

# DISCRIMINATION & LATINX YOUTH

Ethnic/racial discrimination is a real threat for Latinx adolescents. Nearly 65% of youth, ages 12 – 21 years old report experiencing at least one instance of discrimination in the last year. Discrimination experiences are harmful for Latinx youth.

While experiences of discrimination can be overt (e.g., ethnic slur), there are also subtler forms of discrimination (referred to as microaggressions), which are commonly experienced by youth. Microaggressions are brief and common daily interactions that communicate derogatory or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities, but research shows that these experiences have negative effects on youths' mental and physical health.



## WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Research shows that most Latinx youth report experiencing discrimination, but these estimates are especially common between ages 15 to 19 years and among Latinx boys.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION?

Discrimination is harmful to youths' physiology, daily behaviors, mental and physical health. It relates to:

- Feeling sad, lonely, depression, and anxiety
- Less sleep and/or changes in youths' sleep patterns
- Increased stress hormones in the body
- Feelings of worry and stress
- Body aches and pains
- Difficulties in school
- Increased risky behaviors
- Higher levels of delinquency
- Increased conflict between parents and adolescents



## WHAT CAN YOUTH DO WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION?

1. Remember that this is not your fault.
2. Remind yourself of the aspects of your identity that are important to you.
3. Seek out a family member to talk to.
4. Seek out a friend or peer to talk to about this. If it is happening in a school context report to a teacher/administrator.
5. Know your allies – who in school or in the community would be approachable and helpful.

## WHERE DO YOUTH EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION?

Latinx youth experience discrimination within their neighborhood and their schools and can occur during interactions with peers, teachers and school administrators. Youth also experience discrimination from store clerks, authority figures, and other adults in their community. In a recent study of Latinx youth, nearly 40% of boys and 15% of girls reported experiencing discrimination from a police officer.

Discrimination can occur in many contexts, including schools and neighborhoods.

Discrimination also stems from a variety of sources such as peers, adults, or teachers and can come from members of another ethnic/racial group or your own. **Parents, community members, and school administrators and teachers should take these experiences seriously!**

## WHAT CAN ADMINISTRATORS & TEACHERS DO AT SCHOOL?

1. Foster a climate of inclusion.
2. Do not shy away from talking about incidents that are relevant to the community that you serve.
3. Address issues of ethnic cultural diversity within the curriculum.
4. Address issues of diversity and inclusion in hiring practices.
5. Be allies to communities of color

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. **Encourage youth to feel proud about being Latinx.** Research shows that youth who feel proud and positive about their ethnic background tend to be less affected by discrimination. Youth should be encouraged to explore and appreciate their ethnicity!
2. **Have supportive conversations with your child.** When youth experience discrimination, being able to talk to their mother and father, or even their aunt and uncle, can be helpful. When your child reports an experience of discrimination, be willing to listen and affirm your child, reminding them that this was not their fault and these experiences are not okay.
3. **Be proactive.** Many parents think ahead about their children's experiences and prepare their children for discriminatory experiences. For instance, parents may tell their child that discrimination experiences may happen and these conversations may help youth to be prepared.
4. **Encourage positive close friendships.** Having close friends are beneficial for youth who experience discrimination because they may have someone to talk to about the experience.
5. **Know your allies.** Identify members in the community and at school who are able to support your child during times of distress if they should occur when you are not around.
6. **Know your rights.** Given recent immigration policies have led to more discriminatory practices within the Latinx immigrant and non-immigrant communities, it is important for parents and youth alike to have a solid understanding of their rights.

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