

# Top 10 Things We Know About Young Children and Health Equity...

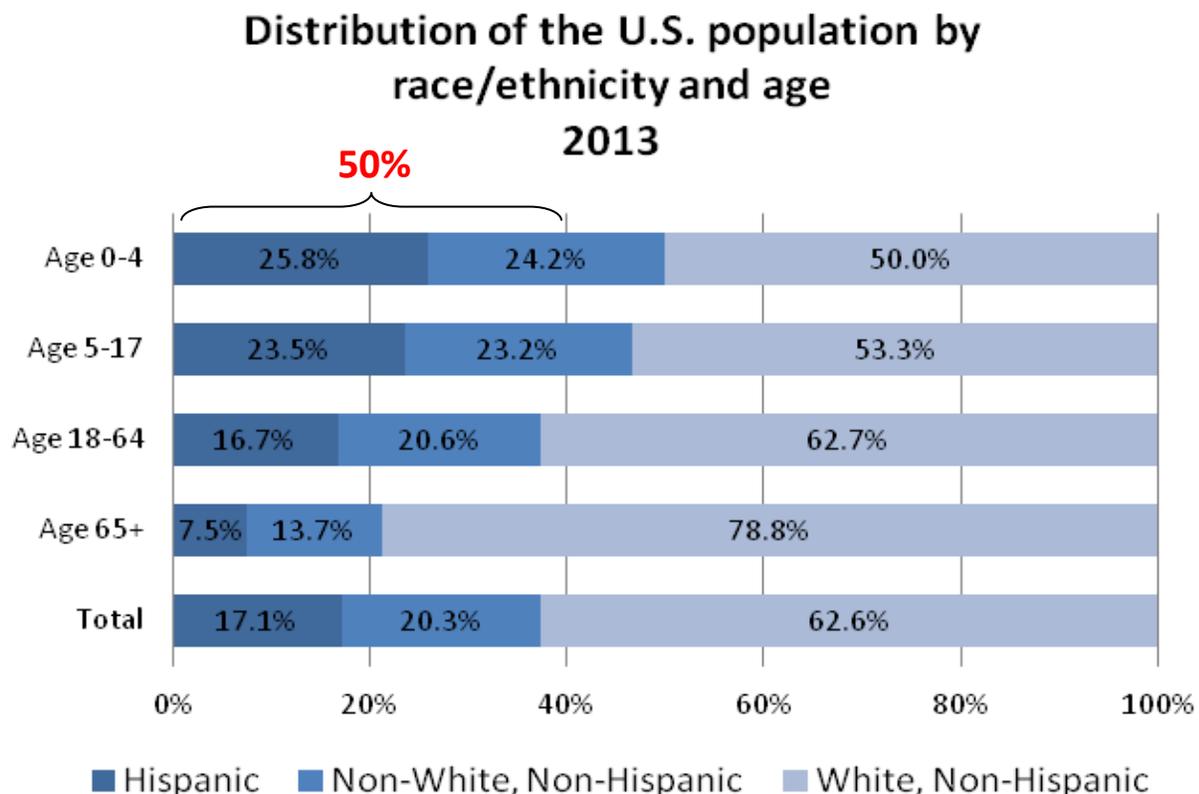
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## OUR YOUNGEST ARE MOST DIVERSE AND POOR.

Children are by far the most diverse age group in society, and their healthy development is critical to America's leadership in a world economy.

Over the last two decades, the U.S. population has become much more diverse. Census data show how the young-child population (zero to 4 years old) is much more diverse than all other age groups (Figure 1). Half of all young children are Hispanic or non-white, compared to just over 21 percent of adults over the age of 65.

Figure 1.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Population Division 2013

While growth in diversity among young children differs in size and racial and ethnic composition, all states now have a young-child population that is more diverse than a decade ago. This change creates both challenges and opportunities for society. It also requires commensurate public responses. This diversity can be a source of strength in a world economy that itself is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, but only if all children have pathways to success and are not marginalized or blocked in their efforts to develop. Particular attention must be paid to race, language, culture and ethnicity in promoting the development of the next generation.

Distribution of the young child population by race/ethnicity and household income from the U.S. Census (Figure 2) show that about one-third of white, non-Hispanic young children in the U.S. live

in low-income families (below 200 percent of poverty), compared to two-thirds of Hispanic and African American children. Meanwhile, one-third of white, non-Hispanic children live in families with incomes over 400 percent of the poverty level (\$90,000 in annual income for a family of four), while only one in nine Hispanic and African-American children live in families with incomes over 400 percent. The data highlights how families of color are less able to have the income needed to make the substantial investments in their children’s well-being and development compared to white families.

Figure 2.

### Distribution of the young child population (0-5 years) by race/ethnicity and household income, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Sample, 2011-2013

The reality is that race and poverty in the U.S. are intertwined (in statistics-speak, they are multicollinear, meaning they are correlated and it is difficult statistically to separate their independent effects). Hispanic and non-white children are much more likely to live in poor households than are white, non-Hispanic children. This is due in part to historical racism. One example is U.S. housing policies, where historical economic disadvantages created by institutionalized racism and discrimination, such as the Homestead Act of 1862 (which gave 160 acres of free land to every white settler) and the National Housing Act of 1934 (which “redlined” many predominantly black, Hispanic, Asian and Jewish neighborhoods), have led to a lack of wealth, resources and opportunities for minority communities.<sup>1</sup> These structures have led to intergenerational poverty that disproportionately harmed families of color and created communities of color that are poor. While children are one-quarter of the country’s population today, they

<sup>1</sup> “Intergenerational Disparities Experienced by Homeless Black Families.” Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness. March 2012. [http://www.icphusa.org/filelibrary/ICPH\\_Homeless%20Black%20Families.pdf](http://www.icphusa.org/filelibrary/ICPH_Homeless%20Black%20Families.pdf)

represent 100 percent of the future. Ensuring children's healthy development in the context of their race, culture and socio-economic status is critical to America's future prosperity.

**Additional Resources:**

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- From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, 2000
- Annie E. Casey Foundation: Race for Results <http://www.aecf.org/resources/2017-race-for-results/>