

Newborns of immigrants in rural communities at bigger disadvantage

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Starting life as the child of impoverished immigrant parents is tough enough in America's traditional gateway cities for immigration.

Increasingly, however, children are born to Hispanic parents who emigrate not to gateway cities – with accessible services like prenatal care, nutritional help for women, infants and children, or pre-school education – but directly to hardscrabble rural communities without support networks, according to a sociologists' report from Cornell, Brigham Young University and the University of New Hampshire.

"Hispanics in new destinations often start well behind the starting line – in poverty and with limited opportunities for upward mobility and an inadequate welfare safety net," Cornell's Daniel T. Lichter and co-authors write in the February 2015 journal *Social Forces*. They report poverty rates of nearly 50 percent among the newborn babies of Mexican-origin immigrants in rural areas.

"The recent concentration of Hispanic poverty in new immigrant destinations," the authors wrote, "portends continuing intergenerational inequality as today's newborn infants make their way to productive adult roles."

Citing traditional immigration gateways like New York City, San Diego, Miami and Chicago, the sociologists observe in an essay published online at Scholars Strategy Network: Population growth in the 2000s is occurring "in many parts of rural America from Alabama to Nebraska

[where] growing numbers of Hispanics provide a demographic lifeline to dying small towns."

But too many rural communities are not prepared – or inclined – to offer critical support services to non-English-speaking, undocumented mothers, the authors say.

Scholars and policymakers have ignored immigrant [poverty](#) outside metropolitan areas, the authors tell Strategy Network readers:

"Addressing the very real needs of these communities and their burgeoning numbers of poor Hispanic residents is vital for America's future."

More information: "Hispanics at the Starting Line: Poverty among Newborn Infants in Established Gateways and New Destinations." *Social Forces* first published online February 24, 2015 [DOI: 10.1093/sf/sov043](https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov043)

"In New Immigrant Destinations Across America, Many Poor Hispanic Babies Are Hampered From The Start." www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/s-are-hampered-start

Provided by Cornell University

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