

Racism and Legality: Undoing the Exclusion of Children in Immigrant Families from the Social Safety Net

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Outline

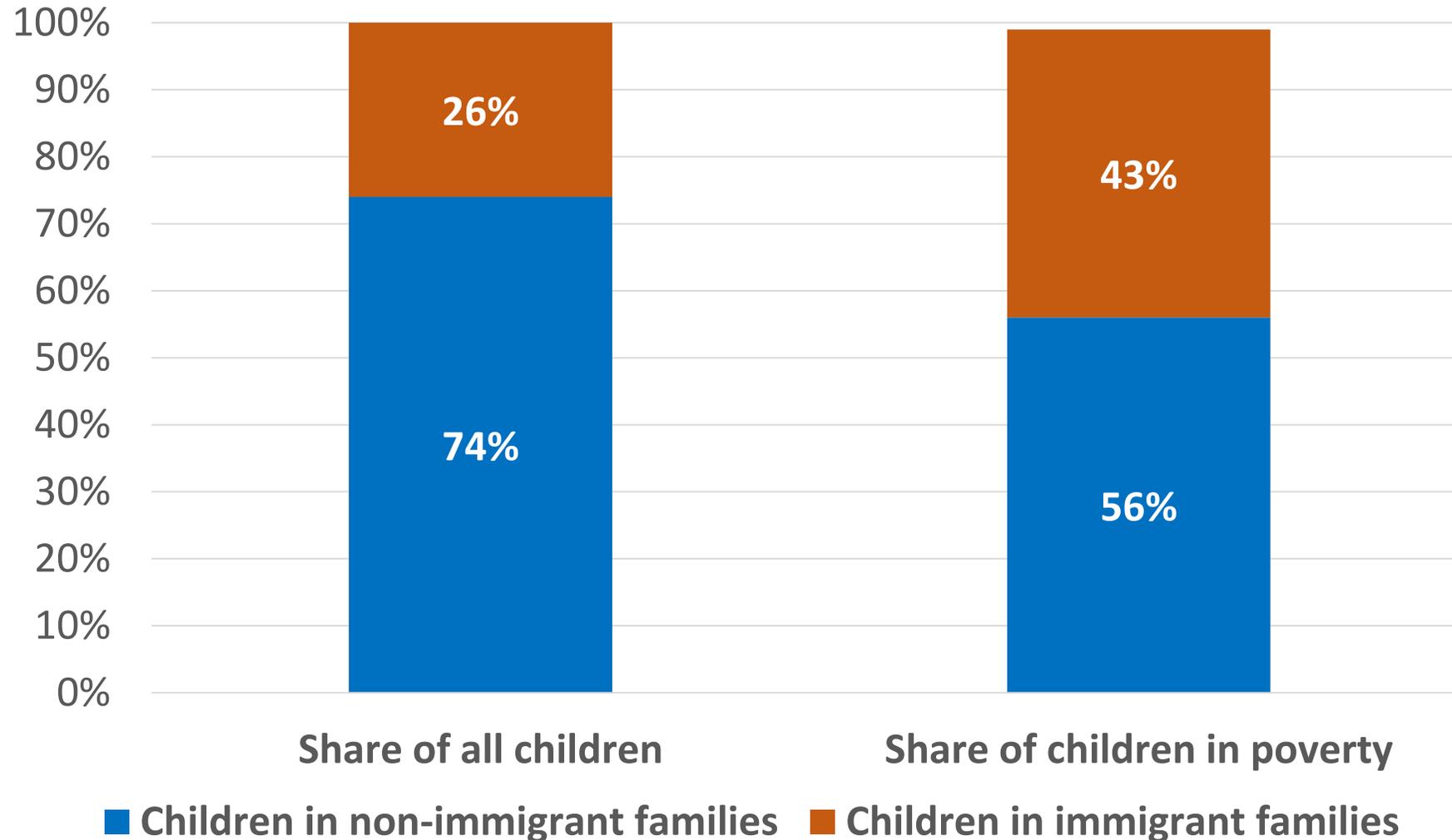
- Why focus on children in immigrant families?
- Immigrant stratification by legality as an expression of structural racism
- How legality is expressed in social policy to limit access to the social safety net
- Effects of restricted access to the social safety net on poverty among children in immigrant families
- Undoing immigrant restrictions

Why focus on children in immigrant families?

Children in immigrant families are 43% of all children in poverty (more than 4.1 million)

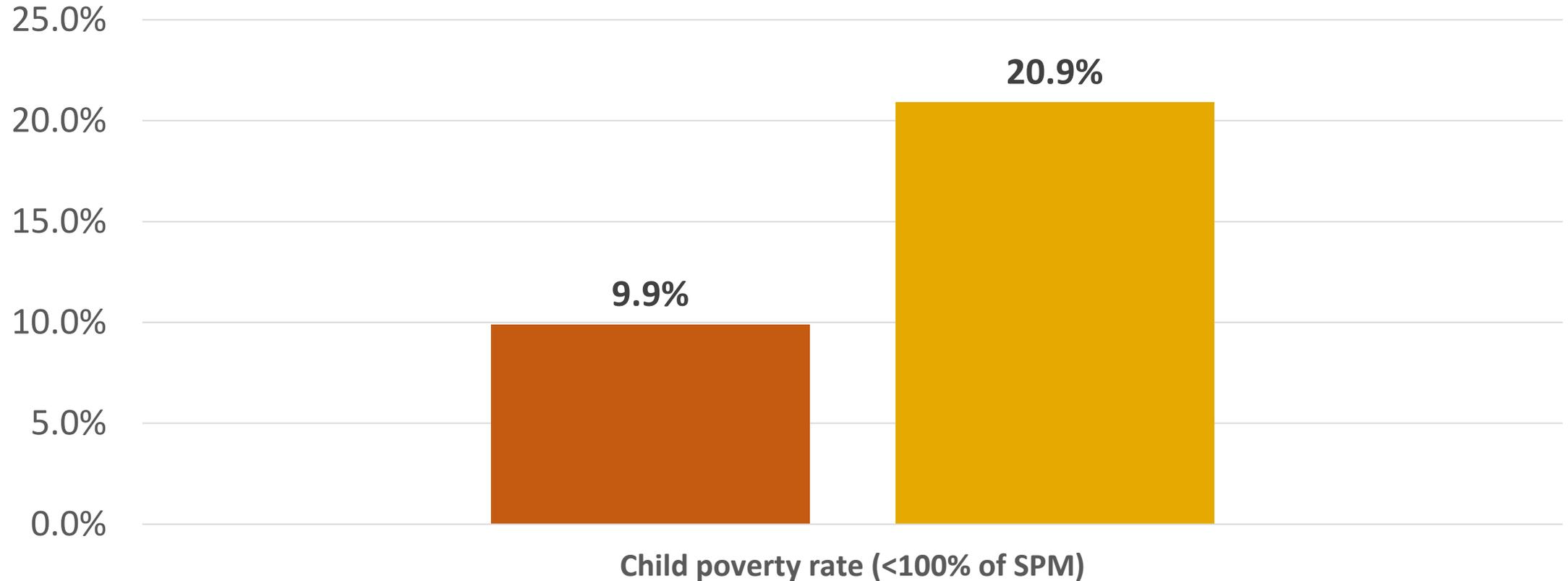
Composition of the child population and children in poverty by nativity

(Supplemental Poverty Measure)



U.S. citizen children in immigrant families have much higher poverty rates

Poverty rates by nativity
(Supplemental Poverty Measure)

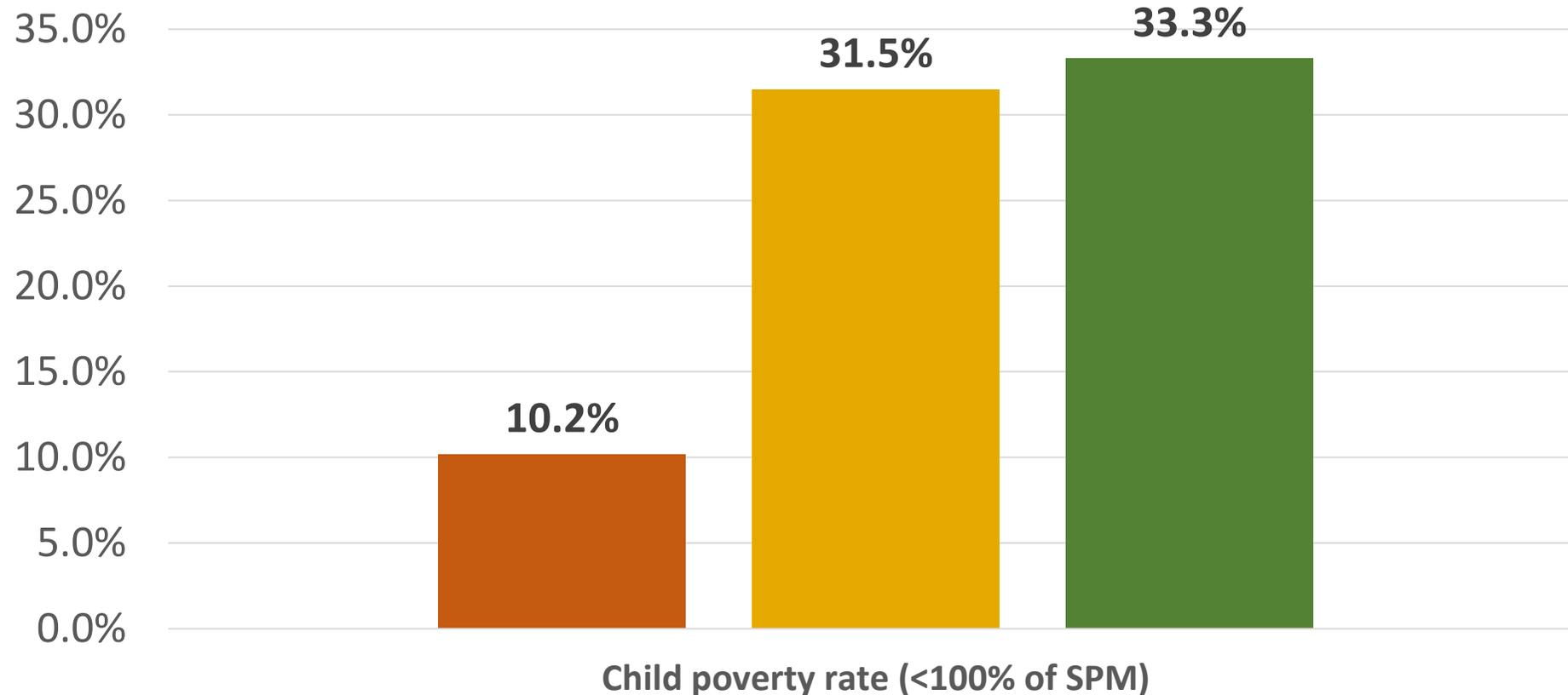


■ US-born children with US-born parents ■ US-born children with at least one foreign-born parent

U.S. citizen children in families with undocumented parents have poverty rates as high as those of undocumented children in families with undocumented parents

Poverty rates by citizen/immigrant status

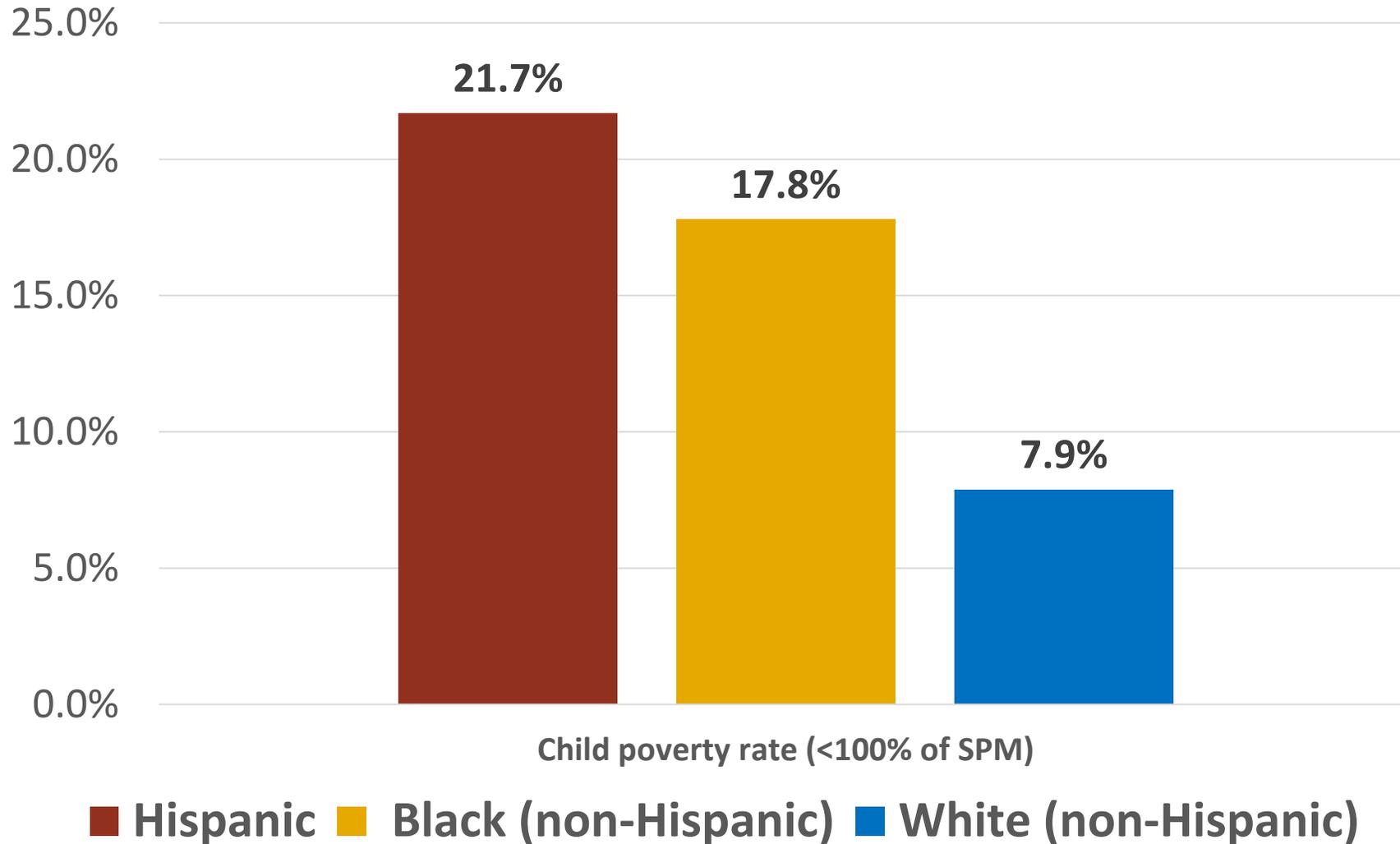
(Supplemental Poverty Measure)



- Citizen child, all household members are citizens
- Citizen child, at least one household member unauthorized
- Non citizen child, at least one household member unauthorized

Hispanic children have the highest poverty rates

Poverty rates by race/ethnicity
(Supplemental Poverty Measure)



Immigrant stratification by legality as an expression of structural racism

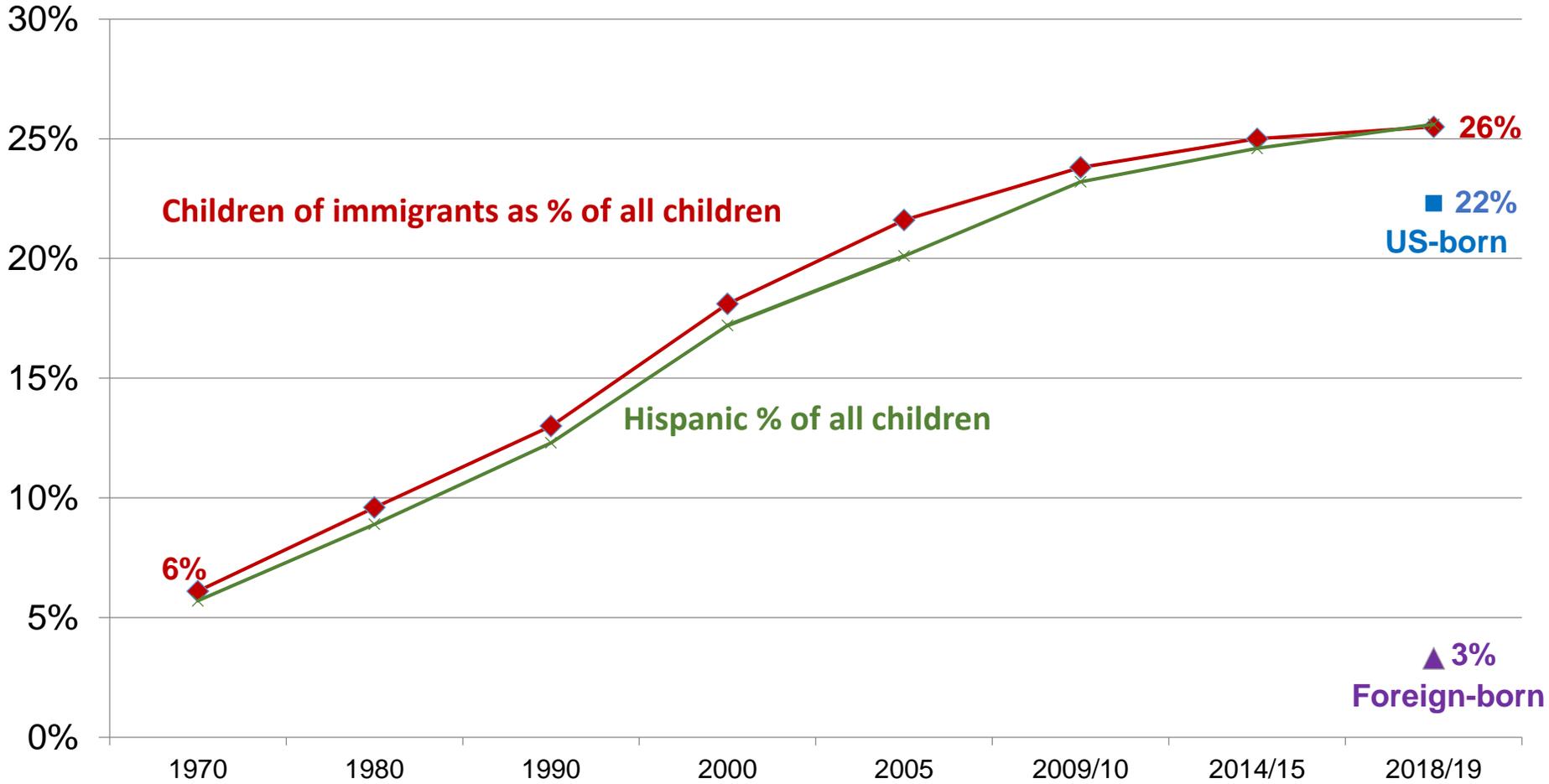
“Although we have convincing evidence about Black-White relations and welfare state development, we know far less about how the growing Hispanic population affects welfare policy”

Hana Brown, 2012

Legality

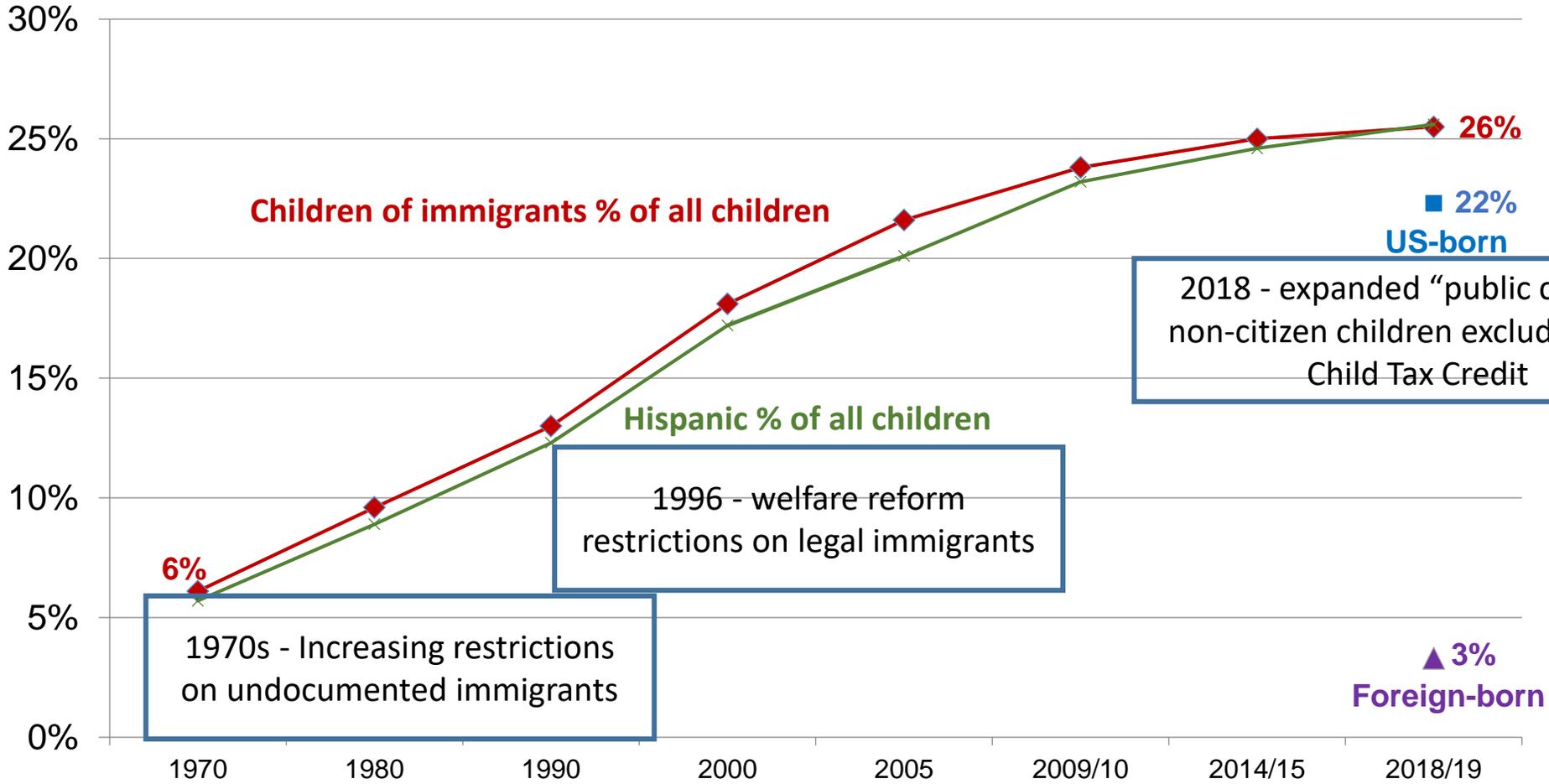
Race

Increase in Hispanic/immigrant children population accompanied by increasing exclusions in social policy targeting these groups



Sources: Urban Institute Tabulations from 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS); 2005 CPS, March Demographic and Economic Supplement and 2009/10 to 2018/19 American Community Survey IPUMS data. Foreign-born and US-born percents do not sum to total due to rounding. Hispanic child population estimates from 1970 Decennial Census and U.S. Census Population Estimates, 1980-2019. Hispanic estimates reflect latter year of two-year pairs.
 Note: Children of Immigrants include foreign-born children and those who have at least one foreign-born parent.

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Legality is codified and expressed
in social policy to limit access to
the social safety net

Immigrant stratification by legality and dimensions of reduced deservingness/access to the social safety net



- Restricted eligibility due to immigrant status
- Stricter income eligibility due to immigrant status
- Lower benefit levels due to immigrant status

- Excess administrative burden due to immigrant status
- Confusion about eligibility due to overly complex and fragmented immigrant eligibility rules
- Fear and reluctance to access safety net due to potential implications for immigration status (e.g., public charge)
- Fear and avoidance of social programs due to general anti-immigrant climate
- Other access barriers associated with immigrant status, e.g., language, lack of familiarity with U.S. programs

Immigrant eligibility and participation is restricted by design

Immigration status is linked to eligibility

- Even for legal immigrants and citizen children in immigrant families

Income eligibility is stricter:

- Deeming and affidavit of support (income of the immigrant's sponsor taken into account in calculating income)

Participation lowered further beyond eligibility restrictions due to:

- Racialized administrative burden
- Use of public programs linked to “public charge” determination

Effects of restricted access to the social safety net on poverty among children in immigrant families

Historic opportunity to reduce child poverty by half AND address racial/ethnic inequities in child poverty

- Landmark 2019 NASEM report *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty* showed that we can achieve the goal of 50% reduction by expanding existing policies.
- The American Rescue Plan and other proposal go a long way towards reducing child poverty.
- Yet, unless we address immigrant exclusions in existing policies, immigrant and Hispanic children will not experience the same reductions in poverty as other groups.

The 20 program and policy options generate disparate impacts across population subgroups in our simulations. Although virtually all of them would reduce poverty across all of the subgroups we considered, [...] **Hispanic children and immigrant children would benefit relatively less.**

NASEM, 2019, A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty

Current measures and proposals for reducing child poverty do NOT include all children.

They do NOT address important exclusions that hurt children in immigrant families

Without addressing exclusions that target immigrant families,

(1) We will not be as effective in reducing child poverty,

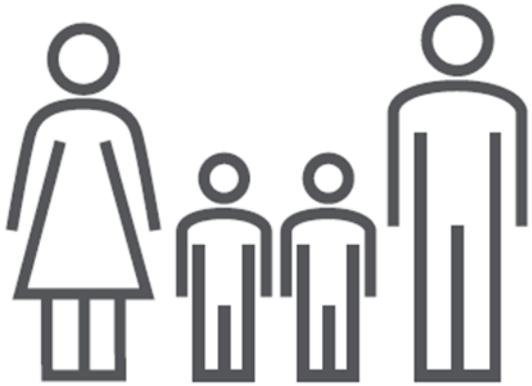
(2) We will not cut poverty fairly and justly for all children, and

(3) We will continue hurting U.S. citizen children in immigrant families.

CARES Act excluded from stimulus payments 5.1 million U.S. citizens who live in immigrant families

- CARES denied \$1,200/adult and \$500/child <17 stimulus payments to families where any family member did not have a Social Security Number.
- Excluded 3.7 million U.S. citizen children and 1.4 million U.S. citizen spouses from stimulus payments because they live in families where not all family members have SSNs.
- (Partially) reversed in December 2020 and American Rescue Plan Act after significant advocacy

Almost identical families and the CARES Act
Two working parents, two U.S citizen children, family earnings \$25,000/year



Both parents have Social Security Numbers

CARES Act stimulus payments = **\$3,400**

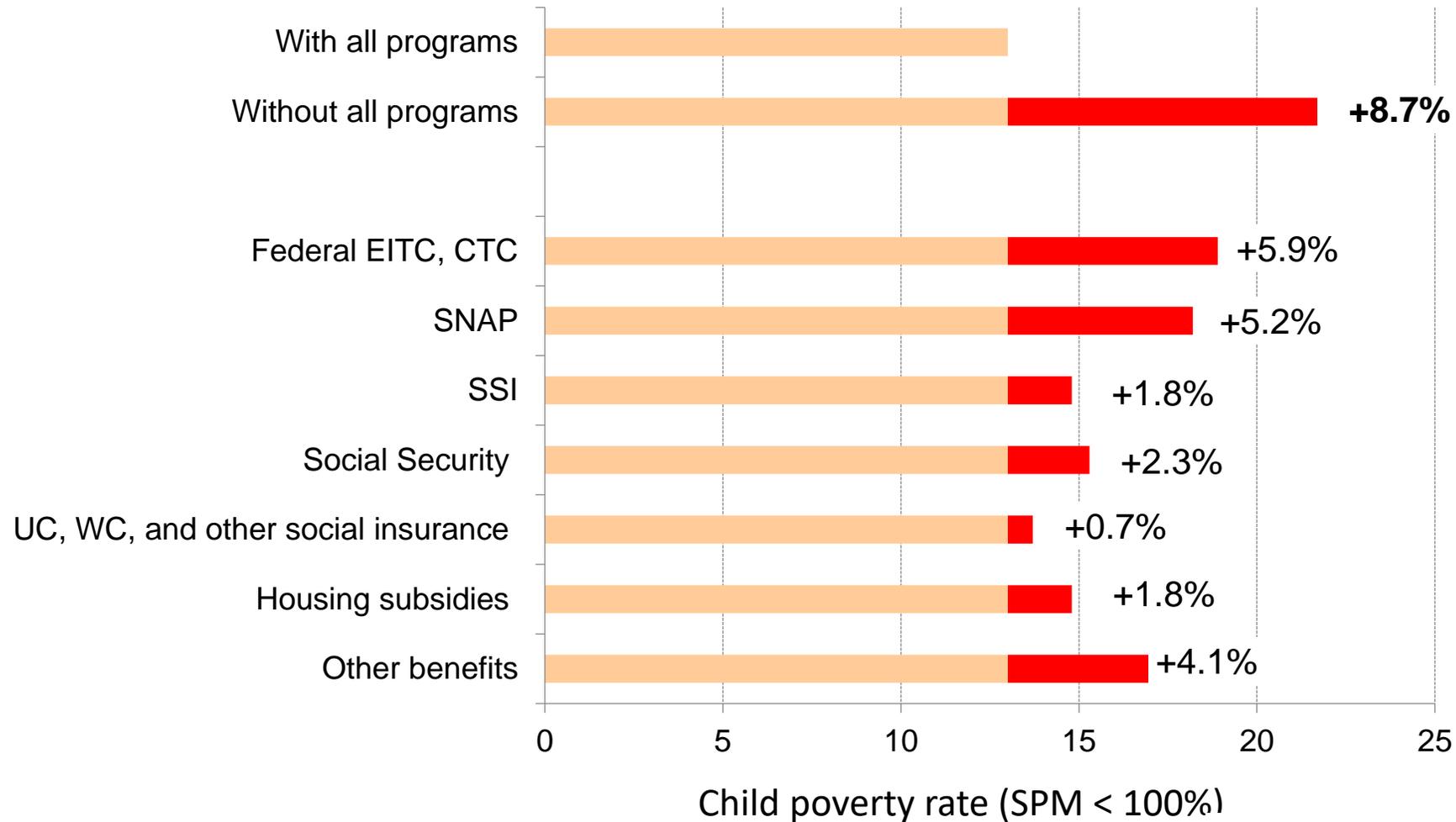


One parent has Social Security Number
or
Neither parent has Social Security Number

CARES Act stimulus payments = **\$0**

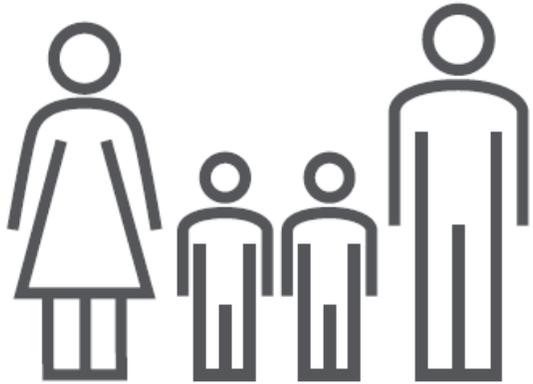
17% of children in poverty are U.S. citizen children living with unauthorized parents (more than 1.6 million children)

The Earned Income Tax Credit is one of our main programs to reduce child poverty



The Earned Income Tax Credit excludes 17% of children in poverty: citizen children in families with undocumented parents

Almost identical families and their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
Two working parents, two U.S citizen children, family earnings \$25,000/year



Both parents have Social Security Numbers

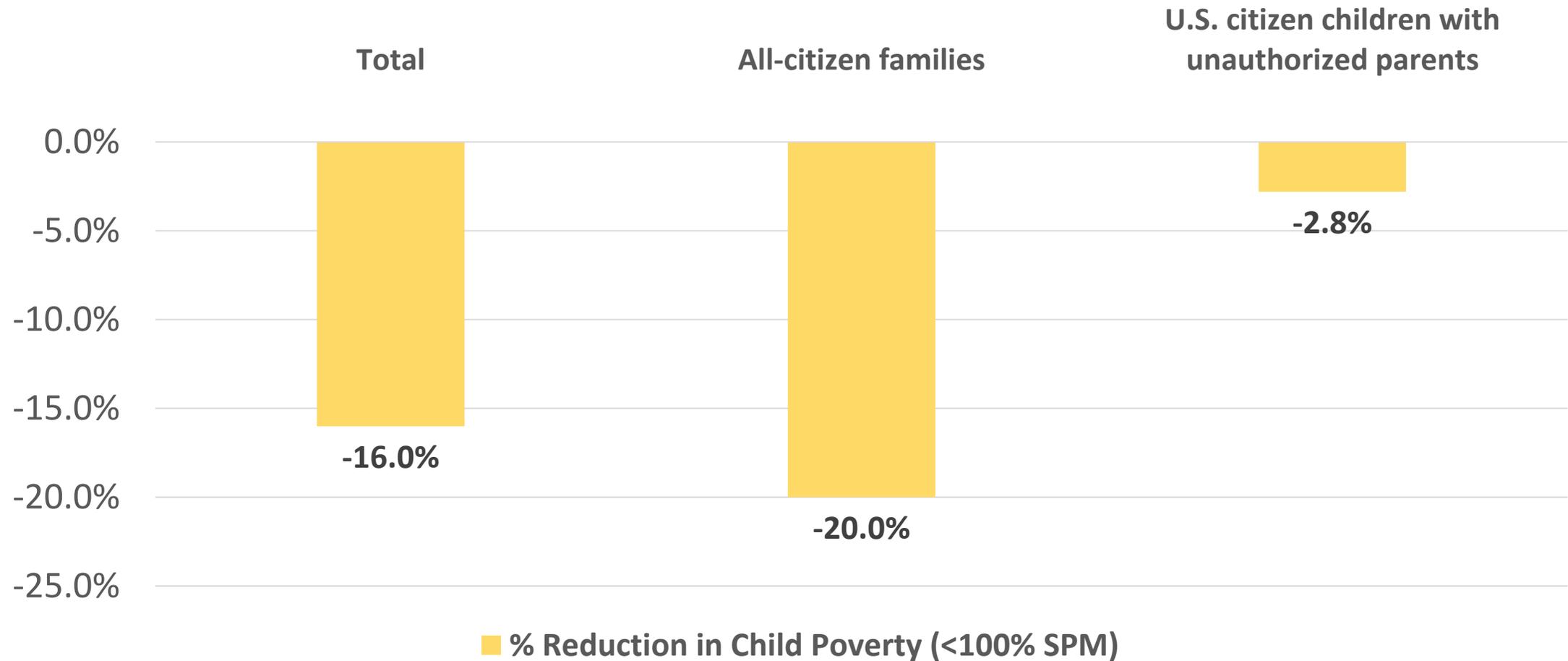
EITC = **\$5,920**



One parent has Social Security Number
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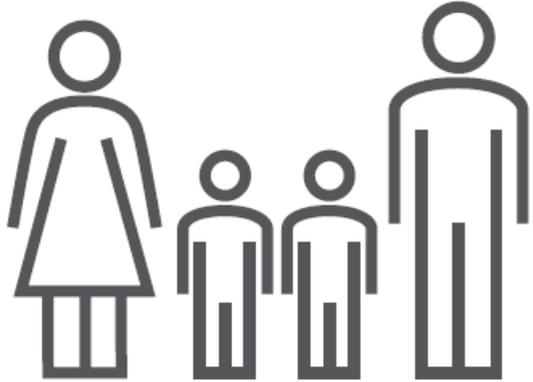
EITC = **\$0**

Even a 40% expansion of the EITC (simulated in NASEM report) would not reduce poverty for citizen children in families with unauthorized parents



Expansion of the Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan excludes 1.2 million non-citizen children

Two families and their Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan
Two working parents, two children (4 and 10 years old), family earnings \$25,000/year



Both children have Social Security Numbers

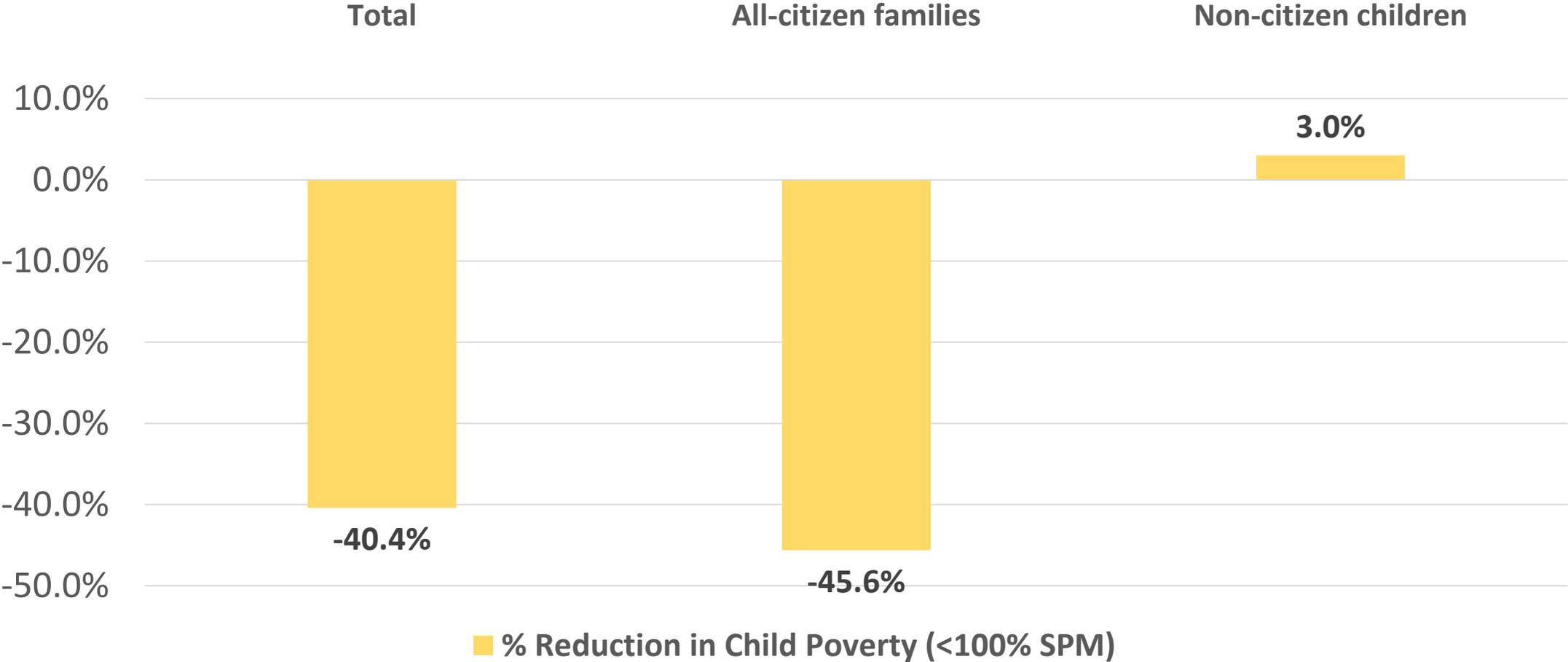
CTC = **\$6,600**



Neither child has Social Security Number

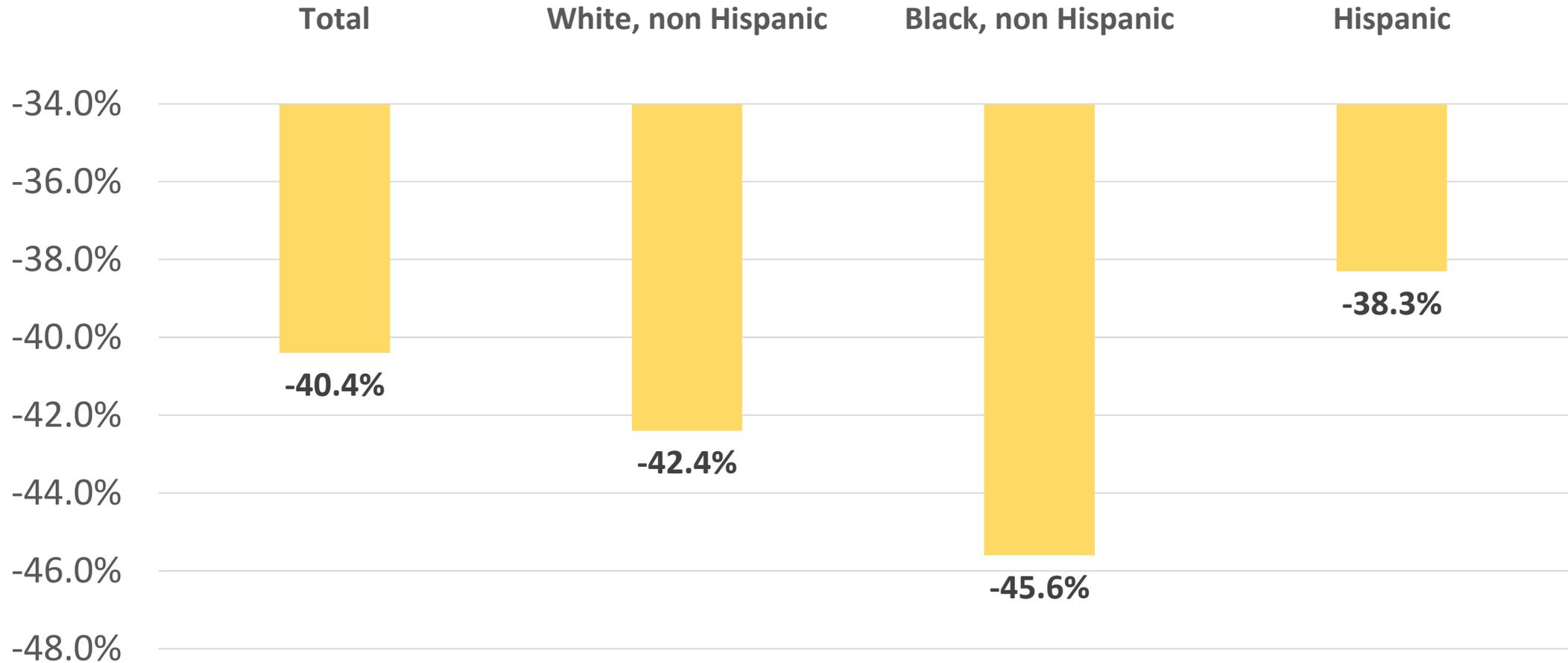
CTC = **\$0**

Expansion of the Child Tax Credit (as simulated in NASEM report and implemented in ARP) would not reduce poverty for non-citizen children



Expanded Child Tax Credit (Child Allowance) The treatment of immigrant eligibility affects the extent of poverty reduction among Hispanic children

Percent change between baseline and selected policies: Poverty rates by race/ethnicity
(Supplemental Poverty Measure)



■ Percent reduction in child poverty (<100% SPM)

Brandeis

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How can we correct these inequities?

- Base eligibility for tax credit on the child not the family:
 - Make EITC available if children have SSN
 - Make rescue/recovery funds available if children have SSN
- Eliminate the bar on use of safety net programs for legal immigrants with less than five years in the U.S.
- State level EITC expansions for tax filers without SSN's (with ITIN's)
 - California, Colorado passed expansions
 - Other states considering expansions (New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington)
- State level COVID related expansions
 - Health care coverage for undocumented immigrants, e.g., California

Thank you