

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 416

UD 035 942

AUTHOR Tumlin, Karen C.; Zimmerman, Wendy

TITLE Immigrants and TANF: A Look at Immigrant Welfare Recipients in Three Cities. Occasional Paper. Assessing the New Federalism: An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Social Policies.

INSTITUTION Urban Inst., Washington, DC.

SPONS AGENCY Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.; Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI.; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, NJ.; Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, IL.

REPORT NO No-69

PUB DATE 2003-10-00

NOTE 32p.

AVAILABLE FROM Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. Tel: 202-833-7200; Fax: 202-429-0687; e-mail: paffairs@ui.urban.org; Web site: <http://www.urban.org>.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Employment Opportunities; *Employment Patterns; English (Second Language); *Immigrants; Job Training; Limited English Speaking; Second Language Learning; Urban Areas; *Welfare Recipients; *Welfare Reform; *Welfare Services

IDENTIFIERS New York (New York); Personal Responsibility and Work Opp Recon Act; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

ABSTRACT

This paper examines immigrant participation in welfare, employment patterns and barriers among immigrant welfare recipients, and opportunities for and limits to enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) and other training programs while on welfare. It stems from interviews with public officials, employment service providers, welfare office workers, immigrant and refugee service providers, advocates, and others in Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; and New York, New York. It uses case studies conducted for the Urban Institute's Assessing the New Federalism project. It also uses Current Population Survey and 2000 Census data. Despite declining use of welfare nationally, immigrants and limited English speakers still comprise a significant share of people on welfare. Immigrants compose one-third of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) California's and New York's caseload and one-fifth of Texas'. Many immigrants on welfare have significant barriers to work (lower education levels and less work history than natives). Many job training programs have English language requirements that limit access to immigrants with little English. Proposed TANF reforms increasing the number of required hours of work and limiting the types of activities that count as work will make it harder for immigrants to receive language or vocational training. Combining an emphasis on employment with opportunities for developing skills could be an especially effective model for limited English speakers. (Contains 28 references.) (SM)

ED 482 416

Immigrants and TANF

A Look at Immigrant Welfare Recipients in Three Cities

Karen C. Tumlin
Wendy Zimmermann
The Urban Institute

Occasional Paper Number 69

Assessing
the New
Federalism
*An Urban Institute
Program to Assess
Changing Social Policies*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Brown
Urban Institute

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

UD 033 942

ERIC
Full Text Provided by ERIC

Immigrants and TANF

A Look at Immigrant Welfare Recipients in Three Cities

Karen C. Tumlin
Wendy Zimmermann
The Urban Institute

Occasional Paper Number 69



Assessing
the New
Federalism
*An Urban Institute
Program to Assess
Changing Social Policies*



The Urban Institute
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: 202.833.7200
Fax: 202.429.0687
E-mail: paffairs@ui.urban.org
<http://www.urban.org>

Copyright © October 2003. The Urban Institute. All rights reserved. Except for short quotes, no part of this paper may be reproduced in any form or used in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the Urban Institute.

This report is part of the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project, a multiyear effort to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

The research for this report was funded primarily by the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project. A portion of the fieldwork for the study was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and a consortium of other federal agencies as part of the project entitled, "Welfare reform, the economic and health status of immigrants and the organizations that serve them."

The *Assessing the New Federalism* project is currently supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Ford Foundation.

The authors would like to thank the scores of state and local officials, welfare office workers, advocates, and researchers who met with them during their field visits to Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City. The authors are grateful for the excellent research assistance of Laureen Laglagaron, Christian Henrichson, Jason Ost, Scott McNiven, and Kenneth Sucher, for Phuong Tran's help with the site work, and for Jeff Passel's indispensable analytic assistance and insights. Very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this report were provided by Michael Fix, Pamela Holcomb, Audrey Singer, Eugene Smolensky, Alan Weil, and Shawn Freinstad.

The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

About the Series

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states, focusing primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being. The project aims to provide timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia, available at the Urban Institute's web site. This paper is one in a series of occasional papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

Contents

The 1996 Federal Welfare Reform Law	2
Immigrant Bars	2
Reforms to Welfare Programs	3
TANF Reauthorization	4
Growing Immigration, Declining Use of Welfare	4
Rising Numbers of Immigrants	4
Mixed-Status Families	5
Increasing Limited English Proficiency	5
Declining Rates of Welfare Use among Immigrants	6
Immigrants a Significant Share of Total Welfare Caseload	7
Immigrants More Likely to Remain on Welfare	10
Immigrants More Likely to Be in Two-Parent Families	10
A Job, A Better Job? Employment, Mobility, and Supportive Services	11
Barriers to Employment	11
Employment Patterns among TANF Recipients	12
Providing Supportive Services	13
Access to Language Instruction, Job Training, and Employment Services	14
The Work-First Norm and Getting a Job without English	14
Defining Acceptable Work Activities	14
Meeting Work Participation Requirements	15
Few Training Programs Offered in Languages other than English	17
Assessing English Language Proficiency	18

Conclusions and Implications for Reform 18

Notes 20

References 22

About the Authors 25

Immigrants and TANF

A Look at Immigrant Welfare Recipients in Three Cities

The federal welfare reform act of 1996 (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, or PRWORA) dramatically revamped the welfare system, turning it into a block grant program run by the states, imposing new, stricter work requirements and setting a five-year lifetime limit on benefit receipt. For immigrants the law did all that and much more. In a major departure from previous policy, the law sharply curtailed noncitizens' eligibility for welfare and other major federal benefits.

While numerous studies have assessed PRWORA's immigrant restrictions and their effects on immigrant families, little research has examined the impacts of welfare program reforms on immigrants *remaining* on welfare, now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).¹ At the same time, a large body of research has emerged on the impacts of new work requirements and time limits on welfare recipients, but little of this research has specifically examined how immigrants fare.

As Congress prepares to reauthorize TANF, this report offers some insights into how well the welfare system works for this frequently overlooked population. The report focuses on the experiences of immigrants and those who are limited English proficient (LEP) on TANF in three major U.S. cities: Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City. One-quarter of the country's immigrants call these three cities home. Over half of the foreign-born population lives in Texas, California, and New York.

This paper examines immigrant participation in welfare, employment patterns and barriers among immigrant welfare recipients, and opportunities for and limits to enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) and other training programs while on the welfare rolls. We conclude by highlighting key immigrant-related issues for TANF's reform and pointing out potential strategies to help immigrants and LEPs on welfare find and keep jobs.

This research stems from a series of interviews conducted with public officials, employment service providers, welfare office workers, immigrant and refugee service providers, advocates, and others in these cities.² The study also draws on case studies conducted by the Urban Institute as part of the *Assessing the New Federalism* project. In addition, we use Current Population Survey (CPS) data and 2000 Census data to examine the characteristics of the immigrant and TANF populations.

Our key findings include the following:

- Despite declining use of welfare nationally, immigrants and limited English speakers still make up a significant share of those on the welfare rolls. Immigrants

compose around one-third of the TANF caseload in California and New York and nearly one-fifth in Texas.

- Many immigrants remaining on the rolls have significant barriers to work, including lower education levels and less work history than natives.
- Immigrants on TANF are less likely to be working than natives and more likely to be working in occupations that provide little opportunity for speaking English, gaining skills, and achieving self-sufficiency.
- PRWORA's strict work requirements limited opportunities for states to provide education and training to welfare recipients, including language training to limited English speakers. In addition, the work-first norm embodied in welfare reform and embraced by the states meant that states did not use the opportunities that remained available to provide language and other training programs.
- Many job-training programs have English language requirements, which limit access for immigrants who do not speak English well.
- Proposed TANF reforms increasing the number of required hours of work and limiting the types of activities that count as work will make it even more difficult for immigrant and limited-English-speaking welfare recipients to receive language or vocational training.
- Combining an emphasis on employment with opportunities for developing skills—a strategy supported by recent research on all welfare recipients—could be an especially effective model for limited English speakers, who could combine part-time work with language training. Proposed increases to work participation requirements would make it more difficult for states to pursue these types of strategies.

The 1996 Federal Welfare Reform Law

While PRWORA aimed to encourage welfare recipients to work and discourage out-of-wedlock births, the immigrant provisions of the law were intended to discourage the immigration of those likely to use benefits, and to save money—half of the budget savings from PRWORA were attributable to the original immigrant restrictions in the law (Congressional Budget Office 1996, 27).³

Immigrant Bars

In addition to imposing broad new bars on legal immigrants' eligibility for public benefits, PRWORA drew a bright line between those immigrants entering the United States before the law passed on August 22, 1996, and those entering after. The law substantially restricted “post-enactment” immigrants' eligibility for welfare, Medicaid, and food stamps.⁴ States also gained new powers to decide whether their noncitizens should have access to federal and state benefits, including TANF.⁵

PRWORA gave states the option of barring noncitizens who entered before August 1996 from TANF, though only Alabama opted to do so. The law barred noncitizens entering after August 1996 from TANF for their first five years in the United States, leaving states to decide whether to provide benefits after that period.⁶

Each of the three states we examine in this study took a different approach to providing welfare to post-enactment immigrants. California, along with 18 other states, chose to use state funds to provide TANF-like assistance to legal immigrants arriving after the law's passage on largely the same terms as citizen TANF recipients (National Immigration Law Center 2002; Zimmermann and Tumlin 1999). New York made post-enactment immigrants eligible for the Safety Net Assistance (SNA) program, a state-funded program that provides more limited benefits and services than TANF.⁷ Texas provides no welfare-like assistance to post-enactment immigrants for their first five years in the country.

Reforms to Welfare Programs

Immigrants receiving welfare are subject not only to the immigrant-specific provisions, but also to the many reforms made to welfare programs in general. PRWORA imposed strict work-related requirements, ended welfare as an entitlement, imposed a five-year lifetime limit on welfare receipt, and gave states substantial new authority to shape their TANF programs.

Before the passage of the federal welfare law, many states had already shifted away from the traditional model of providing cash benefits with little emphasis on employment. The new federally mandated approach pushed welfare recipients to seek employment or engage in “work activities” soon after, or even while, applying for benefits. PRWORA made this “work-first” approach the guiding principle of the new TANF program.

Among other requirements, states must ensure that half of all adult TANF beneficiaries work—or engage in approved activities—at least 30 hours per week. The law dedicated new TANF funds to help states achieve this mandate, by helping pay for supportive services such as transportation and child care, and by ensuring access to health insurance through Medicaid. The hope was that welfare offices would be transformed from places that simply give out checks to places that support and facilitate work. Along with this philosophical change came reduced opportunities for welfare recipients to engage in welfare-funded employment and training programs.

Not all PRWORA provisions restricted access to welfare. The federal welfare law expanded access for two-parent families. Before PRWORA, two-parent families faced stiffer welfare eligibility requirements than one-parent families,⁸ though some states had eliminated the distinctions between one- and two-parent family eligibility, primarily through AFDC waivers. PRWORA gave all states the option to end these different work-related eligibility rules for two-parent families. Most states, including New York and Texas, did so. California, however, still requires two-parent family applicants to demonstrate that the principal wage earner has worked fewer than 100 hours in the four weeks before application.



TANF Reauthorization

In the years following welfare reform, caseloads across the country dropped precipitously, leading many to hail the law a great success. With the economic recession beginning in 2001, however, many families have returned to welfare, leading to increases in many states' welfare rolls (Loprest 2002). This caseload increase, though modest, provides an important context for TANF's reauthorization.

Congress debated TANF's reauthorization in 2002, but lawmakers were unable to agree on its terms.⁹ As Congress readies to reauthorize the law in 2003 a number of reforms appear likely, many toughening the law's already demanding work requirements.¹⁰ A few key provisions under consideration would

- continue the TANF block grant to states at \$16 billion per year over the next five years;
- increase the number of hours recipients are required to work from 30 to as many as 40 per week;
- increase the share of state caseloads required to participate in work activities; and
- further limit the activities that count as "work."¹¹

Although an expansion of immigrant eligibility for TANF is unlikely, legislation giving states the option of covering lawfully present children and pregnant women through Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was approved by the Senate in June 2003.¹²

The current economic and political context has clearly shaped the directions of the proposed welfare reforms. Republican leadership now controls both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and these leaders have consistently favored tougher work requirements. The economy continues to struggle, and since 9/11 national security remains the primary lens through which immigration issues are viewed.

As Congress prepares to act on TANF's reauthorization, this report offers some insights into how the 1996 reforms have affected immigrant families receiving TANF and what future changes might mean for this still important group of welfare recipients.

Growing Immigration, Declining Use of Welfare

Rising Numbers of Immigrants

The number of foreign-born people in the United States has grown dramatically over the past two decades, more than doubling from 14.1 million in 1980 to an estimated 31.1 million in 2000. During this period, the immigrant share of the total population grew from 6.2 percent to 11.1 percent. Although they account for only 11 percent of the U.S. population, immigrants represent 14 percent of those with

incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or FPL (table 1). In California, immigrants make up one-quarter of the overall state population and one-third of the state low-income population. In New York, the foreign-born constitute one-fifth of the total and one-quarter of the low-income population. In Texas, immigrants make up 12 percent of the state population and 18 percent of low-income residents.¹³ Within our local sites, the foreign-born account for an even larger share of the low-income population: Almost one-half of low-income residents of Los Angeles are immigrants, and over one-third of New York City's and one-quarter of Houston's low-income population are foreign-born.

Mixed-Status Families

The prevalence of mixed-status families, where parents are legal immigrants and children are U.S.-born citizens, complicates the effects of welfare reform on immigrants. In the new world of public assistance, where eligibility varies by citizenship status, mixed-status families can produce confusing eligibility scenarios. In 1998, nearly one in 10 U.S. families with children was mixed-status, with a noncitizen parent and citizen child. In the states examined here, mixed-status families are even more common, accounting for over 25 percent of California families with children, 15 percent of Texas families, and 14 percent of New York families. In Los Angeles, mixed-status families make up 43 percent of all families with children and 59 percent of all families with incomes below 200 percent of FPL. In New York City, over one-quarter of all families with children and nearly one-third of low-income families are mixed-status (Fix and Zimmermann 1999).

Increasing Limited English Proficiency

Newly available data from the 2000 Census provide an early look at the growth in the number of limited English speakers resulting from large-scale immigration over

Table 1. Foreign-Born Population and Poverty Population for the United States, Selected States and Metropolitan Areas, 2000

	Total population			Below 200% of FPL		
	Foreign-born (thousands)	Native (thousands)	Percentage foreign-born	Foreign-born (thousands)	Native (thousands)	Percentage foreign-born
United States	27,372	245,870	10 ^a	14,090	86,618	14
California	8,361	25,743	25	4,753	9,536	33
New York	3,500	15,006	19	1,782	5,563	24
Texas	2,499	17,797	12	1,585	6,999	18
Los Angeles	3,268	6,284	34	2,069	2,644	44
New York City	2,916	5,923	33	1,551	2,656	37
Houston	723	3,609	17	455	1,317	26

Sources: Average of 1999, 2000, and 2001 March Supplements of the Current Population Survey.

FPL = federal poverty level.

a. The foreign-born account for 11 percent of the Census 2000 population.



THE URBAN INSTITUTE

the past decade. The total limited English proficient population expanded dramatically in the 1990s, growing from nearly 14 million to well over 21 million people (table 2). The LEP share of the total adult working-age (age 18–64) population also increased from 6 to 9 percent. Limited English speakers now make up over one-fifth of adults in California and one-sixth of adults in Texas and New York.

Declining Rates of Welfare Use among Immigrants

Since immigrants in the country prior to PRWORA’s enactment retained TANF eligibility, relatively few noncitizens actually lost eligibility immediately following the law’s passage. Still, noncitizens experienced steeper declines in welfare approval and use rates than citizens in the years following reform. From January 1996 to January 1998, LA County’s noncitizen application approvals for welfare and Medi-Cal fell by over 50 percent while the number of approvals for citizens remained constant (Zimmermann and Fix 1998). A follow-up study by the Urban Research Division (URD) of Los Angeles County found that the number of approved applications for noncitizens continued to decline between January 1998 and October 1999, but at a slower rate than before (Moreno et al. 2000).

A number of factors account for these “chilling effects” on immigrants’ use of welfare. Shifting federal policies on immigrants’ eligibility for public benefits and

Table 2. Limited English Proficiency in the United States and Selected States, 1990 and 2000

	1990			2000			Change 1990–2000 (%)
	Total (thousands)	LEP (thousands)	LEP share of total (%)	Total (thousands)	LEP (thousands)	LEP share of total (%)	
Total							
United States	230,446	13,983	6	262,375	21,320	8	52
California	27,384	4,423	16	31,417	6,278	20	42
New York	16,743	1,766	11	17,749	2,310	13	31
Texas	15,606	1,766	11	19,242	2,670	14	51
Children 5–17							
United States	45,342	2,388	5	53,096	3,493	7	46
California	5,363	797	15	6,766	1,111	16	39
New York	3,009	248	8	3,447	303	9	22
Texas	3,455	392	11	4,264	517	12	32
Adults 18–64							
United States	153,908	9,793	6	174,300	15,486	9	58
California	18,899	3,255	17	21,063	4,560	22	40
New York	11,372	1,247	11	11,852	1,677	14	34
Texas	10,443	1,201	11	12,910	1,910	15	59

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census and Census 2000 Supplemental Survey.

Note: Limited English proficiency (LEP) is defined as those who report that they speak English less than very well.

varying state-level eligibility rules created confusion, as well as a fragmented safety net that varies by state and by the date immigrants entered the United States. Changes enacted under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) around the same time as welfare reform raised “public charge” concerns about the implications of receiving public benefits for obtaining legal permanent resident status or for naturalizing, despite the fact that there has been no change in public charge policy.

The most recent Urban Institute analysis of the CPS, however, shows that over the 1994 to 1999 period, the number of U.S. noncitizen and citizen families on the welfare rolls decreased at about the same rate (59 and 60 percent, as shown in table 3) (Fix and Passel 2001). In their analysis, Fix and Passel show that although noncitizen families with children have about the same TANF use rates as citizen families, *low-income* legal immigrant families with children have lower TANF use rates than low-income citizen families with children (8.7 percent versus 11.6 percent in 1999).

Immigrants a Significant Share of Total Welfare Caseload

As the total number of welfare recipients declined dramatically—from over 4 million families receiving TANF in 1994 to 1.6 million in 2000—a key question arose: Who is left on the welfare rolls? This paper makes a more specific inquiry: Do immigrants and limited English speakers make up an increasing share of those remaining on the rolls and, if so, what is keeping them from moving off welfare?

As of 2000, noncitizens accounted for 10 percent of all families reporting TANF receipt, the same share as in 1994. Adding refugees (2 percent) and naturalized immigrants (4 percent) brings the foreign-born share of all TANF families to 16 percent—marginally higher than their 15 percent share in 1994 (table 3).

These national averages, however, mask important state differences. Within our three study states, noncitizens make up higher shares of the 2000 caseload: they make up 24 percent of all welfare families in California, 21 percent in New York, and 9 percent in Texas. The foreign-born are even more important to the remaining caseload in these three states—they make up 39 percent of families still on the rolls in California, 31 percent in New York, and 15 percent in Texas (table 4). Though the foreign-born shares of these state TANF caseloads are only slightly higher than or about the same as their shares of the total state populations, these figures demonstrate that despite earlier chilling effects and bars on immigrant eligibility, immigrants continue to make up a significant share of the welfare caseload. In fact, even in California, where chilling effects were thought to be strongest, immigrants are nearly one-third of the welfare caseload.

Looking at noncitizens as a single group, however, masks differences between the legal and undocumented immigrant population, which Fix and Passel have imputed in their analysis. While the number of legal immigrant-headed families receiving TANF declined by 65 percent between 1994 and 2000 and the number of refugee-headed families declined by 71 percent, undocumented immigrant-

Table 3. Family Receipt of TANF, by Citizenship, Nativity, and Legal Status of Head and Spouse, 1994 and 2000

Status of family head/spouse	Families (thousands)		Change (%)	Percent distribution of total	
	1994	2000		1994	2000
Families receiving TANF					
Total	4,040	1,608	-60	100	100
Native	3,450	1,344	-61	85	84
Foreign-born	590	264	-55	15	16
Citizen	3,502	1,403	-60	87	87
Native	3,450	1,344	-61	85	84
Naturalized ^a	52	59	13	1	4
Noncitizen	411	168	-59	10	10
Legal	347	121	-65	9	8
Undocumented	63	47	-26	2	3
Refugee ^b	127	37	-71	3	2
Total families					
Total	131,602	140,266	7	100	100
Native	115,585	119,158	3	88	85
Foreign-born	16,017	21,108	32	12	15
Citizen	120,828	126,553	5	92	90
Native	115,585	119,158	3	88	85
Naturalized ^a	5,243	7,395	41	4	5
Noncitizen	9,927	12,138	22	8	9
Legal	7,019	7,755	10	5	6
Undocumented	2,908	4,383	51	2	3
Refugee ^b	846	981	16	1	1

Sources: 1995 and 2001 March Supplements of the Current Population Survey, reporting benefits receipt for the previous year.

Note: Legal status assigned using Urban Institute imputations (Passel and Clark 1998). Those imputed to be legal nonimmigrants are excluded. Families are considered noncitizen families if either the head or the spouse is a noncitizen.

a. Naturalized citizens include naturalized refugees.

b. Refugees only include alien refugees.

headed families receiving welfare for their citizen children declined by only 26 percent, causing their share of all TANF families to inch up from 2 to 3 percent (table 3). This growth results partly from the large influx of undocumented immigrants to the United States, but also from the fact that undocumented parents are largely unaffected by the welfare-to-work reforms because they are not permitted to work legally and can only receive benefits for their citizen children.

Table 4. Family Receipt of TANF, by Citizenship of Head and Spouse, for California, New York, and Texas, 1994 and 2000

Status of family head/spouse	California				New York				Texas						
	Families (thousands)		Share of total (%)		Families (thousands)		Share of total (%)		Families (thousands)		Share of total (%)				
	1994	2000	Change (%)	1994	2000	1994	2000	Change (%)	1994	2000	1994	2000			
Families receiving TANF															
Total	674	367	-46	100	100	336	198	-41	100	100	231	106	-54	100	100
Native	381	223	-41	57	61	243	136	-44	72	69	198	91	-54	86	85
Foreign-born	293	143	-51	43	39	93	62	-33	28	31	33	15	-53	14	15
Citizen	396	256	-35	59	70	259	154	-41	77	78	201	97	-52	87	91
Native	381	223	-41	57	61	243	136	-44	72	69	198	91	-54	86	85
Naturalized ^a	14	33	126	2	9	16	18	-11	5	9	3	6	102	1	6
Noncitizen	192	90	-53	28	24	67	42	-38	20	21	30	10	-68	13	9
Legal	142	55	-61	21	15	65	33	-49	19	17	26	6	-75	11	6
Undocumented	49	34	-30	7	9	2	9	294	1	5	4	3	-17	2	3
Refugee ^b	86	21	-76	13	6	10	2	-74	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total families															
Total	15,741	17,134	9	100	100	9,584	9,652	1	100	100	9,029	9,866	9	100	100
Native	10,616	11,283	6	67	66	7,413	7,157	-3	77	74	7,662	8,119	6	85	82
Foreign-born	5,124	5,851	14	33	34	2,171	2,495	15	23	26	1,368	1,746	28	15	18
Citizen	11,854	13,261	12	75	77	8,183	8,144	0	85	84	7,998	8,538	7	89	87
Native	10,616	11,283	6	67	66	7,413	7,157	-3	77	74	7,662	8,119	6	85	82
Naturalized ^a	1,238	1,978	60	8	12	770	987	28	8	10	336	419	25	4	4
Noncitizen	3,605	3,629	1	23	21	1,295	1,407	9	14	15	987	1,259	28	11	13
Legal	2,336	2,348	1	15	14	1,004	845	-16	10	9	654	675	3	7	7
Undocumented	1,269	1,282	1	8	7	292	562	93	3	6	333	584	75	4	6
Refugee ^b	282	244	-13	2	1	106	102	-4	1	1	45	60	35	0	1

Sources: March Supplements of the Current Population Survey, average of 1995 and 1996, and 2000 and 2001, reporting benefits receipt for the previous year.

Note: Legal status assigned using Urban Institute imputations (Passel and Clark 1998). Those imputed to be legal nonimmigrants are excluded. Families are considered noncitizen families if either the head or the spouse is a noncitizen.

a. Naturalized citizens include naturalized refugees.

b. Refugees only include alien refugees.



THE URBAN INSTITUTE

Immigrants More Likely to Remain on Welfare

If immigrants are getting *on* welfare at lower rates than citizens, as local-level evidence in places such as LA County suggests, but immigrant shares of the caseload have not declined, then immigrants must be exiting welfare at slower rates than citizens (Du et al. 2000; Moreno et al. 2001; Zimmermann and Fix 1998). Indeed, our analysis indicates that immigrants on the TANF rolls are having a harder time getting *off* TANF because they face significant barriers to employment, are less likely to work while on TANF, and are often the last ones “called up” for the remaining employment services available under TANF.

Anecdotal evidence from our three sites also suggests that limited English speakers may be disproportionately left on the welfare rolls. Though we do not have data showing change over time, according to LA County, 41 percent of all TANF recipients in 1999 were limited English speakers. And according to data from New York City, as of June 2001, 19 percent of those on welfare spoke limited English.¹⁴ Though these figures certainly do not reveal a national trend, as these cities have two of the largest urban caseloads in the United States (bigger than most states’ caseloads), they are significant.

The inability of LEPs to become self-sufficient and to get off welfare is increasingly problematic in the context of time-limited welfare. In California, data indicate that in some large counties LEPs are disproportionately timing off of assistance—meaning LEPs remain financially eligible for assistance when they hit their five-year lifetime assistance limit. Of the first 5,000 cases to hit the lifetime limits in Alameda County, for example, 64 percent were LEP.¹⁵ Over 70 percent of these LEP timed-out recipients were working 35 or more hours per week but remained financially eligible for welfare. Other large counties in the state had similar experiences. In each of the six largest California counties, over half of the first group to time off welfare was working full-time and was LEP.

Immigrants More Likely to Be in Two-Parent Families

Immigrants are significantly more likely than natives to be in two-parent families. This fact supplies a critical piece of the remaining TANF caseload puzzle, because PRWORA expanded eligibility for two-parent families. Eighty-two percent of all foreign-born families with children have two parents, compared with 71 percent of all native families with children (table 5). This gap widens significantly among families on TANF. Though only 21 percent of all native families on TANF are two-parent families, 43 percent of all foreign-born families on TANF are two-parent.

In California the trend is even starker; 51 percent of all immigrant TANF families are two-parent. Immigrants’ lower divorce rates and the large share of refugees in two-parent families at least partly explain this pattern. In New York, the share of two-parent foreign-born families receiving TANF is considerably lower at only 20 percent, in large part because Dominicans, who are more likely than other immigrant groups to be in single-parent families, make up a large share of New York’s welfare population.

Table 5. TANF Recipients by Family Status and Nativity, 2000

	United States		California		New York		Texas	
	Native	Foreign-born	Native	Foreign-born	Native	Foreign-born	Native	Foreign-born
TANF families								
Total (thousands)	1,328	265	206	128	114	58	76	17
Share one-parent (%)	79	57	74	49	89	80	85	71
Share two-parent (%)	21	43	26	51	11	20	15	29
All families with children								
Total (thousands)	31,005	6,410	2,747	2,070	1,727	713	2,280	689
Share one-parent (%)	29	18	33	19	32	29	32	17
Share two-parent (%)	71	82	67	81	68	71	68	83

Source: Average of 1999, 2000, and 2001 March Supplements of the Current Population Survey, reporting benefits receipt for the previous year.

Note: Families are considered foreign-born if either the head or the spouse is foreign-born.

These patterns have important implications for immigrant families on TANF. While two-parent families face stricter TANF work requirements than one-parent families,¹⁶ states bear an even greater burden to ensure that two-parent families are meeting their work requirements. States are now required to have at least 90 percent of two-parent families engaged in work activities—compared with 50 percent of all families—putting pressure on states to push two-parent families into work.¹⁷ States that do not meet this benchmark lose TANF funding. As a result of these pressures, 17 states, including California, have moved all of their two-parent families into state-funded parallel welfare programs—where post-1996 immigrant families may already have been placed if the state chose to provide state-funded assistance during the five-year federal bar on TANF for these immigrants. While federal requirements do not apply to these state programs, the fiscal burden of paying for the benefits rests solely with the state.

A Job, A Better Job? Employment, Mobility and Supportive Services

Barriers to Employment

Looking at the characteristics of immigrants receiving TANF sheds light on why some have difficulty finding sustainable employment. Overall, research has shown that those remaining on TANF are more disadvantaged than those who have left. They have lower education levels and are more likely to face multiple obstacles to work (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999). Studies have also identified limited English proficiency as a key obstacle to work among welfare recipients (Zedlewski 1999).

Of those still on TANF, immigrants are among the most disadvantaged. They have dramatically lower education levels and more limited work histories than native-

born welfare recipients.¹⁸ TANF recipients in foreign-born families are significantly less likely to have a high school degree than those in native families (39 versus 65 percent) (table 6). Immigrants also have significantly less work history: Immigrants on TANF are less likely to be working than natives on TANF (34 versus 39 percent). And far fewer immigrants have worked in the past year: 45 percent of TANF recipients in foreign-born families were employed in the past year compared with 58 percent of recipients in native families, despite the fact that, overall, low-income immigrants are more likely to work than natives (52 versus 46 percent).

The fact that many immigrants on welfare do not speak English very well exacerbates the employment barriers immigrants face due to their lower education levels and limited work history. LA County estimated that in 1999, 41 percent of its TANF caseload was limited English proficient. In 2001, New York City estimated that close to 20 percent of its caseload was made up of limited English speakers. According to respondents in our sites, welfare recipients who do not speak English or Spanish often have an even harder time finding employment. In all three cities, and especially Los Angeles and Houston, a considerable number of employers are Spanish-speaking. Other language groups, respondents reported, must often rely on the small number of businesses within their ethnic enclaves for jobs to meet their welfare requirements.

Employment Patterns among TANF Recipients

When immigrant welfare recipients do get jobs, what kinds of jobs are they getting? National CPS data indicate that immigrant TANF recipients often get different jobs than natives. They are less likely to be in administrative, clerical, sales, and service positions and more likely to be in machine operator and farming jobs (table 7). These data are in line with what we heard from respondents in all three sites: When the economy was strong immigrants too got jobs, but not always the best jobs. Instead of finding employment in hospitals or banks, for example, immigrants found jobs in construction or housecleaning.

Further, immigrants are more likely to find jobs that, logically, require fewer English language skills. Because many of these jobs require only limited—if any—interaction with others, they provide little opportunity to learn English, gain skills, and move up the employment ladder. In addition, construction and farming jobs are often seasonal so pay evaporates during some parts of year, making it harder to get off welfare permanently.

Table 6. Employment Characteristics of Adult TANF Recipients in 2000 (percent)

	Total	Foreign-born	Native
High school degree, GED, or more	60	39	65
Employed in past year	55	45	58
Currently working	38	34	39

Sources: Average of 1999, 2000, and 2001 March Supplements of the Current Population Survey, reporting benefits receipt for the previous year.

Table 7. Occupations for TANF Recipients by Nativity, 2000 (percent)

	Foreign-born	Native
Occupations for working TANF adult		
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, or laborers	9.6	6.5
Precision production, craft/repair	10.8	7.2
Administrative support/Clerical	10.8	14.7
Sales	9.7	15.6
Farming, forestry, and fishing	12.2	2.7
Machine operators, assemblers, or inspectors	12.2	7.8
Service	22.7	30.2

Sources: Average of 1999, 2000, and 2001 March Supplements of the Current Population Survey, reporting benefits receipt for the previous year.

In New York City, respondents reported these same issues for immigrants within the work experience program (WEP)—a significant part of New York’s welfare system. In June 2000, 11 percent of New York City TANF cases were participating in WEP (New York City Public Assistance Fact Sheet, July 2000). Since 1995, over 250,000 public assistance recipients have worked in unpaid WEP positions. The WEP program sends welfare recipients who do not find jobs within 25 days of being approved for TANF to mandatory community service jobs.¹⁹ Most WEP participants work for New York City public agencies, primarily the parks and sanitation departments. According to various respondents, immigrants and limited English speakers receive less desirable public agency jobs—those that require little speaking and, often, outdoor work (e.g., outdoor janitorial jobs). English speakers stand a better chance of getting placed in the most-prized jobs—clerical and indoor office jobs.

Providing Supportive Services

As states and localities strive to move those remaining on the welfare rolls into the workforce they are paying increasing attention to the “hard to serve,” including those who need mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse services. Both LA County and, to a lesser extent, New York City have made substantial efforts to serve this needy population by identifying these recipients, exempting them from work requirements, and referring them to programs to address their specific work barriers. Texas has done less for the hard to serve. The state is piloting a project in four counties that identifies and serves victims of domestic violence. Houston, however, does not distinguish hard-to-serve populations with special barriers or exempt them from work requirements.

Although LA County identifies those needing special services, a 1999 complaint issued by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Civil Rights raises questions about whether limited English speakers on welfare have equal access to those services. According to the complaint, the county did not translate the screening forms for domestic violence into any languages other than Spanish. As a result, few non-English, non-Spanish speakers (for example, 29 of about

6,500 Armenians and none of the 3,300 Cambodians) were referred to services for victims of domestic violence. Even with adequate referrals for limited English speakers, respondents note that access problems would remain because few service providers can accommodate languages other than English and Spanish.

Access to Language Instruction, Job Training, and Employment Services

Although only some welfare recipients received employment and training before PRWORA passed, the federal welfare law severely limited states' incentives to provide these services. For immigrant and LEP welfare recipients this shift has reduced access to English instruction and language-appropriate job training or educational programs. While the work-first thrust of welfare reform was meant to encourage welfare recipients to work and not study or train, immigrants on TANF may be more in need of training and education, given their lower education levels and more limited work histories.

The Work-First Norm and Getting a Job without English

There are several reasons limited English speakers have had difficulty obtaining language training under welfare reform. First, although the federal rules provide some flexibility, they have generally made it more difficult to provide education and training, including English instruction, to welfare recipients. Second, program administrators did not often use the remaining flexibility because they had strongly internalized the work-first norm of welfare reform, believing that welfare recipients should work as soon and as much as possible.

Third, welfare agency workers and administrators in all three cities, to varying degrees, did not believe that recipients needed to speak English to find work. While this was certainly true for many Spanish speakers in Los Angeles and perhaps Houston and New York as well, it is not likely to be true in other places or for most other language groups. Even if non-English speakers found jobs in the strong economy of the late 1990s, it seems likely that these LEPs will have few job prospects in the struggling economy of the past few years. Finally, many welfare administrators believed limited English speakers should not be able to take English classes on so-called fairness grounds since other working families were denied similar educational opportunities under welfare reform.

Defining Acceptable Work Activities

Under welfare reform, recipients must engage in state-approved work activities or face reductions in their welfare grants. Because states lose funds if they do not have adequate numbers of recipients working in federally defined work activities, they have an incentive to require welfare recipients to work in activities falling under these federal categories.

The federal law lists 12 allowable work activities. Though the list includes vocational education, job skills training, and education directly related to employment, it does not explicitly list English language training or ESL. Though ESL or vocational ESL (VESL) may be allowed under the category allowing education related to employment or vocational education, access to these programs is limited in many states. In most cases, LEPs must first meet their 20 hour per week work requirement before participating in ESL. Yet few states have created programs to support part-time work combined with language classes. As a result, respondents reported, welfare recipients wishing to improve their language skills frequently cannot successfully coordinate class times, work schedules, transportation, and child care.

Instead, most welfare recipients fulfill their work requirements through subsidized or unsubsidized employment, work experience programs, or job search activities. In FY 2000, 89 percent of adults on TANF were engaged in these activities for at least one hour per month, while only 14 percent of adults participated in education or training activities—including on-the-job training—to meet their individual work requirements (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2002).²⁰ While recipients in California and Texas engaged in education and training activities at similar rates (14 and 15 percent, respectively) far fewer recipients in New York attempted to meet their work requirements with educational or training activities. Only 6 percent of adults participating in work activities in New York were engaged in any form of educational or training activities. These data, however, do not tell us anything about the types of activities actually used to satisfy work requirements or whether recipients in employment and training met most of their work requirements with another activity. Respondents in our sites indicated that very few welfare recipients met their *full* work requirements with education and training programs.

Meeting Work Participation Requirements

The federal law contains powerful disincentives to enrolling welfare recipients in language or training programs. Federally imposed state work participation rates limit the range of acceptable individual work activities. For FY 2002, states are mandated to place 90 percent of two-parent families and 50 percent of all families in work activities. But not all the federally defined work activities are countable in these state participation rates. In fact, when states calculate *either* rate they cannot count recipients engaged in job skills or education programs directly related to employment, which would include ESL and VESL. In addition, though vocational education is countable, no more than 30 percent of states' recipients can fall into this category. And no individual recipient in vocational education—even within the 30 percent limit—can receive these services for over 12 months.

These rules create an incentive for states to place as few recipients as possible in vocational education, job training, and employment-related education programs. States face the greatest disincentive to placing two-parent families in employment and training because the state participation rates for two-parent families are so much higher *and* because the participation of two-parent families count toward states' two-parent and their total families' participation rates. These incentives have signifi-



cant implications for immigrants on TANF since they are more likely than natives to be in two-parent families.

States' reluctance to allow TANF recipients to meet their work requirements by enrolling in education and training programs may be misplaced. When PRWORA passed, the minimum state work participation rates seemed daunting, especially for two-parent families. But federal rules reduce state work requirements if states achieve average monthly caseload reductions from the baseline year, 1995. In FY 1999, nearly half of the states (23)—including Texas—realized such large caseload reductions that their mandated participation rate for all welfare families dropped to zero. In fact, in 1999 all 50 states met their overall work participation requirements, significantly reducing their risk of losing federal TANF funding if too many welfare recipients enrolled in training programs such as ESL. Most states have continued to receive caseload reduction credits through FY 2001, despite a slowdown in caseload declines.

While all states with two-parent TANF programs received caseload reduction credits in FY 2001 to ease the burden of meeting their state participation rates, a significant number of states met this burden by pulling their two-parent programs out from under TANF. In either case, states still enjoy the flexibility to refer significant numbers of TANF recipients—or two-parent families in separate state programs—to ESL and training programs before they fall below the mandated state participation rates. States continue to miss the opportunity provided by caseload reductions to provide more training and education programs for those remaining on the rolls.

In April 1999, the federal government attempted to loosen states' rigid interpretation of allowable work activities. The final TANF regulations issued in 1999 encouraged states to broaden their work-first rules under TANF, specifically noting that ESL can fit within one or more of the 12 allowable work activities (64 Fed. Reg. 17720, 17834). Yet few states, including California, New York, and Texas, have made language training readily available to their LEP welfare recipients.²¹

In general, most welfare recipients have been able to take ESL or VESL classes only *after* they have met their 30 or 35 hours of required work per week, instead of counting these classes toward their hours of required work activities. As a result, respondents reported shortening classes since recipients are available only in the evenings or on weekends.

The ESL and VESL providers interviewed in each city felt that reduced class times have limited the ability of LEPs to learn English. Moreover, some ESL providers in Los Angeles and New York City reported that they had been pushed to shift to a work-focused VESL curriculum that “watered down” what they were able to teach, further impeding the language acquisition process. Even these abbreviated language programs, they reported, have gone underused in the work-first era because many welfare parents do not have child care for night and weekend hours or simply cannot make time on top of the 30 hours of required work activities to take language classes. As a result, most ESL providers and welfare staff in each study city said that the demand for ESL programs among TANF recipients has dropped since welfare reform. For example, in Houston the number of TANF recipients served by Houston Community College ESL programs was cut in half—declining from approximately 300 clients in 1995 to only 136 in 1998.

One promising strategy for promoting language acquisition among LEPs on welfare is to allow them to combine part-time work with language instruction or training. Previous research has shown that combining work with education and training can boost employment rates, earnings, and job retention (Hamilton et al. 2001; Martinson and Strawn 2002).²² Our three sites either rarely took this approach in their welfare programs or were slow to take it because the strong economy meant that full-time work was readily available and the strong work-first norm made providing language instruction a low priority.

In New York City, welfare recipients can combine part-time work with ESL or language-appropriate training under the city's BEGIN (Begin Employment Gain Independence Now) program. The program typically includes three days in a work-based activity, such as work experience, and two days in a classroom activity, such as ESL or adult basic education. Caseworker referrals to the BEGIN program began to increase in 2001 (to about 11,700) following declines in earlier years (Nightingale et al. 2002). But demand still outstrips supply, especially for ESL programs. According to program advocates and the City Board of Education, the BEGIN program had long waiting lists and demand for ESL classes far exceeded available slots. In addition, immigrants entering after 1996 who are part of the state- and city-funded Safety Net Assistance program cannot enroll in BEGIN. Ironically, these recent immigrants likely need the BEGIN language services more than those in the country longer who are eligible for the program.

In Los Angeles, the number of welfare recipients allowed to satisfy their work requirements through a combination of work and education or training has also increased in recent years. Advocates and administrators alike in LA County agreed that they had successfully moved many welfare recipients into jobs under the TANF program. But they worried that many of those jobs were low-paying and offered little opportunity for mobility, making the county less successful at moving welfare recipients into self-sustaining employment. Recognizing this problem, LA County's 1999 TANF plan explicitly encouraged caseworkers to place "many participants" in part-time work and education programs.

In Houston, combining part-time work with training or education funded by TANF is virtually impossible under the state's current benefit structure. The state's low benefit levels make it difficult to work and still receive a TANF grant. In Texas, working even 20 hours per week at minimum wage can push a recipient's income high enough to make her ineligible for welfare. New York and California, with their higher benefit levels and higher amounts of allowable earned income, can easily implement programs allowing 20 or more hours per week of work and training without recipients losing their full TANF grants.

Few Training Programs Offered in Languages other than English

Even when education and training programs are open to immigrants and limited English speakers, they are frequently provided only in English and Spanish. Some training programs, in fact, have minimum English requirements that keep limited English speakers out. For example, limited English speakers do not have access to the training programs explicitly linked to comparatively high-paying private-sector



jobs in New York City's information technology and banking sectors. These programs, which are run by community-based organizations under contract to the city, are highly desirable because of their links to employers. In effect, these programs train people for entry-level positions.

Assessing English Language Proficiency

Another barrier to serving limited English speakers is the fact that in each of the three sites, welfare recipients' English proficiency was rarely systematically assessed. In Los Angeles, recipients are tested for English proficiency as part of a vocational assessment only after they fail to find a job through the county's three-week Job Club (intensive job search) program. Only after this vocational assessment can recipients be referred to ESL. Though the county does not routinely assess English language proficiency it does test recipients for literacy in their native language—but only for English and Spanish speakers. Those with low literacy scores are sent to a combination of part-time Job Club and adult basic education classes. The lack of a systematic assessment of English language ability and a parallel Job Club and ESL program were two key issues raised in an Office of Civil Rights complaint lodged by advocates.

The largest employment services contractor in New York City, the for-profit firm Maximus, acknowledged the benefits of mandatory language assessments. The contractor cited the city's failure to provide these assessments and subsequent service referrals as the main barrier they faced in meeting the required work placement figures under their mammoth city contract (Lipton 2000). Specifically, Maximus noted that they simply could not place the large number of limited English speakers into jobs without additional language training.

Houston also lacks a formal language assessment process for welfare recipients. Instead, caseworkers determine a recipient's initial time limit for assistance (12, 24, or 36 months) based on their work readiness, which accounts for past work history and education, but not English proficiency. Although language does not factor into these assessments, administrators reported that most immigrants are assigned longer time limits because they have lower education levels. Immigrants with higher education levels, including many refugees, receive shorter time limits regardless of their English skills. The failure of our study sites to conduct systematic English language assessments reinforces the notion that limited English speakers have not been considered a special or hard-to-serve TANF population that requires additional consideration in program design.

Conclusions and Implications for Reform

Seven years after federal welfare reform, former President Clinton and Congress have no doubt made good on the promise to "end welfare as we know it." State and local policies implemented in the wake of reform have shifted the traditional focus away from providing cash assistance while allowing education and training

opportunities and toward emphasizing work. Early results indicate that states have increased the percentage of welfare recipients working and decreased the number of families receiving welfare benefits. But what have these new welfare-to-work reforms meant for immigrants?

Despite restrictions on immigrant eligibility for welfare, the foreign-born make up a significant share of those left on the TANF caseloads. Large shares of those remaining on welfare have very little education, few skills, and little work experience. Immigrant welfare recipients have even lower average education levels and less work history than natives.

A focus on work instead of training and the limited availability of training programs for those who do not speak English have made it even more difficult for limited English speakers to receive language or skills training. Federal and state efforts to reform welfare programs are making it harder for recipients to receive training or education.

The strong economy of the late 1990s contributed to falling caseloads, with large numbers of English and non-English speaking welfare recipients finding jobs. But the recession of the past two years has led to rising caseloads in some states, raising questions about whether employers will continue to hire welfare recipients with limited English skills.

As Congress reconsiders TANF's reauthorization, scholars and analysts are focusing on those left on the welfare rolls. During this reassessment, the TANF program has the opportunity to follow the lead of the federal Welfare-to-Work program administered by the Department of Labor. This program was created to help move welfare recipients with the most significant employment barriers into well-paying jobs. In January 1999, the program targeted its resources on five high-priority populations, including those with disabilities, those needing substance abuse treatment, and those with limited English proficiency. This targeting recognizes that LEPs are among the hardest to serve—particularly if the ultimate goal is self-sufficiency, not just employment in low-wage jobs.

New York City's and, especially, LA County's efforts to allow concurrent work and ESL programs provide a model for other places. By combining work with language training that counts toward work requirements, these initiatives further the goal of moving immigrant recipients into work while improving their chances for longer-term success. They are also in line with research on the population as a whole that finds "mixed-strategy" programs are among the most successful employment programs. Congress should give strong consideration to the benefits of blending work with skill and language training, allowing the many immigrants and limited English speakers still on welfare an opportunity to move off welfare and become self-sufficient.

Notes

1. See, for example, George J. Borjas, *Welfare Reform and Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2000); Randy Capps et al., "How Are Immigrants Faring after Welfare Reform? Preliminary Evidence from Los Angeles and New York City" (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002); Audrey Singer and Greta Gilbertson, *Naturalization in the Wake of Anti-Immigrant Legislation: Dominicans in New York City* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000); and Wendy Zimmermann and Karen C. Tumlin, *Patchwork Policies: State Assistance for Immigrants under Welfare Reform* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1999). A few national and local studies provide some important exceptions. See especially Shawn Fremstad, "Immigrants, Persons with Limited Proficiency in English and the TANF Program: What Do We Know?" (Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2003). TANF is the federal welfare program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1996.
2. In New York City we had limited access to city welfare workers. In LA County and Houston we interviewed welfare program administrators for the cash and work components of TANF programs, but similar interviews in New York were not granted. As a result, information for New York relies heavily on reports from service providers, advocates, and legal aid lawyers. This information was supplemented with an extensive review of available city documents and other reports on welfare in New York.
3. This estimate gives the savings from the welfare law as passed. Subsequent federal laws restored some, but not most, of these immigrant eligibility cuts.
4. The 1996 law barred most immigrants from food stamps and SSI. Since then, eligibility for certain immigrant groups in these programs has been restored. Under the most recent restorations legal immigrants residing in the U.S. for five years or more and, effective October 1, 2003, legal immigrant children are eligible for food stamps.
5. A current federal court case challenges the constitutionality of the federal government's authorization of states' discrimination against noncitizens. See *Soskin v. Reinerson*, pending before the 10th Circuit as of July 18, 2003. Though this case challenges states' ability to bar noncitizens from Medicaid, it would also affect states' ability to bar noncitizens from TANF.
6. Most immigrants entering after 1996 are also barred for at least five years from receiving Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and food stamps.
7. Under New York's program post-enactment immigrants with children receive more limited benefits and have more restricted access to training and educational services than immigrants arriving before August 1996. Unlike TANF, the SNA program has no formal assessment procedures to determine whether participants are job-ready or if they need additional training or other services before they enter the workforce. In addition, SNA was designed as an in-kind program to provide vouchers to recipients for food, housing, and other basic necessities. To date, only rent vouchers, which account for most of the monthly grant, are being issued, with the remaining funds given to SNA recipients in cash.
8. Three requirements applied to two-parent families and created contradictory work incentives. First, if either parent worked more than 100 hours per month, the family could not receive welfare even if the family was still financially eligible for assistance. An incongruous second rule required the family to show that one parent had significant and recent labor force attachment, which was hard to do without running afoul of the 100-hour rule. The parent had to show that he or she had worked at least six quarters within a 13-quarter cycle ending no more than one year ago. Finally, two-parent families that managed to meet both of these requirements had to wait 30 days before becoming eligible for assistance.
9. PRWORA required Congress to reauthorize TANF by October 2002. Congress extended the law, without reauthorizing it, until March 31, 2003.
10. The House of Representatives passed H.R. 4, The Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2003. This bill was very similar to the legislation that passed the House in 2002 (H.R. 4737 was approved by the House on May 16, 2002) and to the administration's 2002 proposal. As of this writing, the Senate had not yet approved legislation reauthorizing TANF.
11. For more detail, see Alan Weil, "Rethinking Work Requirements" (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002).

12. Currently, children and pregnant women entering after August 22, 1996, are barred from these benefits for five years. The House of Representatives' companion legislation does not include the restorations, known as the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA).
13. Data are from Urban Institute tabulations of the Current Population Survey, using a three-year average of March 1998 to March 2000 where 1999 is the center year. Data were adjusted by Jeffrey Passel of the Urban Institute to correct for misreporting of citizenship.
14. New York's definition of limited English speaking is narrower than Los Angeles County's definition. New York considers only those who speak essentially no English to be limited English speakers.
15. These data come from The California Budget Project web site. See <http://cbp.org>.
16. The work requirements for two-parent families depend on whether the family receives federally funded child care. If the family does not, the two parents must work 30 hours of their required 35 hours per week in "core work activities," which include nine of the 12 federal work activities. (The three excluded activities are job skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment, and secondary school or GED attendance. Of course, these three activities are where welfare recipients are most likely to receive educational or training services, including ESL.) The remaining five hours can be met in any of the 12 federally defined work activities. Two-parent families receiving child care, however, must spend 50 of their 55 hours in core activities. One-parent families must work only 30 hours per week and can count any of the 12 federally defined work activities toward their requirements.
17. PRWORA technically only sets out a separate statewide work requirement for two-parent families (at 90 percent). One-parent families do not face a separate required statewide rate, but are instead averaged together with two-parent families and must meet an overall state participation rate of 50 percent.
18. We use three-year averages of Census Current Population Survey data for this analysis.
19. In the state-funded Safety Net Assistance program recipients have 45 days to find jobs before they are sent to these WEP jobs.
20. These numbers exceed 100 percent. Some recipients engaged in more than one type of work activity to meet their individual work requirements.
21. A recent study by the Economic Roundtable found that in Los Angeles welfare parents with limited English were half as likely as parents fluent in English to receive education or training (Burns et al. 2003).
22. See also Demetra Smith Nightingale et al., "Work and Welfare Reform in New York City During the Giuliani Administration: A Study of Program Implementation" (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002).



References

- 64 Fed. Reg. 17720, 17834.
- Borjas, George J. 2000. *Welfare Reform and Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- Burns, Patrick, Mark Drayse, Daniel Flaming, and Brent Haydamark. 2003. "Prisoners of Hope: Welfare to Work in Los Angeles." Los Angeles: The Economic Roundtable.
- Capps, Randy, Leighton Ku, Michael E. Fix, Chris Furguele, Jeffrey S. Passel, Rajeev Ramchand, Scott McNiven, and Dan Perez-Lopez. 2002. "How Are Immigrants Faring after Welfare Reform? Preliminary Evidence from Los Angeles and New York City." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Congressional Budget Office. 1996. *Federal Budgetary Implications of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office.
- Du, Jean, Debra Fogerty, Devin Hopps, and James Hu. 2000. "A Study of Washington State TANF Leavers and TANF Recipients: Findings from the April-June 1999 Telephone Survey. Final Report." Olympia: Washington Department of Social and Health Services.
- Fix, Michael, and Jeffrey S. Passel. 1999. "Trends in Noncitizens' and Citizens' Use of Public Benefits Following Welfare Reform: 1994-97." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. Updated with data from Urban Institute tabulations of the 1998-2000 CPS.
- . 2002a. "Assessing Welfare Reform's Immigrant Provisions." In *Welfare Reform: The Next Act*, edited by Alan Weil and Kenneth Finegold (179-202). Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.
- . 2002b. *The Scope and Impact of Welfare Reform's Immigrant Provisions*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Discussion Paper 02-03.
- Fix, Michael, and Wendy Zimmermann. 1999. "All Under One Roof: Mixed-Status Families in an Era of Reform." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Fremstad, Shawn. 2003. "Immigrants, Persons with Limited Proficiency in English and the TANF Program: What Do We Know?" Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Hamilton, Gayle, Stephen Freedman, Lisa Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, and Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Surjeet Ahluwalia, and Jennifer Brooks, with Electra Small and Bryan Ricchetti. 2001. "How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs." Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and Child Trends.
- Holcomb, Pamela, LaDonna Paverti, Caroline Ratcliffé and Susan Riedinger. 1998. "Building an Employment-Focused Welfare System: Work-First and Other Work-oriented Strategies in Five States." Report for the Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Lipton, Eric. 2000. "City Revises Plan to Create Jobs for Poor: Welfare-to-Work Idea Has Run into Problems." *New York Times*, November 21.
- Loprest, Pamela J. 2002. "The Next Welfare Reform: Counter Boomerang Effect (Commentary)." *Christian Science Monitor*, September 20.
- Loprest, Pamela J., and Sheila R. Zedlewski. 1999. *Current and Former Welfare Recipients: How Do They Differ?* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Discussion Paper 99-17.
- Martinson, Karin, and Julie Strawn. 2002. "Built to Last: Why Skills Matter for Long-Run Success in Welfare Reform." Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- Moreno, Manuel, Michael Lichter, Elizabeth González, Beverly Burr, and Joshi Vandana. 2000. *A Window on Welfare Reform: Recent Impacts on Families and Communities in Los Angeles County*. Los Angeles: County of Los Angeles, Chief Administrative Office, Urban Research Division.

- National Immigration Law Center. 2002. *Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs, Fourth Edition*. Los Angeles: National Immigration Law Center.
- Nightingale, Demetra Smith, Nancy Pindus, Fredrica D. Kramer, John Trutko, Kelly Mikelson, and Michael Egner. 2002. "Work and Welfare Reform in New York City During the Giuliani Administration: A Study of Program Implementation." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Pub. L. 104-193 (1996).
- Rowe, Gretchen. 2000. *Welfare Rules Databook: State TANF Policies as of July 1999*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Singer, Audrey, and Greta Gilbertson. 2000. "Naturalization in the Wake of Anti-Immigrant Legislation: Dominicans in New York City." Working Paper #10. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 1999. *Third Annual TANF Report to Congress*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Weil, Alan. 2002. "Rethinking Work Requirements." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Short Takes on Welfare Policy No. 8.
- Zedlewski, Sheila. 1999. *Work-Related Activities and Limitations of Current Welfare Recipients*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Discussion Paper 99-06.
- Zimmermann, Wendy, and Michael Fix. 1998. "Declining Immigrant Applications for Medi-Cal and Welfare Benefits in Los Angeles County." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Zimmermann, Wendy, and Karen C. Tumlin. 1999. *Patchwork Policies: State Assistance for Immigrants under Welfare Reform*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. *Assessing the New Federalism* Occasional Paper No. 24.



About the Authors

Karen C. Tumlin is a consultant with the Urban Institute's Population Studies Center. Her work focuses on immigrant policy and child welfare. She is also completing her law degree at the University of California, Berkeley.

Wendy Zimmermann is a senior research associate in the Urban Institute's Population Studies Center. Her research concentrates on immigration and immigrant policy.



THE URBAN
INSTITUTE

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 8098
Mt. Airy, MD

The Urban Institute

2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: 202.833.7200
Fax: 202.429.0687
E-mail: paffairs@ui.urban.org
<http://www.urban.org>

Occasional Paper



*U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*



NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

- This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
- This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").