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## **The Quality of Life (QOL) Study: An Overview**

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos now represent 12.5% of the United States population, and are about equal to the African American population in being the largest minority group in the country. In Nebraska alone, there are about 94,500 Latinos, now comprising 5.5% of the state population. This number reflects a 155% increase in the last decade – a change that cannot be accounted for by the relatively small (8%) growth in the overall state population. These recent changes in U.S. demographics have not been matched with endeavors to better understand, and consequently meet, the needs of the Latino population. To date, empirical studies on the Latino population, and particularly Latinos in the Great Plains, remain sparse. The current study attempts to address this lack of research by providing preliminary information regarding the Latino population in Nebraska.

The Quality of Life of Latinos in Lincoln, NE (QOL) Study is a broad-based assessment of factors affecting the quality of life of Latino families. The study examined a range of factors affecting physical and psychological well-being at multiple levels: individual (e.g., mental/physical health), family (e.g., parent-child relationships), and social (e.g., sense of community) and included both internal (e.g., stress, coping) and external (e.g., discrimination, economic) factors. Particular attention was paid to factors previously identified as relevant to minority and immigrant populations.

The target population for the study was parents of children under age 18 and an adolescent child, if they had one. Due to difficulties recruiting a random sample from a predominantly European-American community, families were recruited using a variety of techniques, including direct mailings to parents of Latino children enrolled in public schools, mailings and telephone calls to individuals on mailing lists maintained by service and governmental agencies serving Latino families, solicitation at events sponsored by Latino community organizations (e.g., churches), and participant referrals (“snowball sampling”).

Data collection occurred in the families’ homes. Parents participated in face-to-face interviews conducted in either English or Spanish at their preference by bilingual interviewers. Parent interviews lasted from 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Adolescents filled out a questionnaire in either Spanish or English. Each participating family member was paid \$10 for his or her time and effort. Data collection was completed in August 2001. This report focuses on the quality of life of the parents.

The Quality of Life Study involved the collective efforts of many individuals. Special thanks are due to Byron Zamboanga, who coordinated the questionnaire development activities; Blanca Ramirez, who supervised data collection; and the families who generously contributed their time to participate in this study. The QOL was supported by grants to members of the Latino Research Initiative from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Arts and Sciences, College of Human Resources and Family Sciences, the University of Nebraska Layman Fund, the University of Nebraska Research Council, the University of Nebraska Center for Great Plains Studies, and a University of Nebraska LINC Kellogg grant.

# Chapter 1

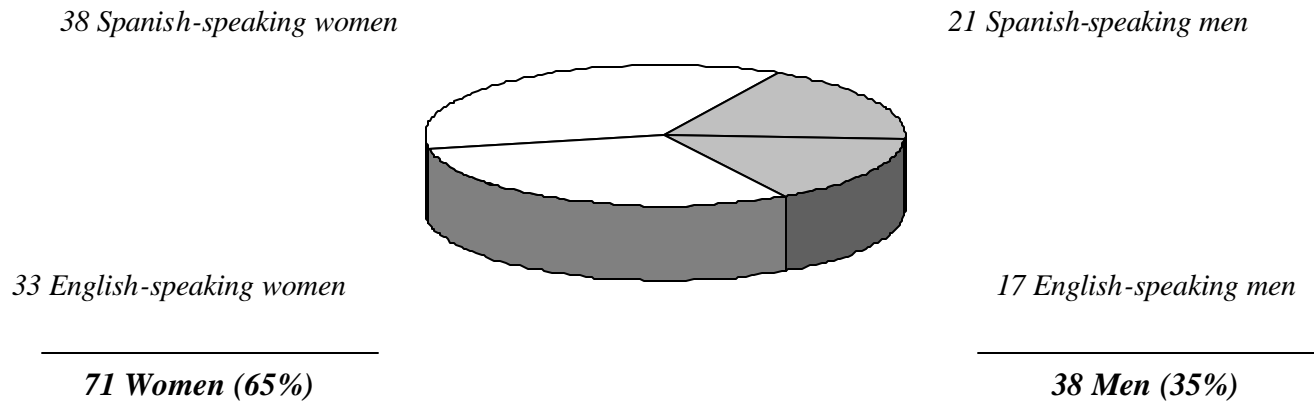
## Characteristics of the Respondents

The term “Latinos” or “Hispanics” covers a diverse range of people within the U.S. This is reflected in the current sample of respondents who represent various national Latin American origins. Moreover, participants also vary in many other factors, such as religious affiliation and length of time they have lived in the U.S. This first section provides information regarding the diverse characteristics of the sample.

The factors examined in this chapter are basic demographic descriptors that are also important indicators and correlates of quality of life. One major factor is language use. The ability to use the English language makes it easier and possible to function around the community, as well as to communicate with other individuals. In fact, many of the other factors measured in this, as well as in later chapters are shown to vary markedly depending on the preferred language use of the individuals, which is why much of data in the rest of this report is presented separately for English- and Spanish-speakers.

It should be noted that while these various quality of life factors might indeed be impacted by language use, it could also be that language use is reflective of factors that are themselves more related to quality of life. For example, English- and Spanish-speakers differ markedly in their length of stay in the U.S., as well as place of birth, data also presented here. Other information presented in this section includes the religious affiliation of the respondents, their number of children, housing situation, and educational level. These various demographic factors all contribute to and also reflect aspects of quality of life.

## Who participated in the study?



### Key Findings

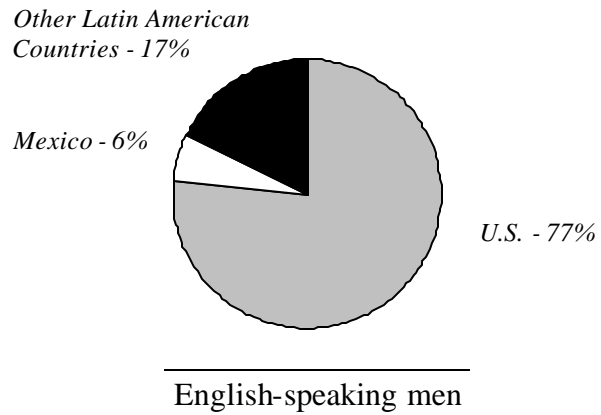
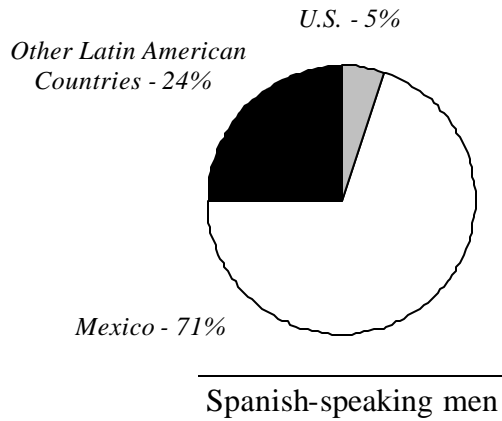
- Of the 109 respondents, 65% were mothers and 35% were fathers
- Of the 71 mothers, 38 opted to respond to the interview in Spanish, and 33 in English
- Of the 38 fathers, 21 opted to respond to the interview in Spanish, and 17 in English

### Other Respondent Characteristics

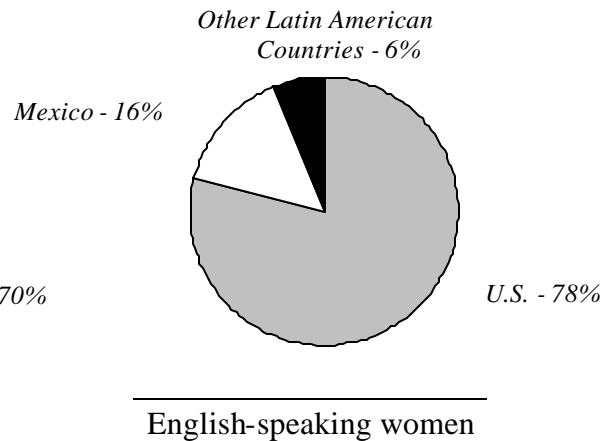
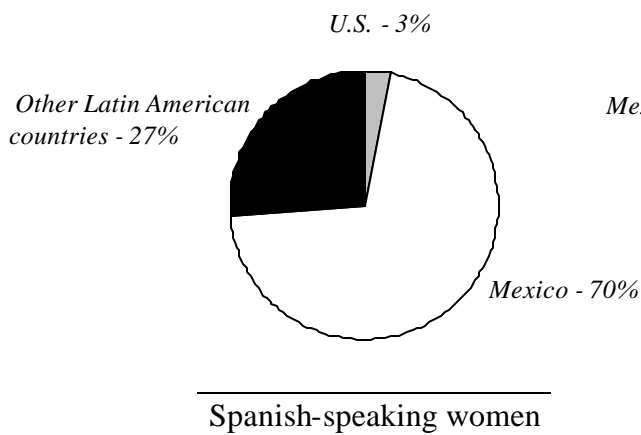
- The average age of the men was 40.3 years and the average age of women was 38.5 years
- 89% of the men and 78% of the women reported being Catholic; 11% of men and 22% of the women reported other religions (e.g., Baptist, Methodist, Christian, Lutheran, Adventist, Assembly of God)
- The majority of the participants were in two-parent households (95% of men, 75% of women), with more women (25%) than men (5%) in single-parent households
- Most families had one or two children (67% of Spanish-speaking parents and 75% of English-speaking parents). Spanish-speaking parents were more likely to have five or more children than English-speaking parents (8% vs. 0%, respectively)

## Where were the parents born?

### Fathers



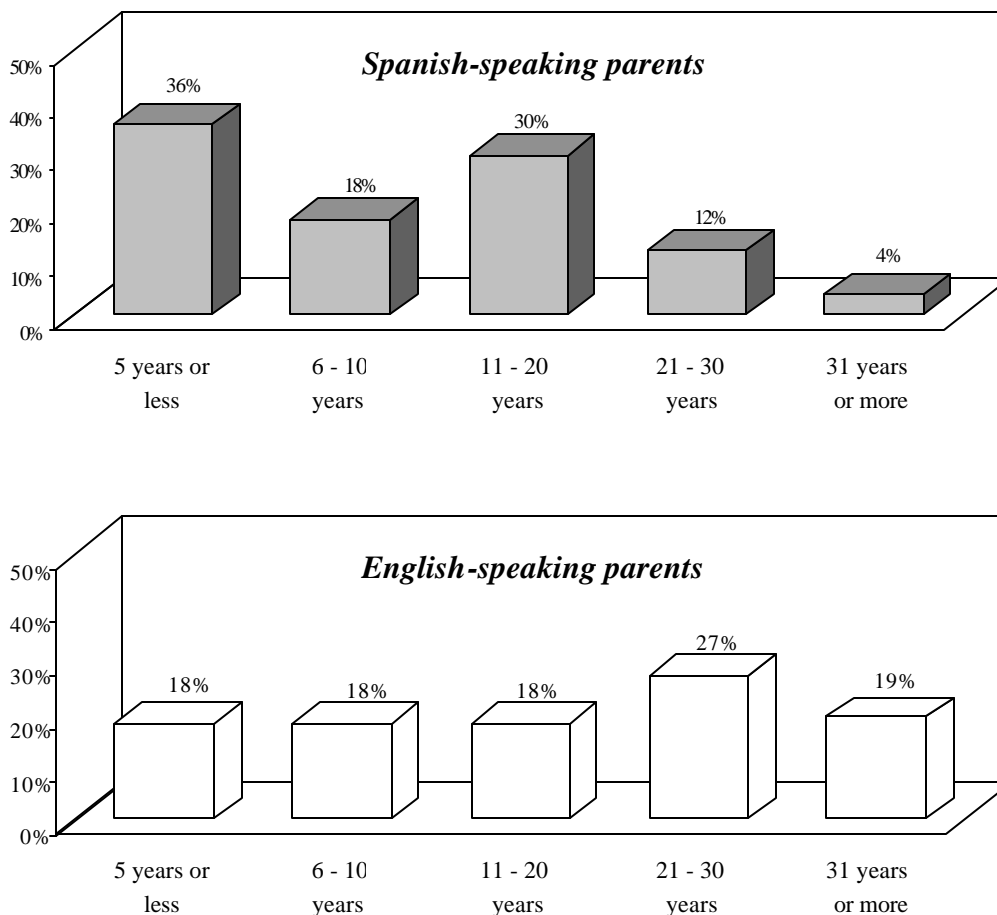
### Mothers



### Key Findings

- Most of the men and women who were English-speaking were born in the U.S.
- Most of the men and women who were Spanish-speaking were born in Mexico or other Latin American countries
- The Latin American group was diverse – participants came from various countries such as Colombia, Puerto Rico, Panama, El Salvador, and Chile

## How long had the non-U.S. born parents lived in the U.S.?



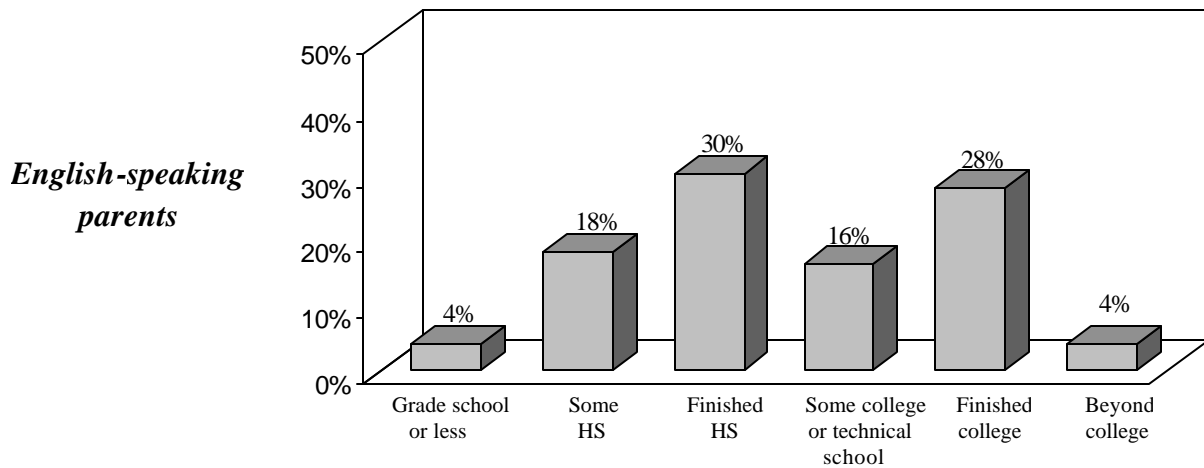
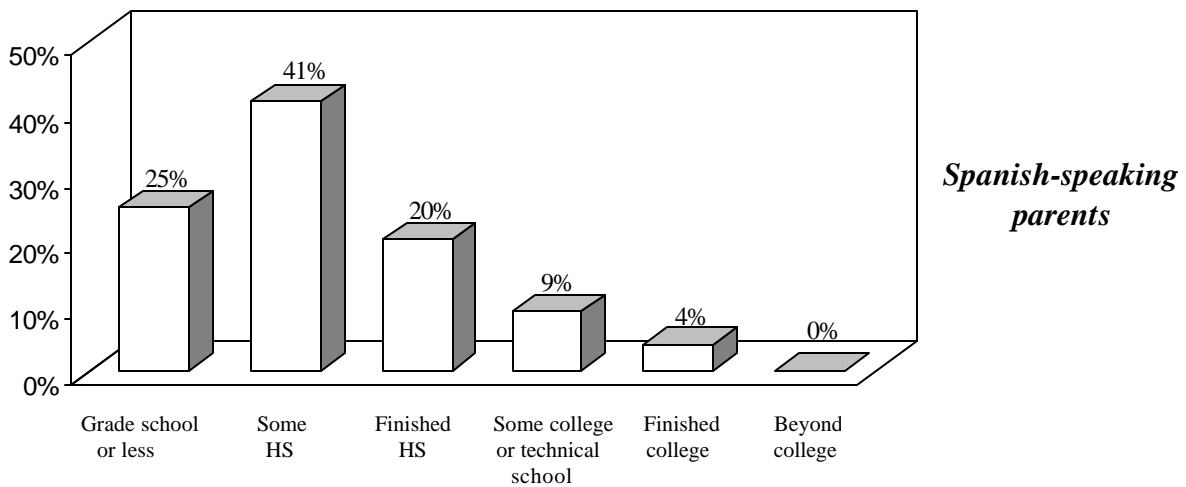
### Key Findings

- Among non-U.S. born respondents ( $n = 67$ ), most of the Spanish-speakers have lived in the U.S. for 10 years or less, while most of the English-speakers have lived in the U.S. for 31 years or more
- The patterns for mothers and fathers were very similar
- Among Spanish-speaking parents, the average time in the U.S. was 12.7 years ( $SD = 10.2$ ); while among English-speaking parents it was 36.5 years ( $SD = 12.6$ )

### Related Findings

- Similar analyses examining how long parents ( $n = 109$ ) had lived in Lincoln, NE revealed that most Spanish-speakers (67%) have lived in Lincoln for 5 years or less, while most English-speakers (58%) have lived in Lincoln for 21 years or more
- On average, Spanish-speaking Latino parents had lived in Lincoln 6.2 years, compared to 22 years among English-speaking Latino parents

## What is the educational level of the parents?

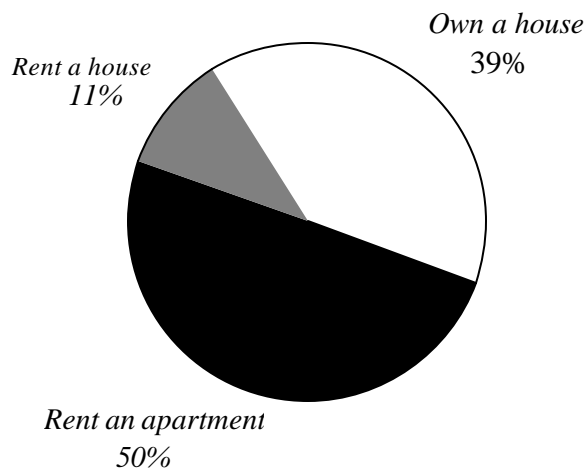


### Key Findings

- Patterns were very similar for Spanish-speaking fathers and mothers, and English-speaking fathers and mothers
- Two-thirds of the Spanish-speaking parents had not completed high school
- Most English-speaking parents had received some post-secondary education
- Less than 1 in 4 English-speaking parents had not completed high school
- Spanish-speaking parents had an average of 9.1 years of education, compared to an average of 13.3 years among English-speaking parents

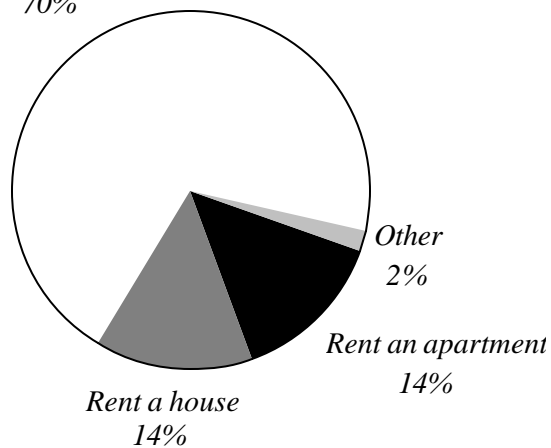
## What is their housing situation?

### *Spanish-speaking parents*



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### *Own a house 70%*



### *English-speaking parents*

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### **Key Findings**

- Patterns were very similar for Spanish-speaking men and women, and English-speaking men and women
- A large percentage of Spanish-speaking parents rent apartments
- The majority of English-speaking parents own a house

## Chapter 2

### Lincoln Latino Parents' Work Situation

Employment and income levels are important contributors to quality of life. Adequate levels of income provide opportunity to satisfy needs for adequate housing, food, medical services (both through income and medical employment benefits), clothing, transportation, etc. Adequate employment and income also allow families to plan for the future, rather than exist in a continuous “survival” mode of day-to-day satisfaction of basic needs.

#### *Work Status of Parents*

Overall, almost all (95%) male parents were employed full time (only one person was found unemployed at the time of the interview). Most of the female parents (76%) were also employed, three-fourths (77%) of them full time. A much larger proportion (81% vs. 38%) of English-speaking mothers were employed full time; Spanish-speaking mothers were more likely to engage in part time employment than their English-speaking counterparts. This greater participation of the English-speaking mothers in the full time labor force is likely to be a reflection of greater acculturation (better language skills, knowledge of how to find employment, less cultural tradition of stay-at-home moms).

#### *Job Satisfaction*

Most parents (82%) were very or somewhat satisfied with their job. English-speakers were more satisfied (89% vs. 76%) with their employment. English-speaking mothers were the most satisfied (61% very satisfied), followed by Spanish-speaking fathers (53%). Among males, this is probably a reflection of the fact that they are likely to be new arrivals, and their employment is considerably better than the one they left behind.

#### *Parents' Household Income*

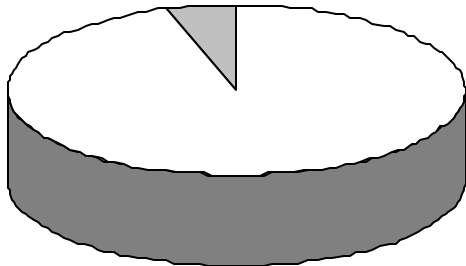
Families with English-speaking parents had higher levels of income than families with Spanish-speaking parents. Both male and female English-speaking parents reported higher levels of income. One-half (50%) of the Spanish-speaking female parents earned less than \$10,000 (vs. 16% of English-speakers), while only 6% of Spanish-speaking males earned less than \$10,000 per year (vs. 0% of English-speakers).

Not surprising, average annual household income was also found to be much higher among English-speaking households (male and female parents) than for Spanish-speaking households.

## What is the work status of the parents?

### Spanish-speaking fathers

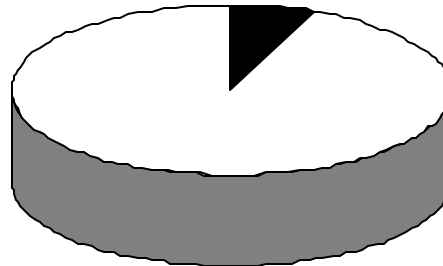
5% - Employed part time



95% - Employed full time

### English-speaking fathers

6% - Unemployed

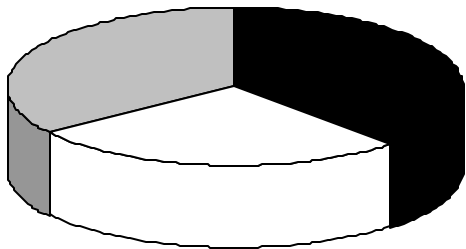


94% - Employed full time

### Spanish-speaking mothers

27% - Employed part time

35% - Unemployed

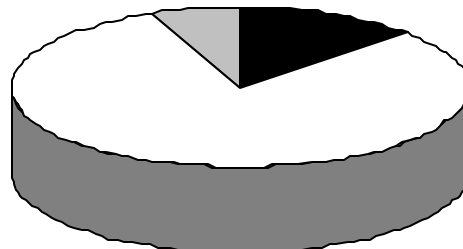


38% - Employed full time

### English-speaking mothers

6% - Employed part time

13% - Unemployed

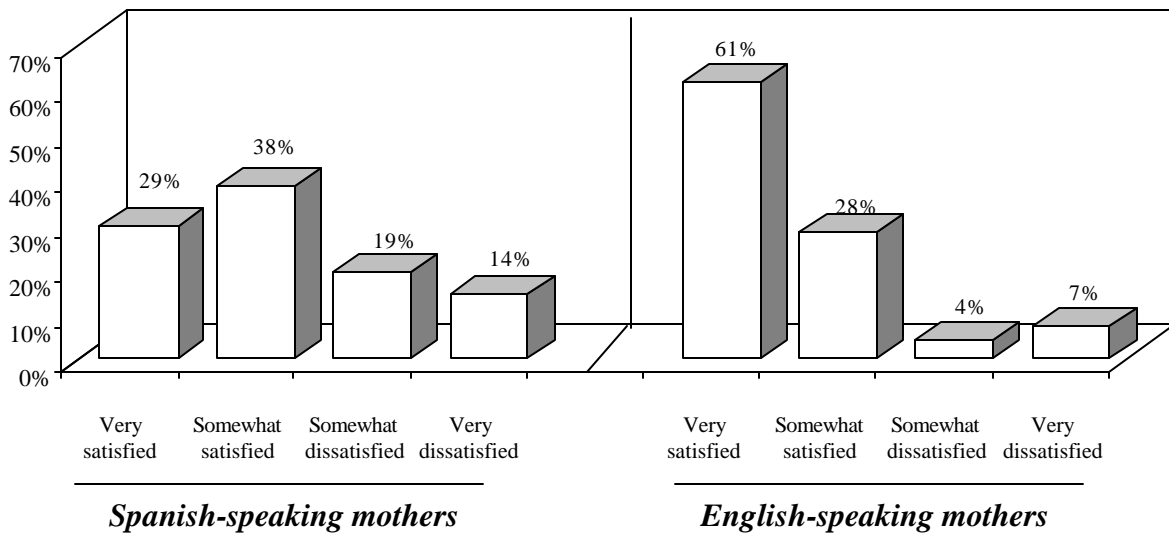
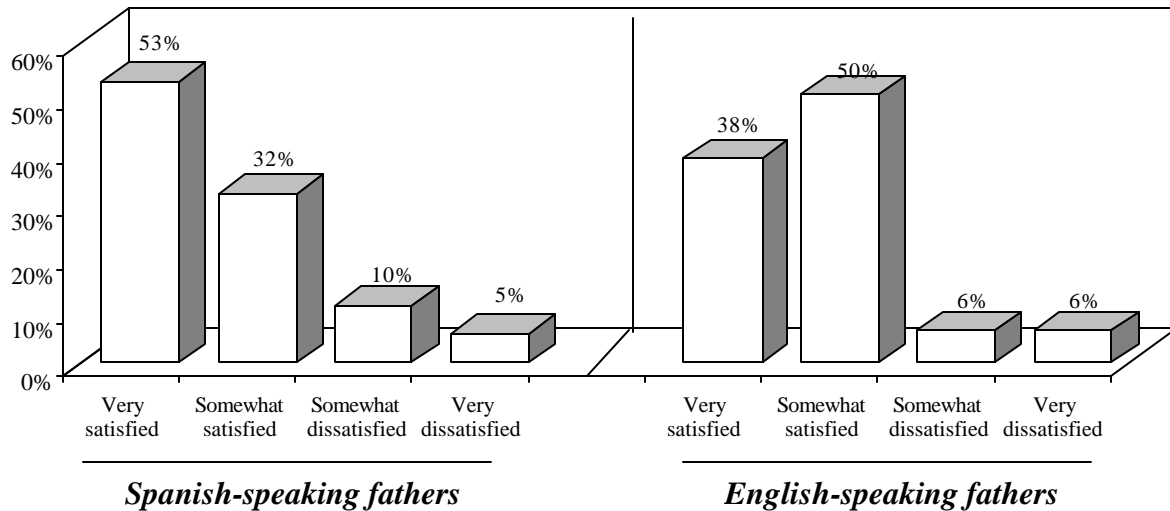


81% - Employed full time

### Key findings

- There were very few differences between English- and Spanish-speaking fathers. For both groups, the majority are employed full time
- Some differences exist between Spanish- and English-speaking mothers. A larger percentage of English-speaking mothers are employed full time
- A larger percentage of Spanish-speaking mothers are either unemployed or employed part time

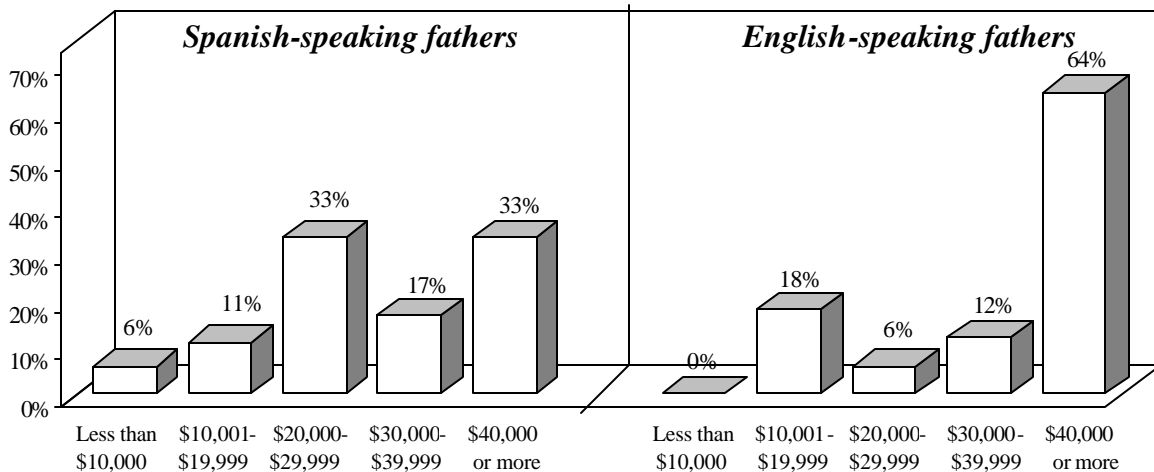
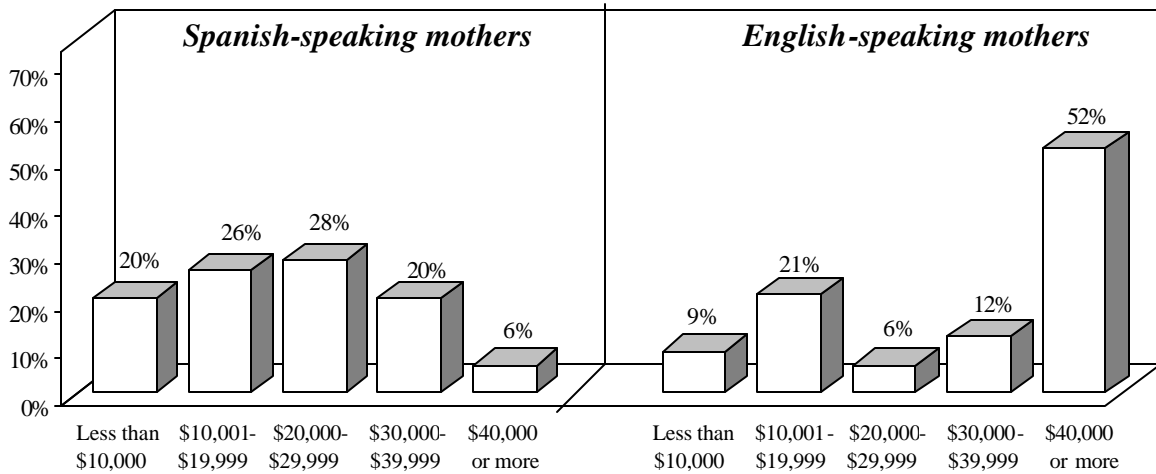
## How satisfied are the parents with their jobs?



### Key Findings

- Among employed parents, levels of satisfaction were high. Most of the participants were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their current jobs
- Spanish-speaking mothers were more likely than the other three groups to say they were “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their current jobs

## What is the average household income before taxes?



### Key Findings

- English-speakers had higher average combined household incomes than Spanish-speakers. For example, six in ten (65%) of English-speaking fathers, and five in ten (50%) of English-speaking mothers had a household income of \$40,000 or more, compared to three of every ten (33%) Spanish-speaking fathers and only 6% of Spanish-speaking mothers

### Related Findings

- The same pattern was true in examinations of individual incomes
- English-speaking fathers had a higher average annual income than Spanish-speaking fathers. For example, 47% of English-speaking fathers made \$40,000 or more, compared to 12% of Spanish-speaking fathers
- Similarly, English-speaking mothers had a higher average annual income than Spanish-speaking mothers. For example, 53% of Spanish-speaking mothers made \$10,000 or less, compared to 16% of English-speaking mothers

## Chapter 3

### Latino Parents' Access to Services

Three areas related to Latinos' access to mental health, dental, and medical services were studied in this investigation: Parents' Access to Insurance, Parents' Satisfaction with Services, and Parents' Awareness of Where to Access Services.

#### *Parents' Access to Insurance*

In this sample of Latinos in the Lincoln community, the majority of participants (50%-100%) had access to mental health, dental, and medical services. Of those who had access, 89-100% of the English-speakers were found to have a high level of access to all three types of services. Of the Spanish-speaking group having access to insurance, the percentage having access to the three types of health services decreased but still ranged from 81-100%, with men having more access than women.

#### *Parents' Awareness of Where to Access Services*

The majority of parents, regardless of gender and language of interview, were aware of where to access medical, dental, and community program services. Of the English-speaking group, 80 to 94 percent of the parents were aware of medical (94%), dental (90%), mental health (87%), social (82%), and community program (80%) services. With the exception of community program services where English- and Spanish-speaking groups were equally aware (80%), the latter group was consistently lower in their awareness of services (88, 78, 32, and 55%, respectively).

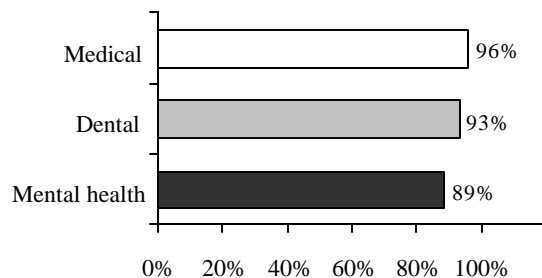
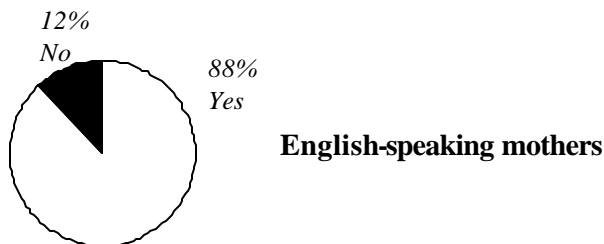
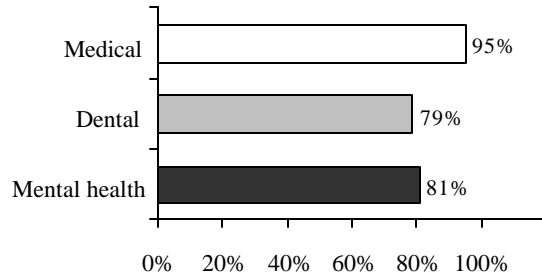
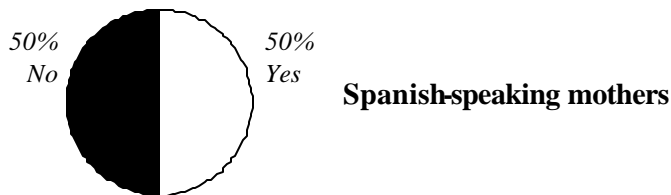
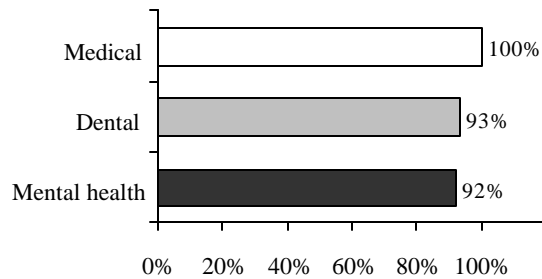
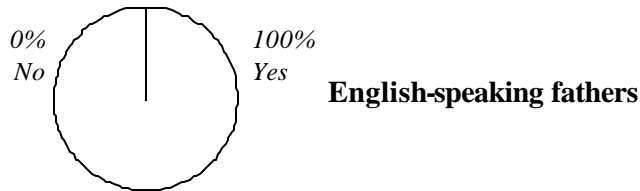
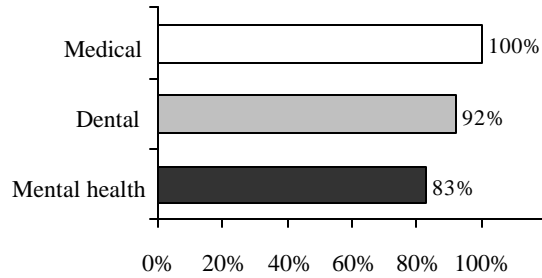
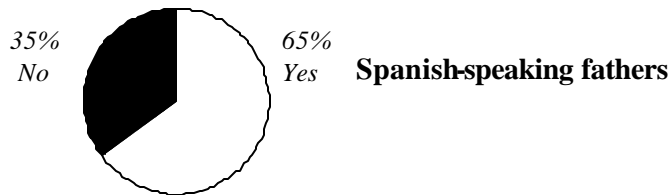
#### *Parents' Satisfaction with Services*

The majority (65-91%) of this sample of Latino parents reported they were somewhat to very satisfied with the health services in the Lincoln community. The highest percentage (86-91%) of parents reported satisfaction with the medical services. The percentage of parents satisfied with the dental services dropped slightly but was still high (87-89%). Satisfaction decreased when parents were asked about mental health services (65-80%). The percentage of parents satisfied with mental health services were the lowest for both men (80%) and women (65%), when compared to dental (87% and 89%, respectively) and medical services (91% and 86%, respectively).

## Do the parents have access to insurance?

Do parents have access?

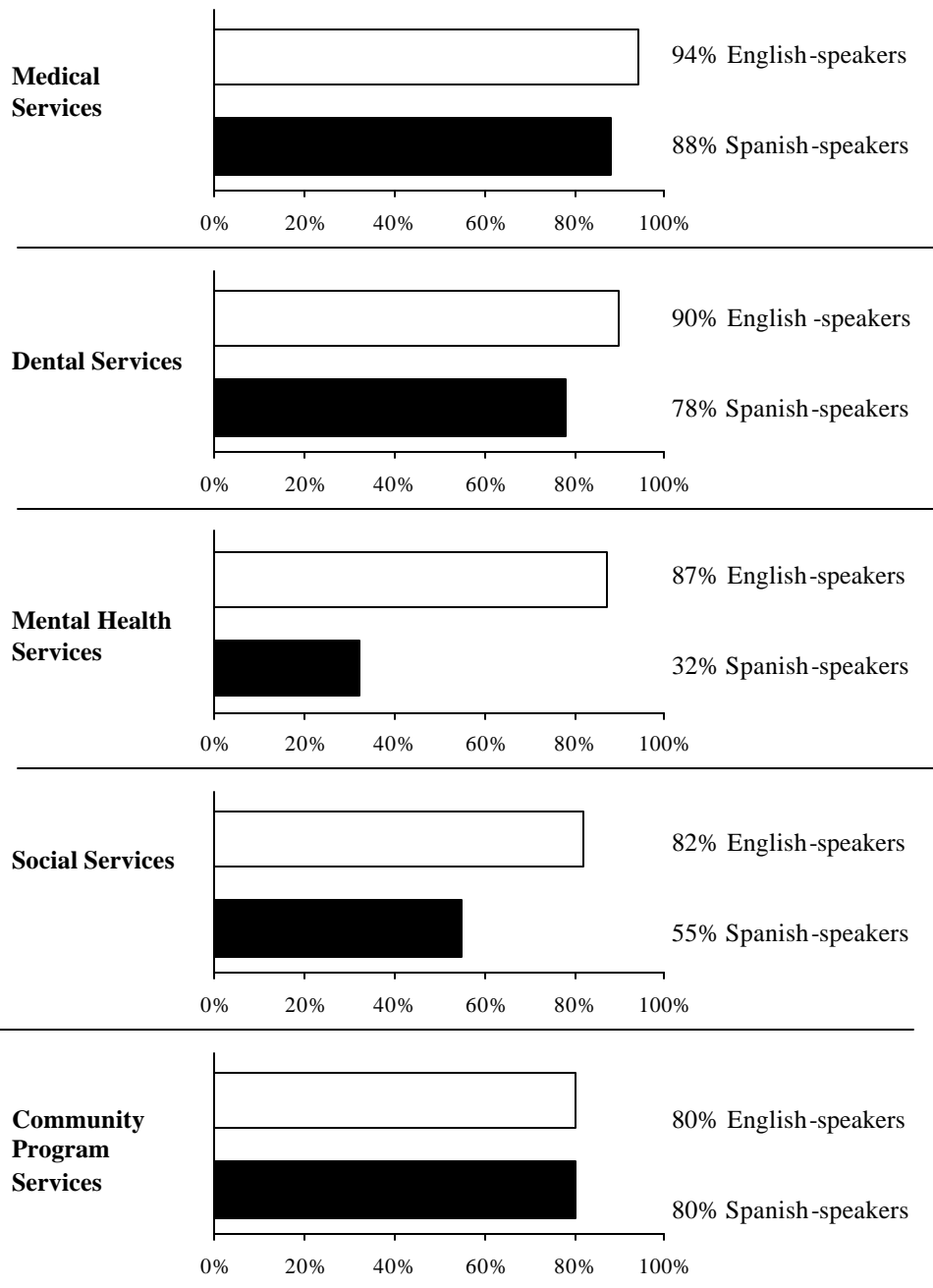
Of those with access, how many are covered for Medical, Dental and Mental Health services?



### Key Findings

- A higher percentage of fathers and English-speakers have access to health insurance
- Among those who have access to insurance, majority are covered for medical, dental, and mental health services

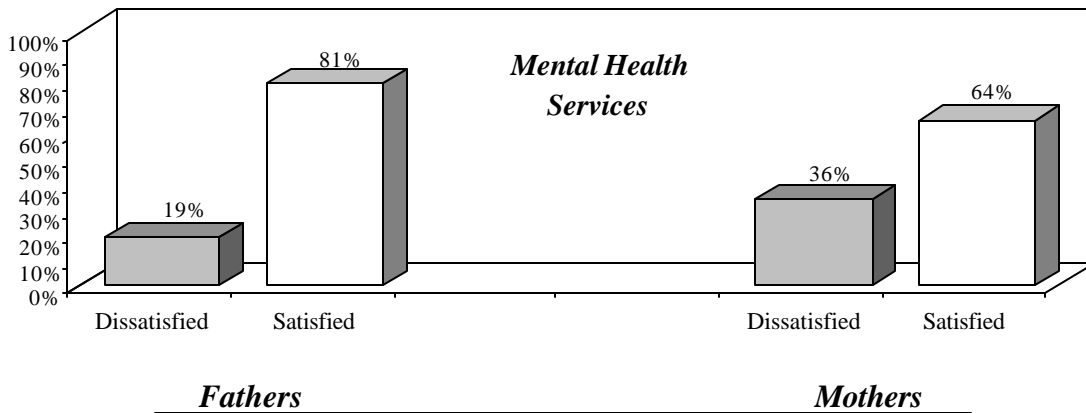
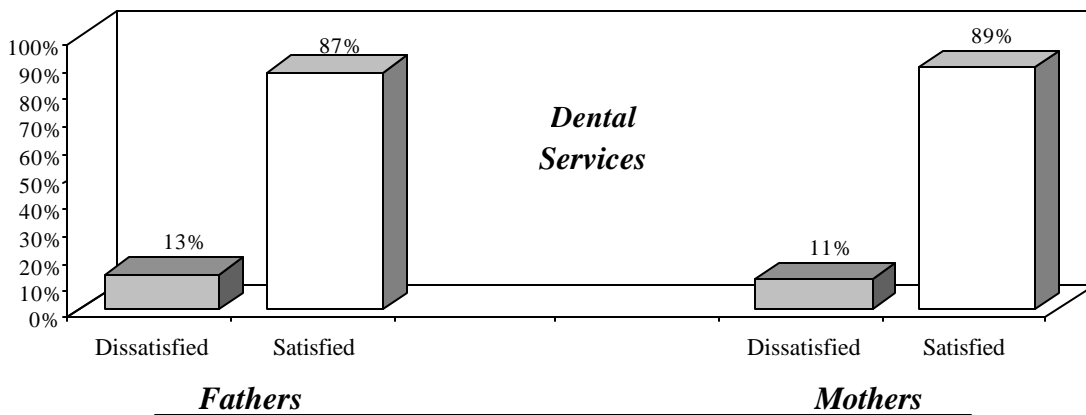
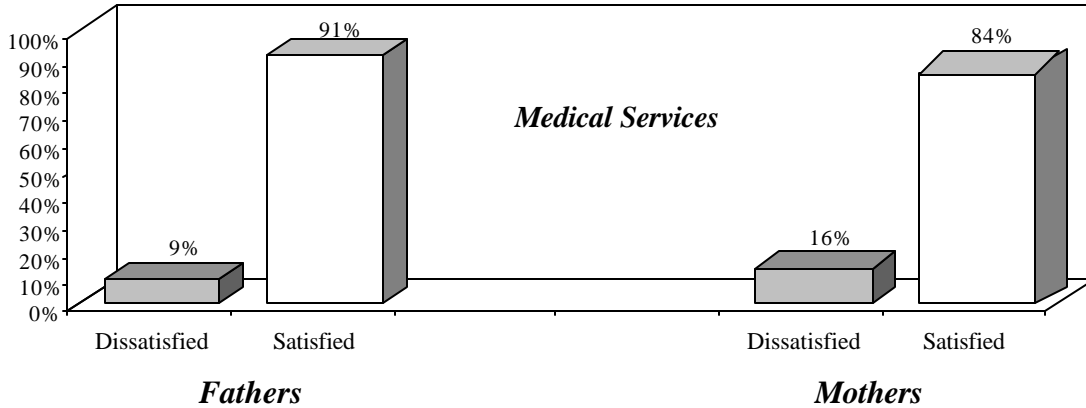
## Are parents aware of where to access services?



### Key findings

- Men and women showed similar patterns in the data
- Most parents, regardless of gender and language of interview, are aware of where to access medical, dental, and community program services
- More English-speaking parents are aware of where to get mental health and social services. In contrast, far fewer Spanish speakers are aware of where to access mental health and social services

## How satisfied are parents with the services available to them?



### Key findings

- Most mothers and fathers (regardless of language) reported being “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with dental and medical services they received
- Women were less likely than men to say that they were “very satisfied” with mental health services

## Chapter 4

### The Community and Family

Latino families do not live in a social vacuum and their perceptions of their “goodness of fit” in a community and their perspectives of their children’s issues have significant implications for health and well-being. Individuals’ well-being is strongly affected by their social networks such as their community and their family (see Carlo, Carranza, & Zamboanga, 2002; Gonzalez-Kruger, Zamboanga, Carlo, Raffaelli, Carranza, Hansen, Cantarero, & Gajardo, 2000). This next section presents information on selected aspects of their social networks. These included length of time in the community, involvement in community organizations, kinship and social community ties, sense of community belongingness, and parenting issues.

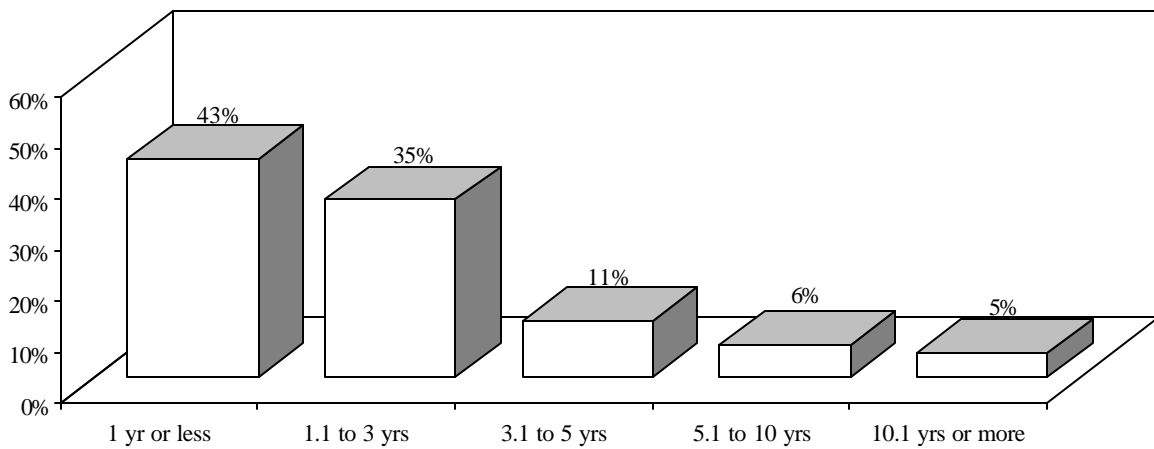
This set of findings suggests that Spanish-speaking and English-speaking parents differ in key indicators of community connectedness and in concerns related to parenting. In general, Spanish-speaking parents have lived in their communities for a shorter length of time than English-speaking parents (e.g., 8 of every 10 Spanish-speakers had lived in their neighborhood less than three years, compared to about 3 in every 10 English-speakers). Spanish-speaking parents were more likely than English-speaking parents to have relatives living in the same community or neighborhood; in contrast, English-speaking parents tended to know more people in their communities. Questions assessing parents’ subjective sense of community belongingness revealed different patterns according to gender and language of interview. Overall, English-speaking mothers reported the highest levels of community belongingness, followed by Spanish-speaking fathers, although responses to individual items varied. In terms of areas of concern and non-concern relating to children, dramatic differences emerged by language and gender of parent.

The community variables inform us about Latino families’ degree of integration in their local community and their sense of community support and acceptance. These variables can impact their willingness and ability to seek and use community support systems and networks. It also reflects Latino families’ perceptions of the community’s acceptance. Support and acceptance from one’s community can serve as a buffer against detrimental consequences of stress related to acculturation. The parenting questions inform us about the kinds of issues related to their children that represent areas of least and most concern for Latino parents. These questions reveal to us the issues that Latino parents devote their focus to as well as those issues which are less central. Parents’ perceptions of their children’s strengths and challenges undoubtedly impact the quality of relationships with their children, as well as the stress family members experience.

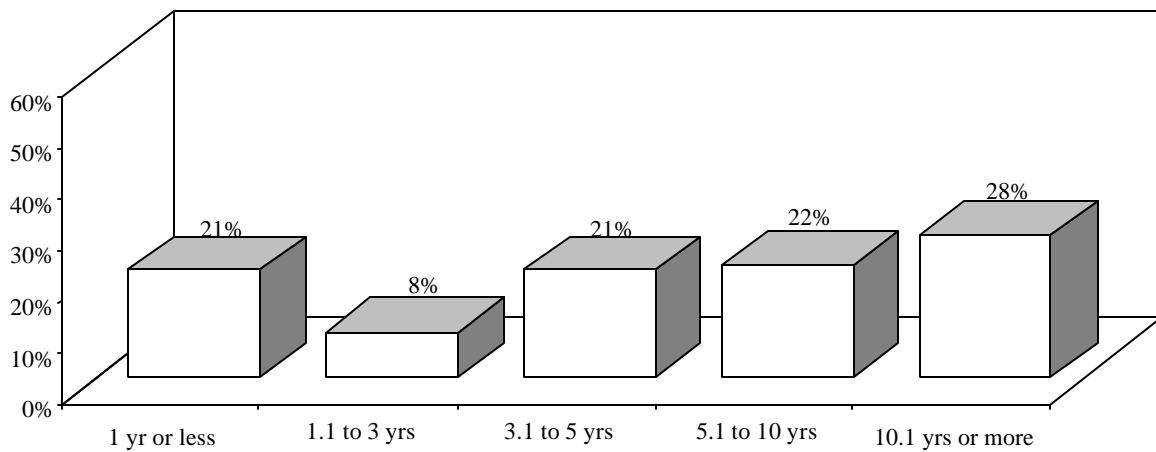
Carlo, G., Carranza, M.A., & Zamboanga, B. (2002). Culture and ecology of Latinos on the Great Plains: An introduction, *Great Plains Research*, 12, 3-12.

Gonzalez-Kruger, G., Zamboanga, B. L., Carlo, G., Raffaelli, M., Carranza, M.A., Hansen, D. J., Cantarero, R., & Gajardo, J. (2000). The Latino Research Initiative: A multidisciplinary and collaborative community-university outreach and scholarship model. *Great Plains Research*, 10, 359-385.

## How long have the parents lived in their neighborhoods?



*Spanish-speaking parents*

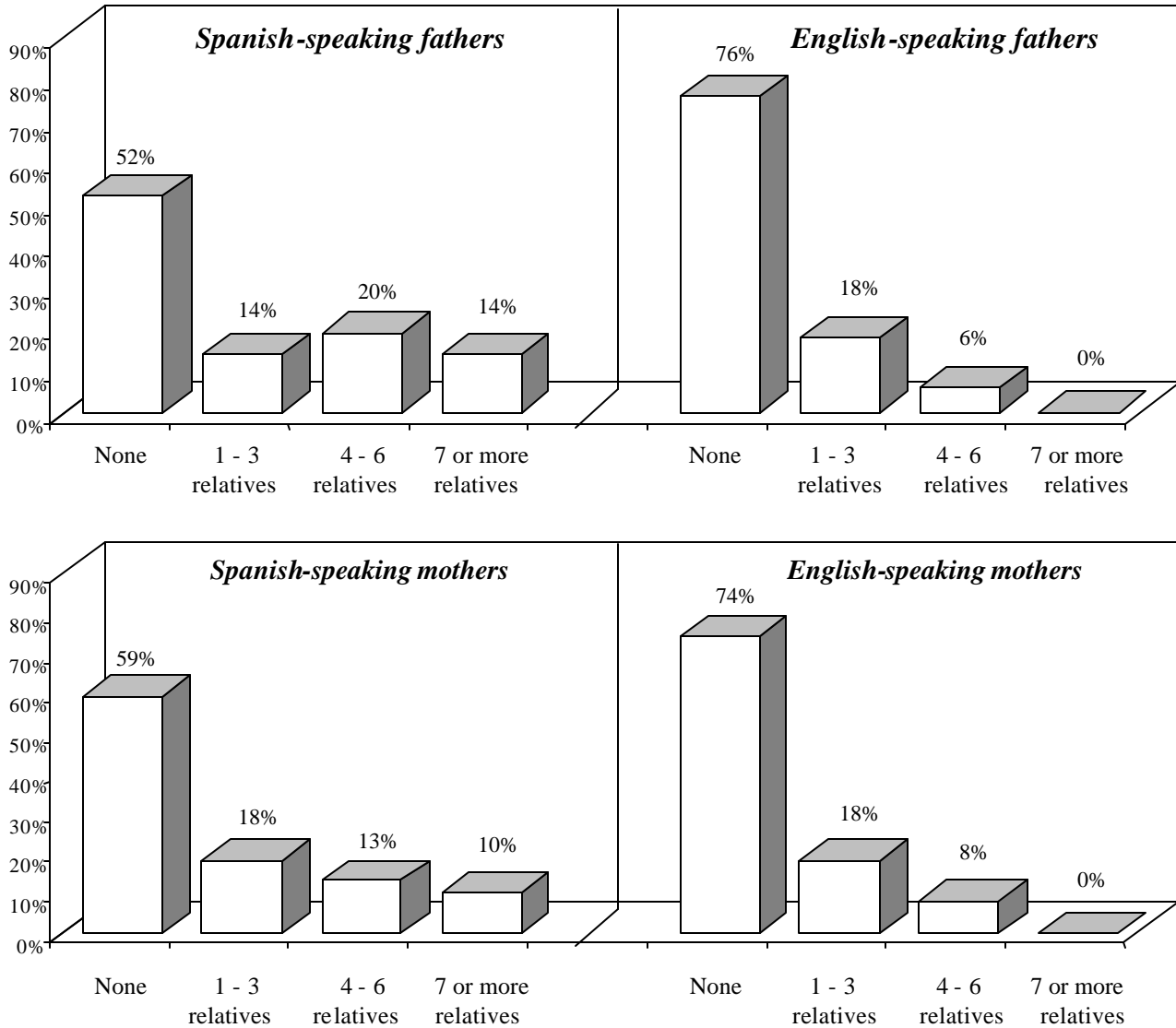


*English-speaking parents*

### Key Findings

- There were few differences in patterns between Spanish-speaking mothers and fathers, and between English-speaking mothers and fathers
- Four out of five Spanish-speaking parents have lived in their communities for three years or less
- Conversely, half of the English-speaking parents have lived in their communities for more than five years

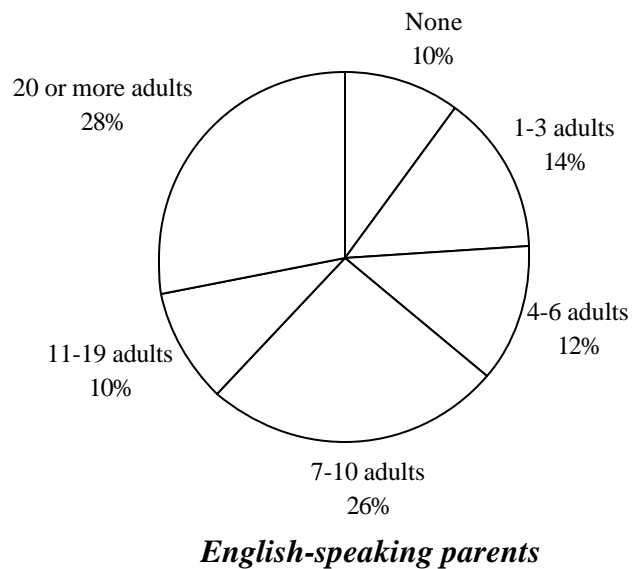
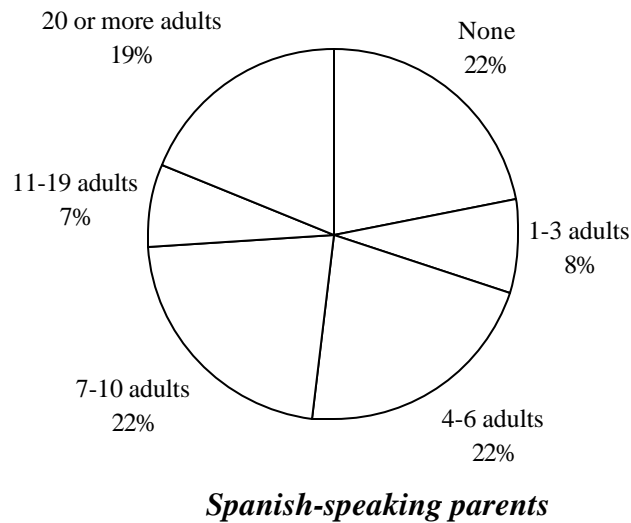
## How many relatives do the parents have who live close by?



### Key Findings

- More than half of the parents have no family members living within a ten minute walk from their home
- On average, Spanish-speaking parents have more relatives nearby than English-speaking parents. Spanish-speaking fathers had an average of 2.4 relatives living close, whereas English-speaking fathers had an average of less than one (0.60) relatives. Spanish-speaking mothers had an average of 2.0 relatives living nearby, whereas English-speaking mothers had an average of .91

## How many other adults do parents know in their neighborhood?



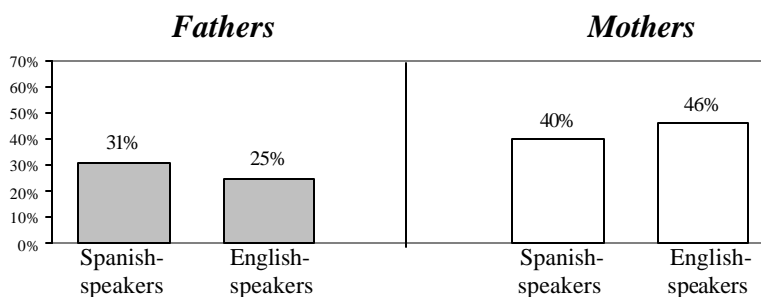
### Key Findings

- Most parents know at least one adult other than relatives in their neighborhood
- One in five Spanish-speaking parents did not know anyone in their neighborhood, compared to 1 in 10 English-speaking parents
- There were few gender differences in response to this question

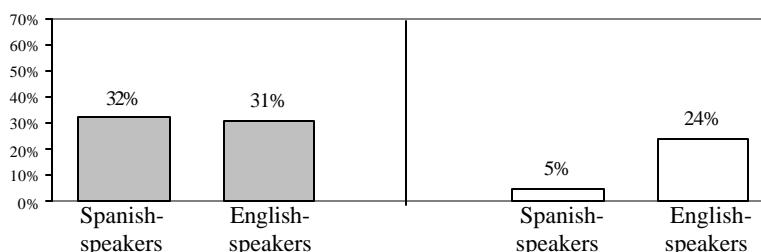
## Do parents feel a sense of belonging to their community?

% who believe that ...

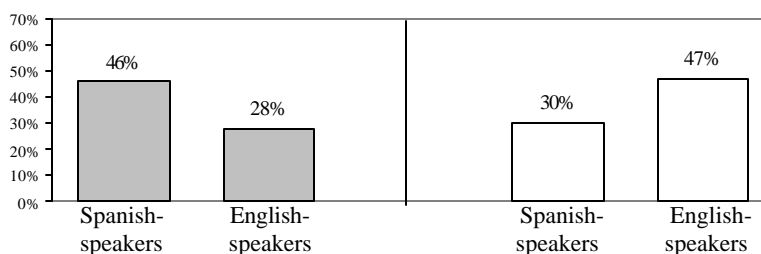
*... friendships/connections they've made with people in neighborhood mean a lot to them*



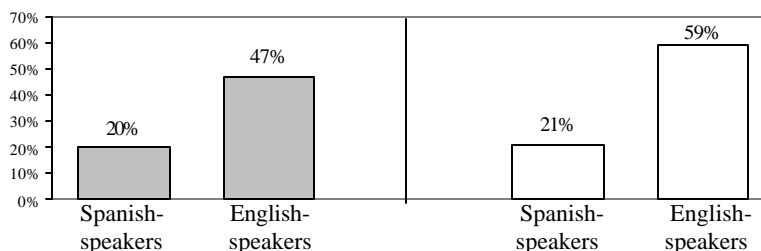
*... their neighborhood is a big part of who they are*



*... they feel loyal to people in their neighborhood*



*... they are similar to people in their neighborhood*

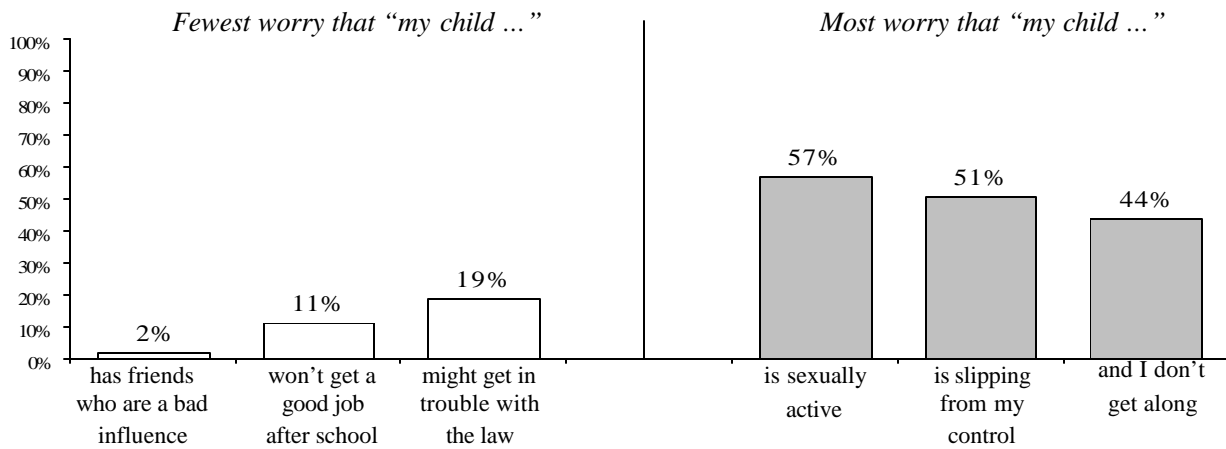


### Key Findings

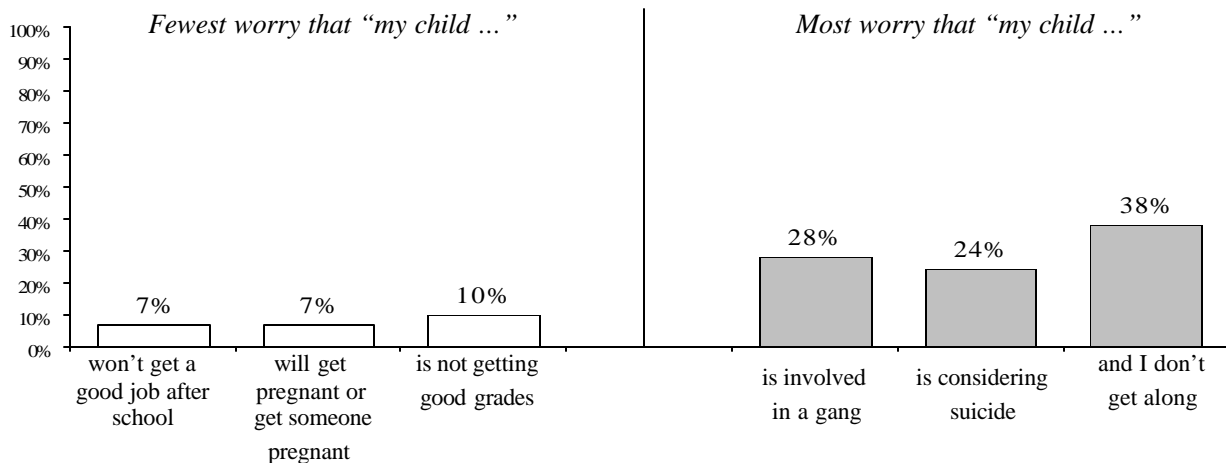
- In general, English-speaking mothers were most likely to endorse items reflecting feelings of belonging to their neighborhood
- Different patterns emerged on specific items according to gender and language of interview. For example, fathers were more likely to say their neighborhood is a big part of who they are than mothers, regardless of language. Spanish-speakers (regardless of gender) were less likely to report being similar to people in their neighborhood
- On a separate item, parents indicated whether they belonged to any neighborhood groups or organizations. Slightly more fathers (1 in 5) compared to mothers (1 in 10) said they belonged to neighborhood organizations. Reasons for not joining included: lack of information, lack of such organizations, and not having been selected to participate in neighborhood activities

# What are Latina mothers' worries regarding their children?

## Spanish-speaking mothers



## English-speaking mothers

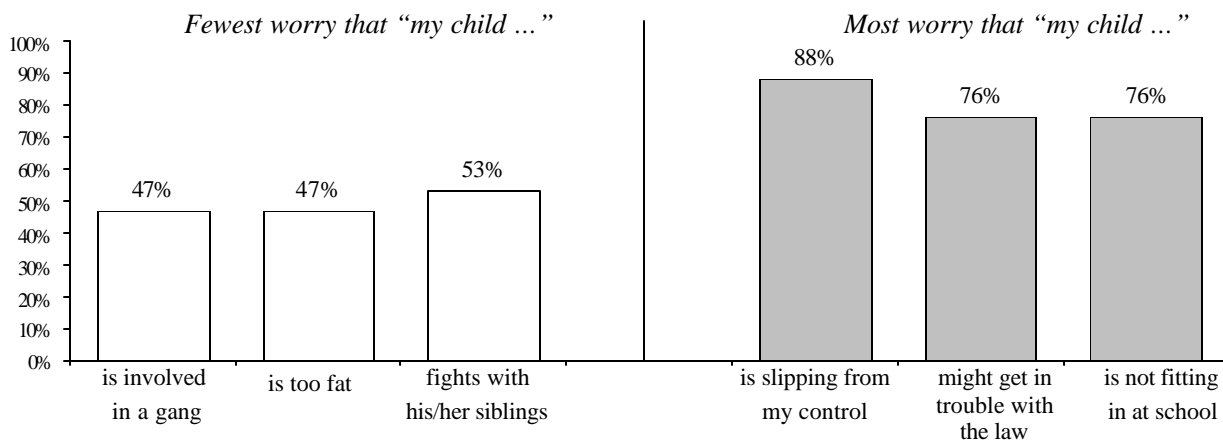


### Key Findings

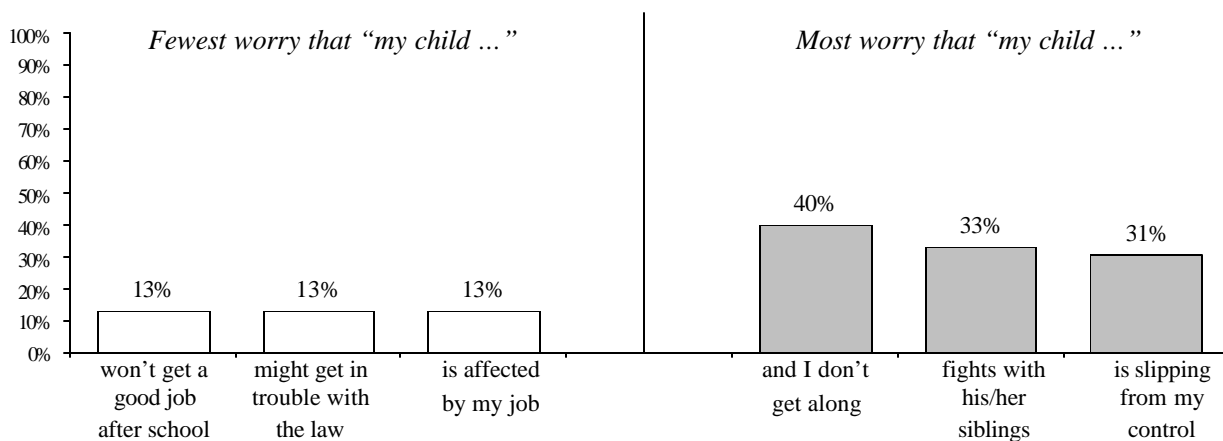
- Parents were asked to indicate how much they worried about 19 issues related to their adolescent child, using a 5-point scale. For each item, the percentage of parents giving the top two responses (“quite a bit” and “very much”) was calculated. The figures show the top three and bottom three worries
- Spanish-speaking mothers have a greater tendency than English-speaking mothers to worry about possible negative outcomes (that is, more of the mothers worry about these issues)
- In addition, the issues mothers worry about differ by language. Spanish-speaking mothers worry most that their child is sexually active or slipping from their control; English-speaking mothers worry about how well they are getting along with their child, and about possible dangers to their child (gang involvement, suicidality)

## What are Latino fathers' worries regarding their children?

### Spanish-speaking fathers



### English-speaking fathers



### Key Findings

- Answering the same set of questions as mothers, Spanish-speaking fathers showed high levels of worry. Over three quarters of Spanish-speaking fathers worry “quite a bit” or “very much” about the top three issues, and the percentage of Spanish-speaking fathers endorsing the “bottom three” worries exceeds the percentage of English-speaking fathers endorsing the “top three” worries
- The issues fathers worry about most also differ by language. English-speaking fathers tend to worry more about family relationship issues, whereas Spanish-speaking fathers worry about their child’s interactions at school and with the legal system

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the Quality of Life Study (QOL) was to gather basic information regarding Latino families in Lincoln, NE. Before discussing the main conclusions that can be drawn from this study, it is important to reiterate that the sample of participants was not random, so the findings might not be representative of all Latinos. However, the study offers insights into the lives of Latino parents in Lincoln, and provides basic information that might be of use for practitioners and scholars who work with this population.

One key finding was the significance of language in shaping the experiences of Latinos in this predominantly White, European-American, community in the Great Plains. Across the various domains of the QOL study, there were dramatic differences between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Latinos. Previous research shows that language preference is related to recency of immigration, educational level, religious affiliation, family size, and other demographic characteristics.

With the exception of Spanish-speaking mothers, full-time employment levels were high in this sample, and the majority of employed participants said their jobs were satisfying. Individual and household income levels differed dramatically by language, likely reflecting differential job opportunities open to individuals who differ in educational attainment and language ability.

Access to insurance also varied by language. All English-speaking men, and most English-speaking women, had insurance. In contrast, just two thirds of Spanish-speaking men, and half of the women, had access to insurance. Other findings indicate that parents are satisfied and aware of various types of health and social services available to them. Findings also highlight the need to increase access, satisfaction, and awareness of these important services to Spanish-speakers, particularly Spanish-speaking women, who are the most likely to be the primary caregiver for children and the person who directs the health care of all family members.

Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Latino parents differ in how long they have lived in the community and in their relationships to the larger community. Spanish-speakers tend to be relative newcomers to their community, and to know fewer non-related adults than English-speakers, although they also tend to have more relatives living in the same neighborhood. The two groups also differ in their subjective sense of belonging. These differences suggest the need to identify ways of helping Latino parents develop ties and integrate into the larger community.

Parenting challenges also differ by language, perhaps reflecting these many differences in life situations. In general, Spanish-speaking fathers report the highest levels of worries, perhaps reflecting the difficulty of enacting the traditional masculine role of family protector in a new and unfamiliar environment. The generally high level of concern reflected by Spanish-speaking parents is an indicator of the need to develop family-based programs to help immigrant parents and their children as they adapt to a new environment. The generally low levels of concerns among English-speaking Latino parents suggest that over time, families do adapt successfully and their children are able to thrive in the Lincoln community.

The QOL study is the first comprehensive survey of Latino families in Lincoln, Nebraska. We expect that there are other data of interest from this study and we have only begun to examine the data collected from the Latino adolescents. Our hope is that this study will spur additional interest in obtaining high-quality information about ethnic minority groups in our state to better inform policy makers, practitioners, educators, and the public.