathers and one quarter of U.S.-born fathers had three or more job stressors.
  - Roughly one quarter of mothers (U.S.- and foreign-born) had three or more stressors.

## Job Characteristics and Child Well-being

Social science research suggests that multiple domains of parents' paid work influence child well-being. These domains include earnings; employer-provided benefits (e.g., health insurance, paid time off, retirement); work schedule (e.g., number of hours worked, nonstandard schedule, irregular schedule); and job security.<sup>4</sup> Research also identifies two broad, interrelated pathways through which job characteristics across these domains can impact child well-being: resources and investments, and parental psychosocial well-being and family dynamics (see Figure 1).<sup>4,6,7</sup>

**Resources and investments.** Job characteristics, such as earnings and employer-provided benefits, provide the financial resources that determine the ability of families to buy goods and services that improve life. Child care, housing, health care, and nutritious food are among the goods and services that families need to thrive. Other job characteristics, such as number of hours worked, work schedules, commute time, and paid time off, can shape the amount of time and energy parents are able to invest in their children. For example, parents who work long or nonstandard schedules may spend less time with their children and have difficulties establishing and maintaining family routines.<sup>5,6</sup>

**Parental psychosocial well-being and family dynamics.** Job characteristics, such as wages, health care benefits, work schedules, and job security, can impact the psychosocial well-being of parents, which can in turn affect family dynamics. For example, research finds that nonstandard work schedules may reduce time spent with children and closeness

### Why research on low-income Hispanic children and families matters

Hispanic or Latino children currently make up roughly 1 in 4 of all children in the United States,<sup>a</sup> and are projected to make up 1 in 3 by 2050, similar to the number of white children.<sup>b</sup> Given this increase, how Hispanic children fare will have a profound impact on the social and economic well-being of the country as a whole.

Notably, though, 4.9 million Hispanic children, or 27 percent of all Hispanic children in the United States, are in poverty, more than in any other racial/ethnic group.<sup>c</sup> Nearly two thirds of Hispanic children live in low-income families, defined as those with incomes less than two times the federal poverty level.<sup>d</sup> Despite their high levels of economic need, Hispanics—particularly those in immigrant families—have lower rates of participation in many government support programs when compared with other racial/ethnic minority groups.<sup>e,f,g</sup> High-quality, research-based information on the characteristics, experiences, and diversity of Hispanic children and families is needed to inform programs and policies supporting the sizable population of low-income Hispanic families and children.

<sup>a</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2017). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2017*, Table POP3. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B.D. (2017). *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016*, Table B-2. Current Population Reports, 60-252. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf>

<sup>d</sup> Lopez, M. H. & Velasco, G. (2011). *Childhood poverty among Hispanics sets record, leads nation*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Hispanic Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation>

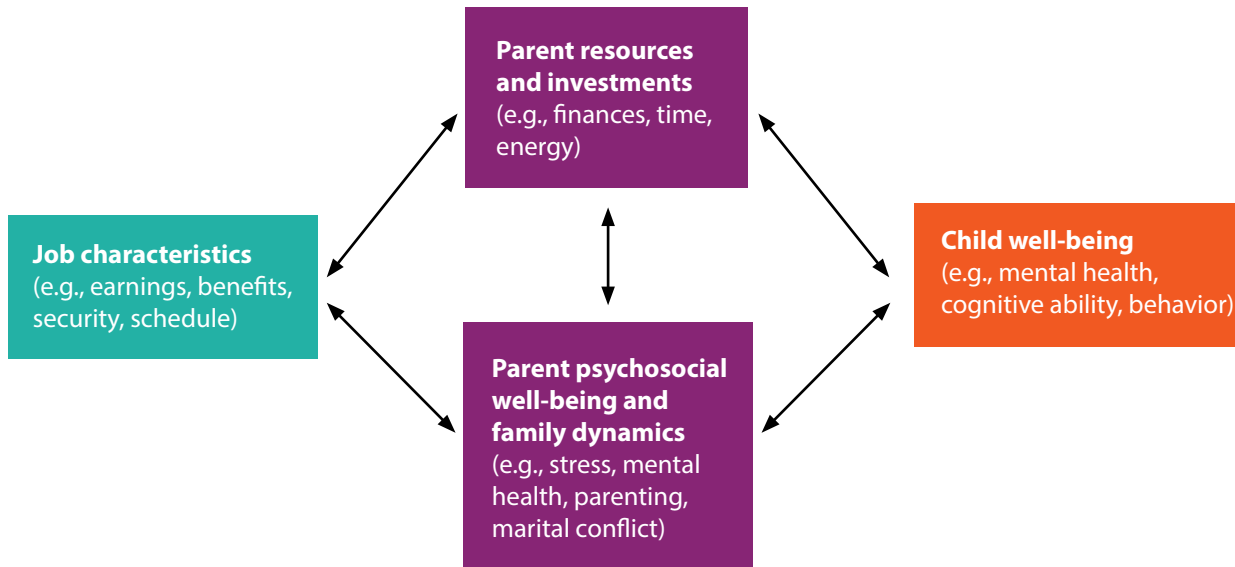
<sup>e</sup> Williams, S. (2013). *Public assistance participation among U.S. children in poverty, 2010*. Bowling Green, Ohio: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. Retrieved from <https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-13-02.pdf>

<sup>f</sup> Lichter, D., Sanders, S., & Johnson, K. (2015). *Behind at the starting line: Poverty among Hispanic infants*. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy. Retrieved from <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1250&context=carsey>

<sup>g</sup> Child Trends Databank. (2014). *Health care coverage*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=health-care-coverage>

between parent and child.<sup>9,10</sup> Low wages, unstable jobs, and variable or nonstandard work schedules can increase stress and take a toll on parental psychological well-being, increasing family conflict and harsh parenting.<sup>11-15</sup>

**Figure 1. Job characteristics and why they matter for child well-being**



Adapted from Repetti & Wang, 2009

## Cumulative Job Stressors

A single job characteristic—or stressor—may not necessarily be linked to adverse outcomes if it occurs in isolation, or if parents have support from others that lessens the stressor’s negative impact.<sup>4</sup> However, any one job (or combination of jobs held at one time) may have multiple stressors that cumulatively affect well-being.<sup>7,16-18</sup> Some research has found that as the number of job stressors increases, so does the risk for negative outcomes.<sup>19,20</sup> For example, children whose parents have nonstandard schedules and work variable hours experience worse outcomes (e.g., worse school performance and more externalizing behaviors) than those whose parents experience just one of those characteristics.<sup>21</sup>

## Methods

### Sample

Analyses in this brief focus exclusively on the 2,460 men and 3,878 women who participated in the 2014 SIPP Wave 1 interviews (see “Data” box) and met the following criteria:

- Family income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level in 2013
- Identified as non-Hispanic white (“white”), non-Hispanic black (“black”), or Hispanic (of any race)
- Reported having any children under the age of 18

For most analyses, we further narrowed the sample to low-income parents who reported being employed in a randomly selected month in 2013, the reference year for the 2014 SIPP Wave 1 data collection<sup>b</sup>; that is, the parents had at least one

<sup>b</sup> This differs from the Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of employment in the Current Population Survey, which considers a person employed if s/he is age 16 or older and worked at least one hour of paid work in the previous week, or at least 15 hours of unpaid work for their own business, farm, or family enterprise; or who had jobs but were not working temporarily due to circumstances such as maternity or paid family leave, childcare problems, bad weather, or job training.

### Data

The analyses in this brief use data from the first wave of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. SIPP is a nationally representative, longitudinal household survey of civilian, noninstitutionalized people in the United States that collects information on income and employment dynamics, use of public assistance programs, and family and household characteristics. The 2014 SIPP was designed to collect data across a four-year span, with each year representing a separate wave of data collection. Data for each year of the 2014 SIPP was collected through interviews conducted once per year (between February and June). SIPP attempts to interview all household members age 15 and older. When a member of the household is unavailable, field interviewers conduct proxy interviews with another member. The 2014 SIPP panel includes nearly 68,000 individual interviews from nearly 29,000 households, out of a sample of about 53,000 designated living quarters.

job and worked for at least one week during the randomly selected month. We chose this measure of employment, in contrast to any employment reported in the past year, for example, to better capture the point-in-time experience of low-income parents. In total, 1,688 men and 1,825 women met the three criteria and the study's definition of employed.<sup>c</sup> The analyses that follow summarize the characteristics of the job(s) these men and women held in the randomly selected month in 2013—also referred to as the reference month. We present the job characteristics of Hispanic parents separately by nativity (i.e., U.S.- or foreign-born).<sup>d</sup> While the prevalence on all measures is reported for all race/ethnic groups, only group differences that are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) are reported in the text (noted in Table 1).

## Measures

For parents who reported that they worked for pay in the reference month, we examined a range of job characteristics across four domains available in the data: job security, work schedule, earnings, and employer-provided benefits.

### Job security

Job security has been linked to lower psychosocial stress, which can in turn shape parenting.<sup>4</sup> Job security generally refers to how much security a person feels at a current job,<sup>4</sup> or how likely a person is to experience unemployment or job loss.<sup>22</sup> Because job security is often subjective, it can be challenging to assess with SIPP data (or similar data sets). However, some studies use other indicators, such as job tenure, to assess job security indirectly.<sup>23</sup> We used three measures to assess various dimensions of a respondent's job in the reference month that indirectly capture aspects of job security:

- **Any involuntary part-time job.** For respondents who reported working less than 35 hours per week at a job, SIPP asked why. Those respondents who said they could not find a full-time job were categorized as having an involuntary part-time job.
- **Total number of current jobs.** Having multiple jobs may reflect financial insecurity—a signal that one job is not sufficient for making ends meet. Because a relatively small number of respondents had more than one job, we used an item from SIPP on the total number of jobs held to create a binary measure that indicates whether the respondent had one job or more than one job.
- **Job duration.** For each respondent, we used the date of the SIPP interview and SIPP data on the month and year each job started to identify the respondent's longest-held job and create a continuous measure of longest-held job duration in years. We then used this information to create a binary measure indicating whether respondents had their longest-held job for less than one year, or for one year or more.<sup>e</sup>

### Work schedule

A parent's work schedule is one of the most important characteristics of a job with respect to child well-being.<sup>4</sup> We used three measures to assess various aspects of each respondent's work schedule during the reference month. For the small percentage of respondents with more than one job, we included schedule and commute data for the job at which the respondent worked the most hours.<sup>f</sup>

- **Hours worked per week.** We used the respondent-reported number of hours worked in a typical week across all jobs to create a categorical measure: under 35 hours per week (i.e., part time), 35–40 hours per week (i.e., approximately full time), and more than 40 hours per week.
- **Type of work schedule.** Respondents selected one of the following mutually exclusive categories to describe the work schedule for each of their jobs: regular daytime schedule, regular evening shift, regular night shift, rotating shift (changes from days to evenings to nights), split shift (two distinct periods each day), irregular schedule (changes from day to day), or other. We focus on the respondents' primary job—i.e., the job where they worked the most hours. However, because a regular daytime schedule could be on weekends, we used additional data to distinguish between respondents who worked regular daytime, Monday through Friday (respondent does not report any weekend work from any job); and those who worked regular daytime hours, with weekend work (any Saturday or

<sup>c</sup> A small number of respondents were excluded from our "employed" group if they had a job but were missing data on length of time at job for all recorded jobs.

<sup>d</sup> Analyses are weighted using SIPP's final person weights for Wave 1 to produce representative estimates.

<sup>e</sup> This measure includes only duration at the current job during the reference month, not duration of all employment with the current employer. A short duration at a current job may reflect poor job security—a stressor—but it may also reflect a move to a better job, which can be a positive outcome.

<sup>f</sup> A small number of respondents with more than one job reported working the same number of hours at each job. In these cases, we used the job that the respondent had held the longest. This was the case for all variables where we distinguished among specific jobs.



Sunday work reported). We also combined regular evening or night shifts into one category and combined split shift and “other” schedule into one category. Finally, we created a binary measure indicating whether any of the respondents’ jobs included evening/night/weekend hours, irregular, rotating, split, or other schedules—in other words, any schedule other than regular daytime hours, Monday through Friday.

- **Commute time.** We included a measure of respondents’ one-way commute time, in minutes, to the job at which they worked the most hours per week. Although commute time is not typically included as an indicator of work schedules, it is a job characteristic that shapes how much time is spent away from home. Additionally, longer commutes are linked to increased stress, poorer health, and decreased life satisfaction.<sup>24</sup>

### Monthly earnings

Research has linked low pay of working parents to reduced child well-being because of its relationship to increased stress and reduced earnings to spend on child care, housing, health care, and nutritious food.<sup>4</sup> We included a continuous measure summing respondents’ **monthly earnings**, in dollars, across all jobs held in the reference month. This measure does not include income from other sources.

### Employer-provided benefits

The benefits an employee has access to through his or her job are important for child well-being, and perhaps increasingly so, since wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of living.<sup>25</sup> Important job-related benefits include paid time off (e.g., sick days, vacation, family leave) and access to retirement/pension and employer-sponsored health insurance.<sup>4,7</sup> The 2014 SIPP only includes information about the availability of employer-sponsored health insurance.

- **Access to employer-sponsored health insurance.** We created a binary measure indicating whether a respondent had access to employer-provided health care during the reference month, even if the respondent did not use it. This indicator was constructed from two questions and includes respondents who reported having private health insurance from a job or employer during this month, and those who reported that the employer offered health insurance even though they did not use it (excluding those respondents who said they did not have the coverage because they were ineligible).

### Cumulative job stressors

As discussed above, any job or combination of jobs may have more characteristics that, in combination, can have a cumulative effect on well-being.<sup>7,16,17,26</sup> Researchers have adopted several strategies to capture multiple job characteristics with a single measure.<sup>26</sup> One common approach, particularly in family research, is to sum the number of job characteristics that promote or inhibit parental investments in children or family well-being.<sup>27</sup>

We created a **cumulative job stressor score** that counts how many of seven job characteristics, which the literature suggests may be stressful for parents, a respondent reported. The score ranges from 0-7, with higher values indicating the presence of more job stressors. The following variables were used to create the index:

- Does not have access to employer-provided health insurance
- Does any involuntary part-time work
- Worked at longest-held job for less than one year<sup>9</sup>
- Has more than one job
- Has any work schedule in a job other than regular Monday-Friday daytime hours
- Has a one-way commute of at least 30 minutes (in the highest quartile in this sample)
- Works more than 40 hours per week, on average

<sup>9</sup> We make the assumption that very short job duration—less than one year—is a stressor. It is possible, however, that short job duration reflects a recent move to a better job, which can be a positive change. Yet even in these cases (which we do not determine), being in a new position can be stressful.

## Findings

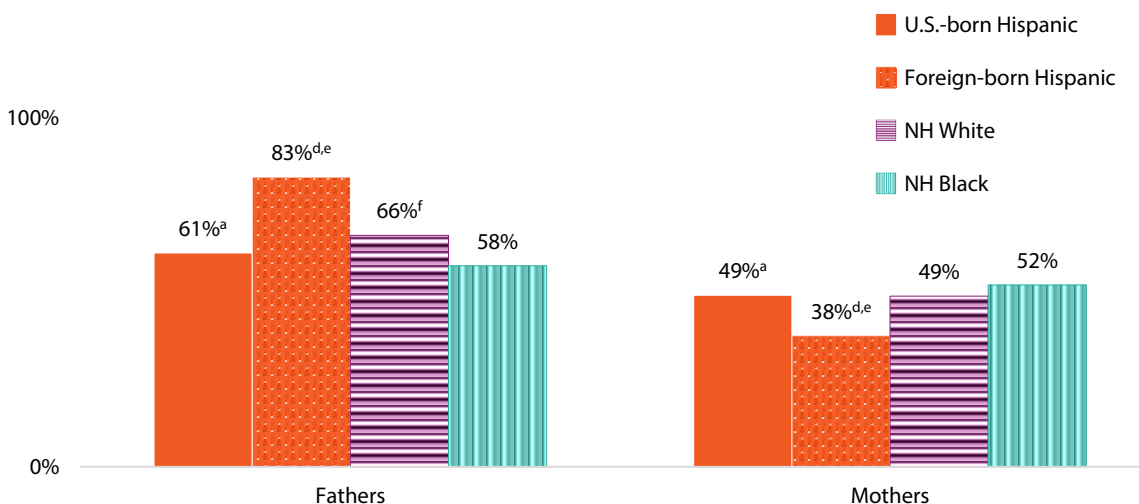
### Employment among low-income parents

Current job characteristics can be shown only for those parents who reported having a current job. Figure 2 shows the percentage of low-income parents who reported having a job in the randomly selected month, by gender, race/ethnicity, and nativity status (for Hispanics).

- Among low-income fathers, foreign-born Hispanic fathers were the most likely to report having a job; 83 percent reported having a job compared to 61 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers, 66 percent of non-Hispanic white fathers, and 58 percent of non-Hispanic black fathers.
- Among low-income mothers, who had lower rates of employment than fathers, foreign-born Hispanic mothers were the least likely to report having a job; 38 percent reported having a job compared to 49 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers, 49 percent of non-Hispanic white mothers, and 52 percent of non-Hispanic black mothers.

**Figure 2.** Among low-income fathers, foreign-born Hispanics were most likely to be employed.

Percentage of low-income parents who are employed



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ . Low-income is defined as a family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

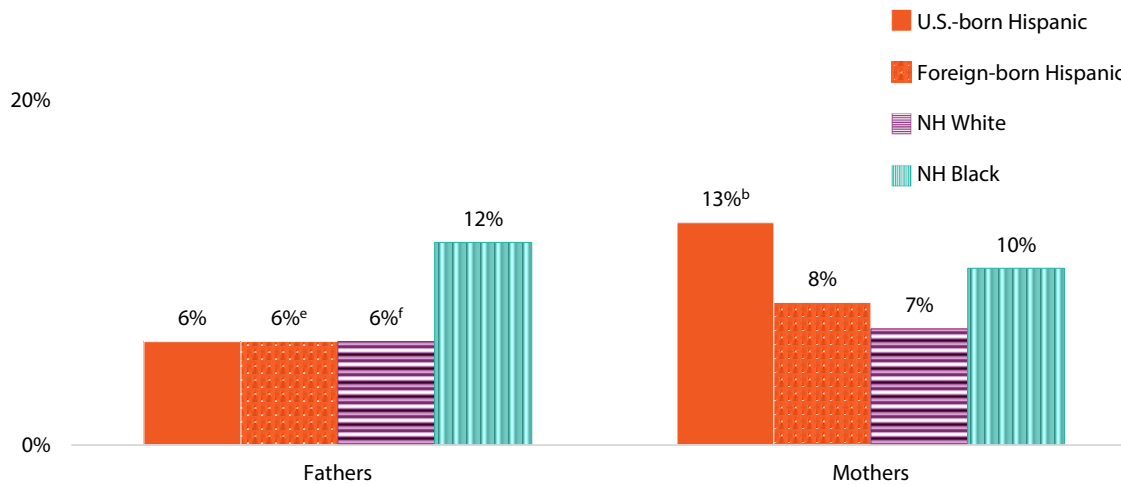
### Job security

#### Fathers

- **Any involuntary part-time job.** Six percent of Hispanic (U.S.- and foreign-born) and non-Hispanic white fathers with a job reported that they had an involuntary part-time job. However, almost 12 percent of low-income non-Hispanic black fathers reported having an involuntary part-time job (Figure 3).
- **Current number of jobs.** Very few low-income fathers—less than 5 percent across all racial and ethnic groups—reported having more than one job (Table 1).
- **Job duration.** On average, foreign-born Hispanic fathers reported being at their longest-held job for an average of 5.0 years, while U.S.-born Hispanic fathers reported being at their job for an average of 4.2 years. Black fathers reported being at their job an average of 4.0 years, and white fathers reported being at their job 5.9 years on average (Figure 4).
  - Twenty-three percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers reported being at their job for less than one year, as did 29 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers (Table 1).

**Figure 3.** Thirteen percent of low-income U.S.-born Hispanic mothers reported having an involuntary part-time job.

Percentage of low-income parents who are working an involuntary part-time job



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

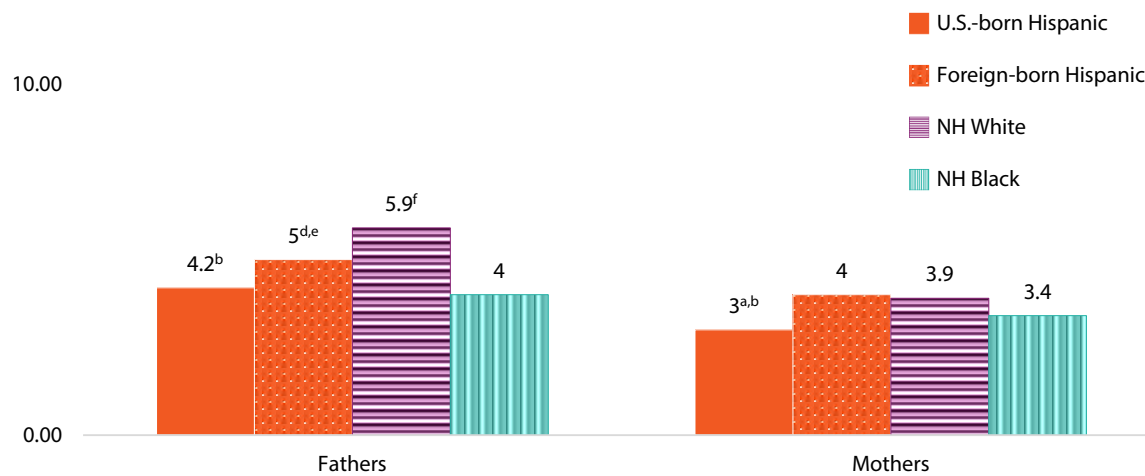
### Mothers

- **Any involuntary part-time job.** Low-income U.S.-born Hispanic mothers with a job were more likely to report having an involuntary part-time job (13 percent) than low-income white mothers (7 percent). Eight percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported having an involuntary part-time job, as did 10 percent of black mothers (Figure 3).
- **Current number of jobs.** Less than 3 percent of low-income U.S.- and foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported having more than one job (Table 1).
- **Job duration.** On average, low-income foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported being at their longest-held job for 4.0 years compared to an average of 3.0 years for low-income U.S.-born Hispanic mothers (Figure 4).
  - Twenty-eight percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported being at their job for less than one year as did 35 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers (Table 1).



**Figure 4.** Low-income U.S.-born Hispanic mothers reported being at their job 3 years, on average.

*Average job duration of low-income parents in years*



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

## Work schedule

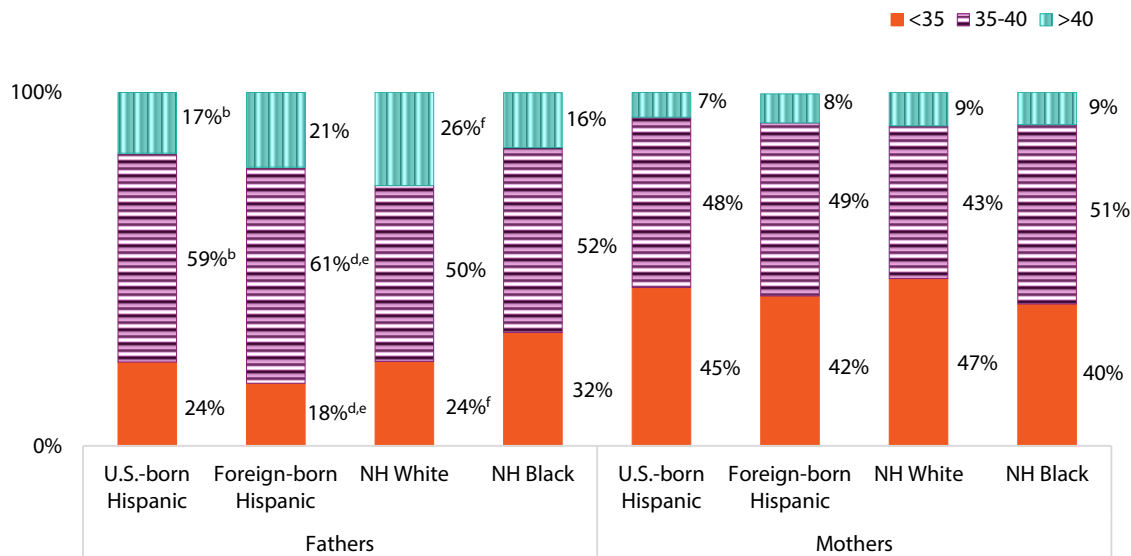
### Fathers

- Hours worked per week.** U.S.-born Hispanic fathers worked an average of 37.5 hours per week, and foreign-born Hispanic fathers worked an average of 38.9 hours per week. Black fathers worked the fewest hours on average (35.3 per week), and white fathers worked 37.9 hours per week (Table 1).
  - Seventeen percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers and 21 percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers worked more than 40 hours per week, on average (Figure 5).
- Type of work schedule.** Fifty-one percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers and 45 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers reported working a regular Monday-Friday daytime shift. Thirty-six percent of black fathers reported working a regular Monday-Friday daytime shift compared to 45 percent of white fathers (Figure 6).
  - Roughly one quarter of U.S.- (24 percent) and foreign-born (26 percent) Hispanic fathers reported working a daytime shift that included weekend hours.
  - U.S.- and foreign-born Hispanic fathers were generally less likely to have irregular work schedules (11 percent and 8 percent, respectively) than black (17 percent) or white (19 percent) fathers.
  - Overall, 56 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers and 49 percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers reported working a schedule other than a regular Monday-Friday daytime shift, as did 55 percent of white fathers and 64 percent of black fathers (Figure 6).
- Commute time.** The reported one-way commute time for all low-income fathers averaged between 22 and 24 minutes. The commute time of foreign-born Hispanic fathers—24.4 minutes, on average—was significantly higher than the average of 21.8 minutes for white fathers (Table 1).



**Figure 5.** Roughly 1 in 5 low-income Hispanic fathers said they worked more than 40 hours in an average week.

Average number of hours worked per week



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

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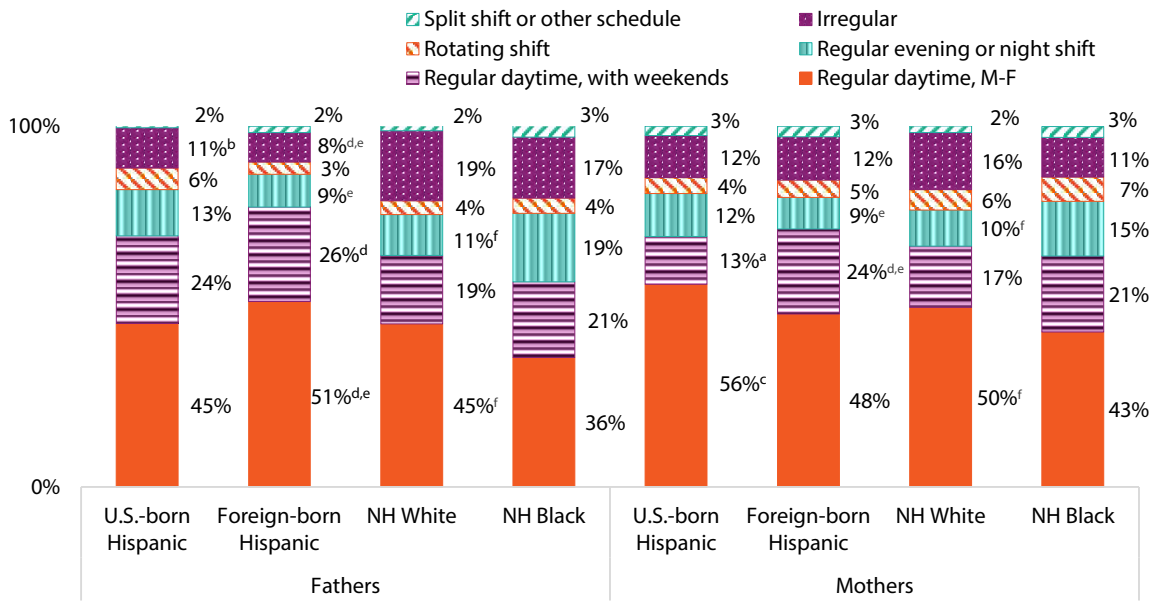
<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

## Mothers

- **Hours worked per week.** Low-income mothers with a job reported working between 31 and 34 hours per week, on average (Table 1). Less than 10 percent of mothers, across all racial and ethnic groups, reported working more than 40 hours per week (Figure 5).
- **Type of work schedule.** The most commonly reported work schedule for low-income mothers was a regular Monday-Friday daytime shift; 56 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers reported working this shift, as did 48 percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers (Figure 6).
  - Twenty four percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported working a daytime shift that included weekend hours, higher than the 13 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers, 17 percent of white mothers, and 21 percent of black mothers who reported this schedule.
  - Roughly 12 percent of Hispanic mothers (U.S.- and foreign-born) reported an irregular work schedule, similar to other low-income mothers.
  - Overall, 44 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers and 53 percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers worked a schedule other than a regular Monday-Friday daytime shift, as did 51 percent of white mothers and 58 percent of black mothers (Table 1).
- **Commute time.** The average one-way commute time for low-income mothers with a job ranges from 17 to just over 21 minutes. The average commute time of 21.3 minutes for foreign-born Hispanic women was significantly longer than the average of 17.2 minutes for non-Hispanic white mothers (Table 1).

**Figure 6.** Roughly one quarter of low-income Hispanic fathers worked a daytime schedule with weekends.

*Work schedule type*



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at p<.05.

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

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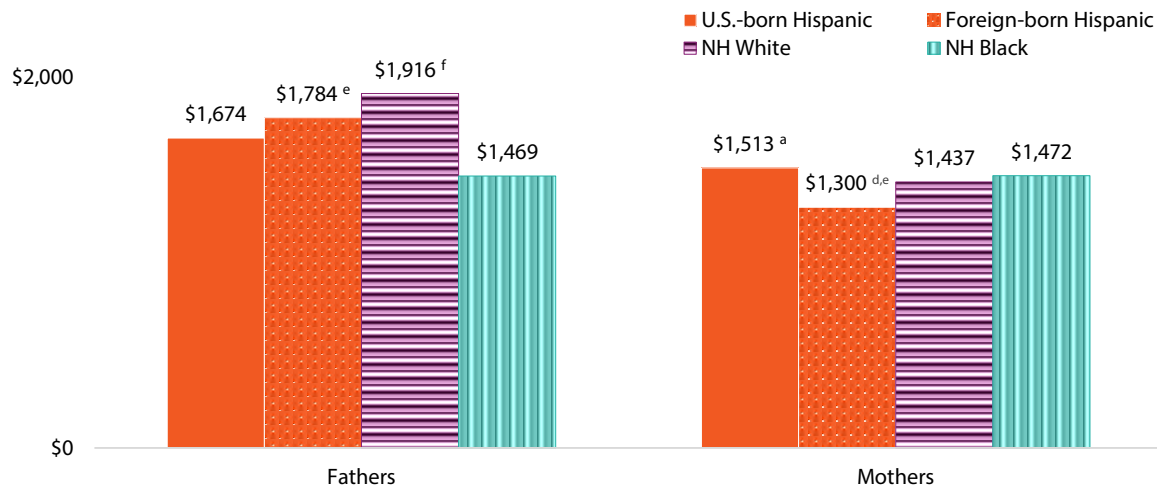


## Earnings

### Fathers

Among low-income working fathers, the average monthly earnings from all jobs ranged from \$1,469 for black fathers to \$1,916 for white fathers. Average monthly earnings for U.S.- and foreign-born Hispanic fathers were \$1,674 and \$1,784, respectively (Figure 7).

**Figure 7.** Low-income foreign-born Hispanic mothers reported lower monthly earnings than other low-income mothers.  
Average monthly earnings from work



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

### Mothers

Among low-income working mothers, the average monthly earnings from all jobs ranged from \$1,300 for foreign-born Hispanic mothers to \$1,513 for U.S.-born Hispanic mothers. The average monthly earnings for working foreign-born Hispanic mothers was significantly lower than that of other low-income mothers (Figure 7).

## Benefits

### Fathers

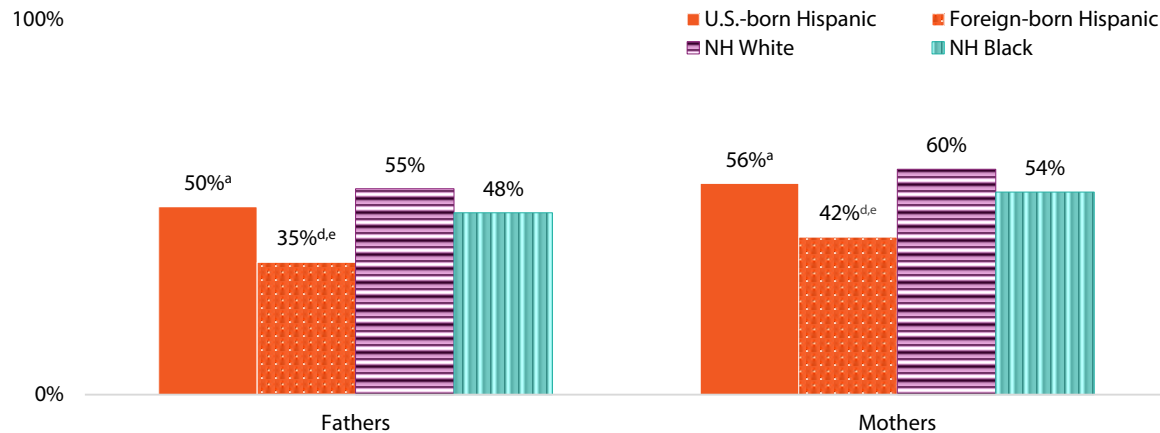
Only 35 percent of low-income foreign-born Hispanic fathers worked in a job with access to employer-sponsored health insurance. This is significantly lower than the percentage of other low-income fathers with access to health insurance through employers (which ranged from 48 to 55 percent, see Figure 8).

## Mothers

As with fathers, low-income foreign-born Hispanic mothers were less likely (42 percent) to have access to employer-sponsored health insurance than other low-income mothers, whose access ranged from 54 to 60 percent (Figure 8).

**Figure 8.** Low-income foreign-born Hispanic parents had less access to employer-sponsored health insurance than their peers.

Percentage with access to employer-sponsored health insurance



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

a U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

b U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

c U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

d Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

e Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

f Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

## Cumulative Job Stressors

As described above, we created a cumulative job stressor score that counts the number of job characteristics that may be perceived as stressful for parents. The score ranges from 0-7, with higher values indicating the presence of more job stressors. Results are shown in Figure 9.

### Fathers

Low-income fathers across all racial and ethnic groups experienced about two job stressors, on average (Table 1).

- Less than 10 percent of U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanic fathers reported no job stressor. Fourteen percent of white fathers reported no stressors, significantly more than all other groups of low-income fathers.
- Thirty-three percent of foreign-born Hispanic fathers and 26 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic fathers had three or more job stressors.

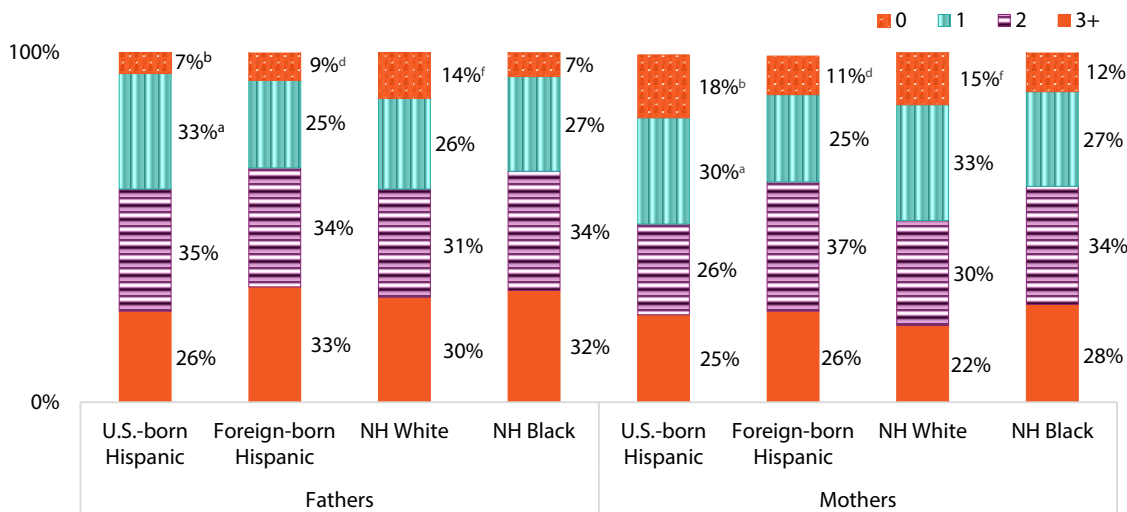
### Mothers

Low-income foreign-born Hispanic and black mothers had an average of 1.9 job stressors, significantly higher than the 1.7 stressors reported by U.S.-born Hispanic and white mothers (Table 1).

- Eleven percent of foreign-born Hispanic mothers and 18 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic mothers reported no stressors. Fifteen percent of white mothers reported no stressors, significantly more than all other groups of low-income mothers.
- Roughly one quarter of low-income Hispanic mothers (U.S.- and foreign-born) reported three or more stressors.

**Figure 9. Most low-income parents reported more than one job stressor.**

*Cumulative number of job stressors*



Source: Authors' analyses of the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: Sample is limited to low-income parents (family income <200% of the federal poverty level) with children under the age of 18 who reported working in a randomly selected month in 2013. All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

## Discussion and Implications

Many parents in low-income families work for pay. Not surprisingly, their monthly earnings are quite low. Additionally, many working low-income parents are in jobs with characteristics, other than earnings, that can present challenges to family and child well-being. Our findings show that some of the challenging work features faced by Hispanic parents, discussed in more detail below, are also common among low-income white and black parents, particularly black fathers.

Among low-income Hispanic parents, approximately half work irregular or nonstandard schedules,<sup>h</sup> many do not have access to employer-provided health insurance, and many may face tenuous job security, having been in their jobs for less than one year. Notably, many low-income working parents, including Hispanic parents, report having jobs with multiple stressors.

Irregular or nonstandard work schedules (including weekend, evening, and early morning hours, or work hours that vary from week to week) have increased with the rise of the “24/7 economy.”<sup>28</sup> This is particularly true of the service sector, in which many low-wage workers are employed.<sup>28</sup> Irregular and nonstandard work schedules can present substantial challenges for parents. For those with young children, finding affordable child care can be difficult and stressful if child care is unavailable at the times they need it.<sup>29</sup> Some families may be able to select jobs in which one parent works nonstandard times to maximize parental care and reduce child care cost.<sup>30,31</sup> However, this might not always be possible, especially in single-parent households. In fact, the negative effects of parental nonstandard work schedules on children’s outcomes are more pronounced among single-parent families and families of low socioeconomic status because they have more limited resources to address work-related challenges.<sup>5</sup> Even when families can “tag-team,” nonstandard or variable work schedules can limit the time families spend together and make it difficult to establish and maintain family routines.<sup>21</sup> This matters because spending time together as a family (e.g., having meals together), has been linked to positive outcomes in children and youth.<sup>32,33</sup>

With rising health care costs, access to health insurance has become increasingly important for everyone, but particularly for low-income families. Insurance can provide access to health care services that increase parents’ chances of remaining

<sup>h</sup> We identify irregular job schedules as a stressor. However, if this schedule is by choice, it offers flexibility and might be positive. Nevertheless, supplementary analyses (not shown) suggest that most parents with an irregular schedule report that it is not by choice; rather, it is a requirement of the job.



healthy enough to work and earn an income,<sup>7</sup> and it can also buffer against the potentially devastating costs of a medical emergency. As we find, many employed low-income Hispanic parents work in jobs that do not provide access to health insurance. Some low-income families have access to health insurance through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). However, many income-eligible Latino families remain unenrolled in these programs; in 2013, 11.5 percent of Hispanic children were uninsured, although two thirds of them were eligible for public coverage.<sup>34</sup> And while the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 has resulted in large increases in coverage for Latino individuals more generally,<sup>35</sup> low-income parents may be less able to afford this coverage, or in the case of unauthorized immigrants, be ineligible for it.<sup>36</sup>

Job security can provide income security and reduce parental stress. We find that, on average, foreign-born Hispanic fathers have worked in their longest-held job five years, slightly less than the national statistic for men at the time of the survey (5.5 years).<sup>37</sup> A larger difference was present for U.S.-born Hispanic mothers, whose average job tenure was three years, more than two years less than the average job tenure of women in the United States (5.4 years).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, many Hispanic parents have been in their current job for less than one year (between 23 percent for foreign-born Hispanic fathers and 35 percent for U.S.-born Hispanic mothers). Perceptions of job insecurity can result in financial stress and tension in the home,<sup>38</sup> ultimately hampering child well-being.

Often, stressful working conditions co-occur,<sup>39,40</sup> as was the case for parents in this sample. Across racial and ethnic groups, but particularly among foreign-born Hispanic fathers and mothers, having jobs with multiple stressors was the norm. This finding is noteworthy, since having multiple job-related challenges can deplete parents' physical and mental resources and well-being,<sup>27</sup> which in turn can reduce the quality of parent-child interactions. For these reasons, efforts to support working parents need to address the fact that parents often face multiple stressors simultaneously.

For some low-income parents, unemployment is a concern. However, participation of low-income parents in the workforce is quite high, particularly for foreign-born Hispanic men. We also find that many low-income Hispanic parents work in jobs that present challenges to family life. For these families, efforts focused on better aligning work conditions with families' needs may help improve family and child outcomes. Some of these efforts can include changes (via policy) that encourage more employers to provide full-time jobs, higher wages, more flexible work schedules, and more comprehensive benefit packages. For example, Morsy and Rothstein recommend legislative reforms that create disincentives to work scheduling practices that "limit employees' ability to provide stable home lives for children."<sup>41</sup> And there is evidence that many states and localities are enacting policies to do just this.<sup>42</sup> However, more remains to be done at the local and federal level, particularly for immigrants who are especially vulnerable to unfair working conditions.<sup>43,44</sup>

Finally, enhanced supports for men and women in jobs with stressful characteristics can also help to reduce the stress these characteristics cause. These supports may include, for example, greater access to affordable, high-quality child care, with more weekend and evening coverage. Efforts to do this must recognize and address the unique challenges that Latino families face in accessing child care.<sup>45</sup> Expanding access to non-employer health insurance or health care services may also be particularly beneficial to low-income Latino families, especially foreign-born Hispanic parents and their children.

In this brief, we consider only a select group of job characteristics that are related to child outcomes. There are others that can and should be examined. For example, while earnings are important, so is the (in)stability of earnings over time. Additionally, we could only address job security indirectly; a more direct analysis of the subjective experience of job insecurity, as experienced and perceived by workers themselves, would also be useful. Notably, we look at mothers and fathers independently, yet any one parent's job characteristics may matter more (or less), depending on the job characteristics of any other parent or caregiving adult in the household. For this reason, future research should explore what job stressors are faced within households. Finally, our measure of cumulative stressors is a count, and it does not account for varying levels of impact across measures or how some combinations of specific stressors might be more detrimental than others, including those not included in this count. For example, long work hours may be more stressful depending on other job characteristics (e.g., occupational safety). Nonetheless, this cumulative measure does signal an accumulation of risks and overall job quality, and it shows that low-income Hispanic families, and many other low-income families, work in a job or jobs with multiple stressors.

**Table 1.** Employment status and work characteristics of low-income Hispanic parents of children under age 18, by nativity status

	Fathers					Mothers				
	U.S.-born Hispanic	Foreign-born Hispanic	NH White	NH Black	Pairwise Significance	U.S.-born Hispanic	Foreign-born Hispanic	NH White	NH Black	Pairwise Significance
<b>Parents of kids under 18 (n)</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>1,174</b>	<b>413</b>		<b>464</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>1,722</b>	<b>875</b>	
Not employed	38.6%	16.9%	33.6%	42.3%	a, d, e, f	50.8%	62.4%	51.0%	47.8%	a, d, e
Employed	61.4%	83.1%	66.4%	57.7%	a, d, e, f	49.2%	37.7%	49.0%	52.2%	a, d, e
<b>Employed parents of kids under 18 (n)</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>228</b>		<b>222</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>467</b>	
<b>Security</b>										
Any involuntarily part-time job	5.5%	6.1%	5.5%	11.8%	e, f	12.9%	8.3%	6.7%	10.2%	b
Total number of current jobs										
1	96.9%	97.5%	95.8%	97.6%		98.0%	97.2%	94.5%	97.6%	
>1	3.1%	2.5%	4.2%	2.4%		2.0%	2.8%	5.5%	2.4%	
Time at longest current job (years)	4.2	5.0	5.9	4.0	b, d, e, f	3.0	4.0	3.9	3.4	a, b
Has had longest job less than 1 year	29.3%	23.0%	21.8%	29.7%		34.8%	27.7%	26.8%	29.7%	
<b>Schedule</b>										
Hours worked per week										
Average	37.45	38.87	37.92	35.25	e, f	31.35	32.22	31.41	33.50	f
<35	23.7%	17.7%	23.9%	32.1%	d, e, f	44.8%	42.4%	47.4%	40.1%	
35-40	59.1%	61.2%	49.7%	52.3%	b, d, e	48.3%	49.4%	43.2%	50.8%	
>40	17.2%	21.1%	26.4%	15.6%	b, f	7.0%	8.2%	9.4%	9.1%	
Type of work schedule										
Regular daytime, M-F	45.3%	51.4%	45.2%	35.9%	d, e, f	56.2%	47.8%	49.8%	42.7%	c, f
Regular daytime, with weekends	23.6%	26.3%	18.5%	20.5%	d	13.2%	23.5%	16.5%	21.1%	a, d, e

**Table 1, cont.** Employment status and work characteristics of low-income Hispanic parents of children under age 18, by nativity

	Fathers					Mothers				
	U.S.-born Hispanic	Foreign-born Hispanic	NH White	NH Black	Pairwise Significance	U.S.-born Hispanic	Foreign-born Hispanic	NH White	NH Black	Pairwise Significance
Type of work schedule										
Regular evening or night shift	12.8%	9.0%	11.4%	19.2%	e, f	11.9%	8.9%	10.4%	14.8%	e, f
Rotating shift	5.6%	3.4%	3.8%	4.2%		4.4%	4.9%	5.7%	6.7%	
Irregular	11.2%	7.9%	19.2%	17.0%	b, d, e	11.6%	12.0%	15.7%	11.3%	
Split shift or other schedule	1.5%	1.9%	1.9%	3.2%		2.6%	2.9%	1.9%	3.3%	
Any non-regular M-F work schedule	56.2%	49.0%	54.8%	64.5%	e, f	44.3%	52.6%	51.1%	57.9%	c, f
One-way commute time (minutes)	22.1	24.4	21.8	23.5	d	18.5	21.3	17.2	21.3	d
<b>Earnings</b>										
Total monthly earnings from all jobs	\$1,674	\$1,784	\$1,916	\$1,469	e, f	\$1,513	\$1,300	\$1,437	\$1,472	a, d, e
<b>Benefits</b>										
Access to employer-provided health insurance	50.0%	35.2%	54.8%	48.4%	a, d, e	56.3%	42.0%	59.5%	54.0%	a, d, e
<b>Cumulative Job Stressors</b>										
Average	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.1		1.7	1.9	1.7	1.9	c, d, f
0	6.5%	9.1%	13.6%	6.6%	b, d, f	18.0%	11.2%	15.3%	11.7%	b, d, f
1	33.4%	24.6%	25.9%	27.0%	a	30.3%	25.4%	32.9%	26.5%	a
2	34.5%	33.6%	30.9%	33.9%		26.4%	37.1%	30.2%	34.3%	
3+	25.6%	32.7%	29.7%	32.4%		25.3%	26.3%	21.7%	27.6%	

Source: 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 1

Notes: All pairwise differences indicated with the notation below are significant at  $p < .05$ . Low-income is defined as a family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level

<sup>a</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus foreign-born Hispanic

<sup>b</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>c</sup> U.S.-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>d</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic white

<sup>e</sup> Foreign-born Hispanic versus non-Hispanic black

<sup>f</sup> Non-Hispanic white versus non-Hispanic black

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## About the Center

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families is a hub of research to help programs and policy better serve low-income Hispanics across three priority areas—poverty reduction and economic self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education. The Center was established in 2013 by a five-year cooperative agreement from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to Child Trends, in partnership with Abt Associates and New York University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and University of Maryland, College Park. The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families is supported by grant #90PH0025 from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents are solely the responsibility of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Copyright 2018 by the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families.

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