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ABSTRACT

Based on 1990 census figures, Hispanics have the lowest per capita income (\$8,007) of all racial population groups in Kansas. Eighteen percent of Kansas Hispanics live in poverty, as do 24 percent of Hispanic children and 62 percent of Hispanic female-headed single-parent families. Hispanics in rural counties of southwestern Kansas have higher poverty rates than those in urbanized counties. The high rate of Hispanic poverty is aggravated by this population's low educational attainment, concentration in low-wage jobs, language barriers, lack of basic financial knowledge, and discrimination. Hispanics have the highest high school dropout rate (7 percent) of all population groups in Kansas. Although Hispanics have the highest labor force participation rate (66 percent) of all groups in Kansas, they work primarily in low-wage, low-skill, labor- and injury-intensive jobs that do not provide basic health insurance coverage. Hispanic poverty has unique characteristics that have not been adequately addressed by past public policy initiatives. Precollege financial assistance must be provided to Hispanics to reduce the high school dropout rate, and Hispanics should be targeted for school-to-work and other job training programs. More governmental agencies should provide program information in Spanish and educate Hispanics on basic rights. "Snapshots" of Hispanic poverty are provided for Finney, Ford, Reno, Sedgwick, Seward, Shawnee, and Wyandotte Counties, along with bar graphs that depict percentages of Hispanics living in poverty for seven age groups in each county.

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# Hispanics and Poverty in Kansas

ED 393 620

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Sources: 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Summary, Tape File 3A  
1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

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### What is Poverty?

According to federal poverty guidelines, poverty is defined by a person or family's annual income. For 1994, a one person family with an annual income of less than \$7,360 per year is considered poor.

#### THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POVERTY GUIDELINES

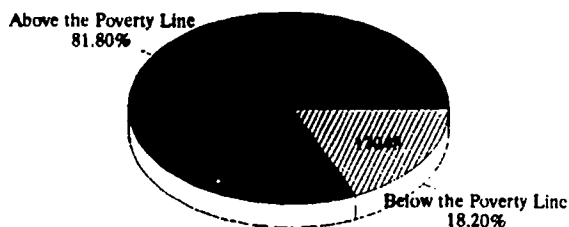
- Single Person Family  
\$7,360
- 2 Person Family  
\$9,840
- 3 Person Family  
\$12,320
- 4 Person Family  
\$14,800
- PER CAPITA INCOME FOR HISPANICS IN SEWARD, FORD, AND FINNEY COUNTIES FALLS BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE.

(Families with incomes below these amounts are considered to be living in poverty.)

### How Many Kansas Hispanics Live in Poverty?

A total of 17,048 Kansas Hispanics live in poverty. 18.20 percent of all Kansas Hispanics, or approximately two in ten persons, have incomes that fall below the federal poverty line.

Percentage of Hispanics Living Above and Below the Poverty Line  
State of Kansas



Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

### What Does Being Poor Mean?

Being poor doesn't just mean not having enough money for extras like

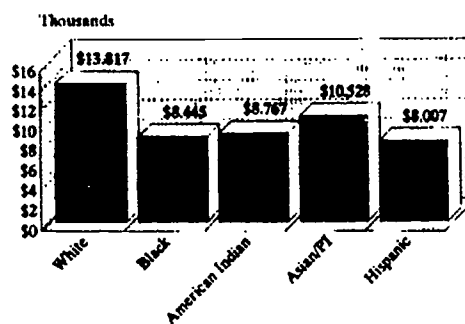
eating out, buying the latest fashions, or having your teeth cleaned every six months.

Poverty means not having enough money to provide the basic necessities for yourself or your family: food, clothing, safe shelter, and health care.

### How Much Do Hispanics Earn in Kansas?

Hispanics have the lowest per capita income for all population groups in Kansas. Hispanics living in Seward, Ford and Finney counties have per capita incomes that fall below the federal poverty line.

Per Capita Income in 1989 by Race and Hispanic Origin  
State of Kansas

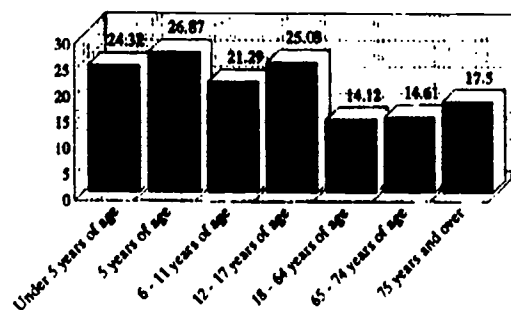


Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A

### How Many Hispanic Children Live in Poverty?

An average of 24.37 percent of all Hispanic children in Kansas live in poverty. Twenty-six percent of Hispanic kindergarten age children are poor.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age  
State of Kansas

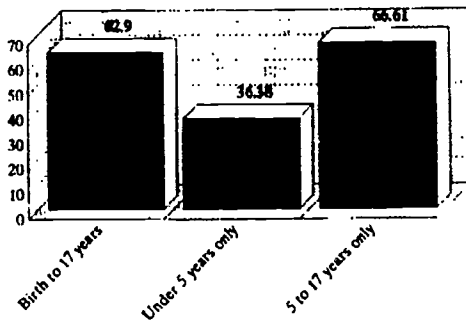


Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

## How are Hispanic Families Faring?

Sixty-two percent of all female single parent families live in poverty.

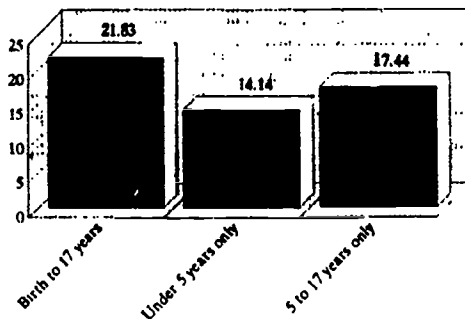
Percentage of Female Hispanic Single Parent Families Living in Poverty  
By Age of Children (State of Kansas)



Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A

Male single parent families fare better with 21.83 percent living in poverty.

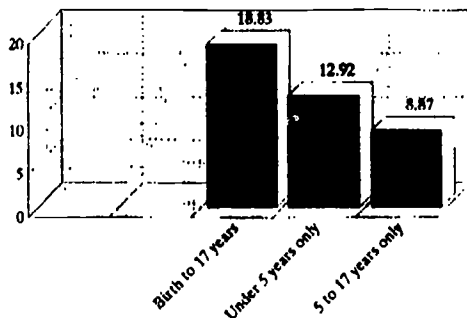
Percentage of Male Hispanic Single Parent Families Living in Poverty  
By Age of Children (State of Kansas)



Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A

A total of 18.83 percent of all two parent families of Hispanic origin live in poverty.

Percentage of Hispanic Married Couple Families Living in Poverty  
By Age of Children (State of Kansas)



Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A

## Rural versus Urban Poverty

Hispanics living in rural counties in Southwestern Kansas earn less per capita and have higher poverty rates than Hispanics living in the more urbanized counties.

The per capita income of Hispanics in Finney (\$6,454), Ford (\$6,304), and Seward (\$5,676) counties fall below the federal poverty line, while the income of Hispanics living in Sedgwick (\$9,060), Shawnee (\$9,085) and Wyandotte (\$8,036) counties exceeds it.

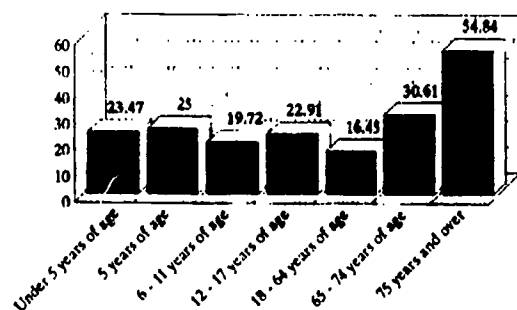
Finney (19.30 percent), Ford (27.97 percent), Reno (21.71 percent) and Seward (32.83 percent) counties have higher Hispanic poverty rates than the more urbanized counties of Sedgwick (18.56 percent) Shawnee (15.85 percent) and Wyandotte (18.83 percent). A significant factor in the impoverishment of rural Hispanics is their employment in low-wage jobs at large meat packing facilities located in Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal.

## A Snapshot of Hispanic Poverty by County:

### Finney County

The total population of Finney County is 33,070. Hispanics constitute 25.26 percent of the population. Hispanic children and senior citizens in Finney County are the most likely to experience poverty.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age  
Finney County

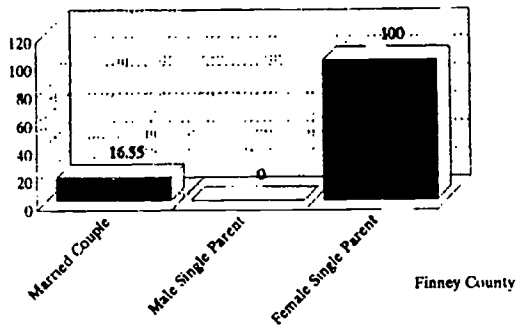


Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

A total of 8.5 percent of White children and 12.3 percent of White senior citizens live in poverty.

Hispanic female single parent families with small children have the highest poverty rate of all family types. A total of 32.73 percent of White female single parent families live in poverty.

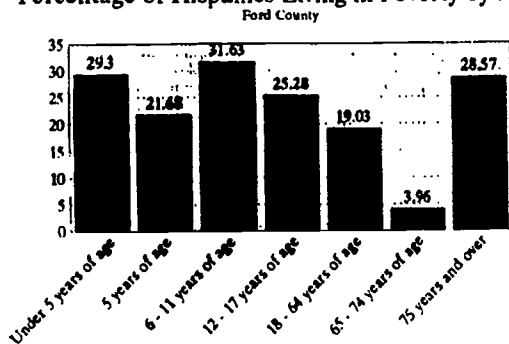
Percentage of Hispanic Families with Children Under 5 Years of Age Living in Poverty by Family Type



### Ford County

The total population of Ford County is 27,463. Hispanics compose 14.87 percent of the total population. Hispanic senior citizens and children, up to 12 years of age, are the most likely to be poor.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age

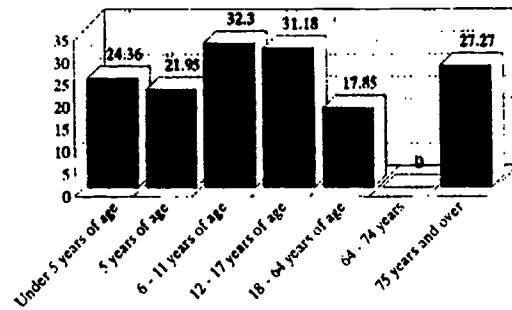


Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

### Reno County

The total population of Reno County is 62,389. Hispanics make up 3.97 percent of the population. More than 30 percent of children between the ages of six and 17 years of age live in poverty.

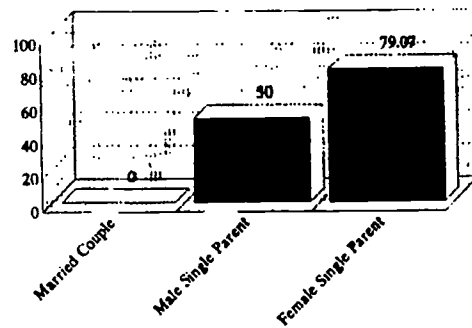
Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age



Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

Female single parent households with small children living in poverty number 79 percent.

Percentage of Hispanic Families with Children Under 5 Years of Age Living in Poverty by Family Type

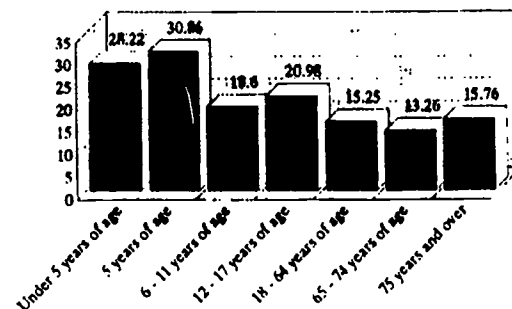


Reno County

### Sedgwick County

The total population of Sedgwick County is 400,667. Hispanics constitute 4.35 percent of the population in this county. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of Hispanic children of kindergarten age are poor.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age

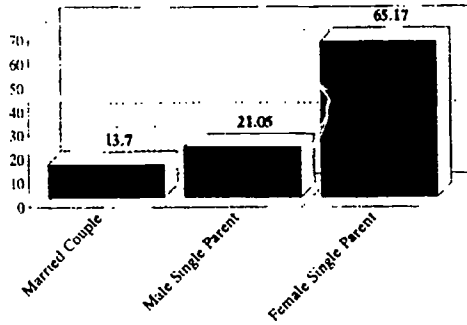


Source: 1990 U.S. Census Minority Economic Profile

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Sixty-five percent of female single parent families with small children are poor.

Percentage of Hispanic Families with Children Under 5 Years of Age Living in Poverty by Family Type

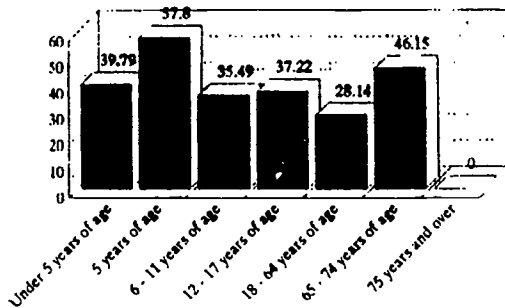


Sedgwick County

### Seward County

The total population of Seward County is 18,743. Hispanics make up 19.53 of the population. More than one-half of five-year-old Hispanic children are poor. Forty-six percent of Hispanics between the ages of 65 and 74 years old are poor.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age Seward County

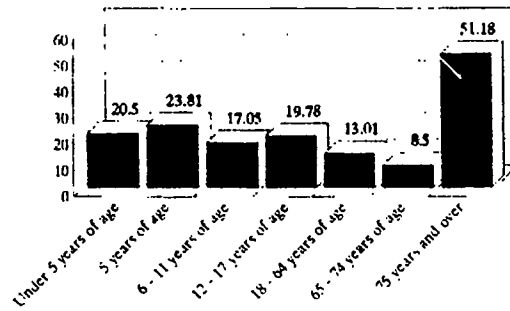


Source: 1990 Census of Population of Housing Summary Tape File 3A

### Shawnee County

The total population is this county is 160,976. Hispanics compose 4.84 percent of the population. Hispanic children under five years of age and Hispanics senior citizens over 75 years of age are the most likely to be poor.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty by Age Shawnee County

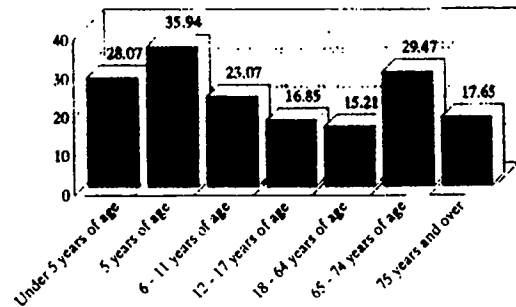


Source: 1990 Census of Population of Housing Summary Tape File 3A

### Wyandotte County

The total population of Wyandotte County is 161,993. Hispanics constitute 6.79 percent of the total population. Hispanic children and senior citizens are the most likely to experience poverty.

Percentage of Hispanics Living in Poverty By Age Wyandotte County



Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The high rate of Hispanic poverty is aggravated by this population's low educational attainment level, concentration in low wage jobs, language barriers, lack of basic financial knowledge, and discrimination.

Hispanics have the highest high school drop out rate of all population groups in Kansas. Approximately seven percent of all Hispanic high school



students quit school before obtaining their degree. compared to six percent of Black and two percent of White students.

Hispanics have the highest labor force participation rate of all population groups in Kansas. Of the Hispanics in Kansas, 66.4 percent are employed. Yet they work primarily in low wage, low skill, labor and injury intensive jobs that do not provide basic health insurance coverage.

Ironically, the lack of employer-provided basic health insurance coverage can be particularly devastating to Hispanics. They lack the funds to purchase private insurance, and often lack the knowledge of how to apply for government programs that could fill the gap.

The Kansas Department of Human Resource's Workers Compensation Division has a toll-free number (1-800-332-0353) where injured workers can call for information and assistance. Spanish-speaking interpreters are available on request.

However, job related injuries can still be disastrous for these families who are often unaware of worker compensation and other programs, and think their only option is to live on meager savings until the family breadwinner can return to work.

Many new and some established Hispanic families lack the ability to communicate effectively in English. The inability to read and write English further perpetuates their cycle of poverty making them unable to understand and communicate with government, judicial, or social agencies within their

communities that might provide assistance.

Poverty is also perpetuated by the lack of basic financial knowledge of budgeting techniques, fair lending laws, consumer rights, and distrust of banking institutions.

It is currently in vogue to talk about cultural diversity and multiculturalism. However, we still live in a society where discrimination exists. Often, Hispanics suffer discrimination not only because of their skin color, but also because of language difficulties and their new or perceived immigrant status.

It is obvious that Hispanic poverty has unique characteristics. Past public policy initiatives to combat poverty have not adequately addressed these characteristics.

In the future, greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing this population with pre-college financial assistance to reduce the high school drop out rate. In addition, Hispanics should be targeted for recruitment into school-to-work and other job training programs.

Within the Kansas Department of Human Resources, both the Division of Unemployment Insurance and the Workers Compensation Division provide materials in English and Spanish. More governmental agencies, especially at the state and local levels, need to provide program information and application forms in English and Spanish.

A more effective effort to educate this population on basic rights needs to be made by governmental and Hispanic community based organizations.

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