

A SNAPSHOT OF CHILDREN ON THE CALIFORNIA BORDER



- **Almost half of California's children (44%) identify as Latino/Hispanic.**

Latino children make up at least 20 percent of the child population in two-thirds of California's counties (39/58), and in 90% of California's state legislative districts (108/120).¹ One-quarter of all Californians – nearly nine million people – claim Mexican ancestry.²

- **More than one-quarter of all California residents are foreign born (26%), compared to 8% of residents in non-border states.** In Texas, the percentage of the population that is foreign born is more than twice as high along the border as in the rest of the state (28% versus 12%). In California, the percentage of foreign born is actually higher in the rest of the state (27%) than it is along the border (22%).

- **California has both a land border and an ocean border.** Many of California's immigrants come from overseas. Less than half of the foreign-born population in California was born in Mexico (44%), compared to 72% in New Mexico, 66% in Arizona, and 65% in Texas.

- **California is a border state.** Many children in California communities – particularly those in Southern California, the Central Valley and Coast, and the Bay Area – have close family and economic ties to Mexico.

Just two of California's 58 counties border Mexico, and these counties – Imperial County and San Diego County – are vastly different from one another. Although Los Angeles County is not on the geographical border, it has a large child population and numerous Latino communities, so we include it in tables on the next pages.

- **Imperial County** is much more homogenous than San Diego County, and looks more like other counties along the U.S.-Mexico border. Of all the counties in California, it has the highest percentage of Latino children (82%); the highest percentage of children who speak Spanish at home (71%); and the sixth highest poverty rate (29%).

- **San Diego County** has a large, ethnically and economically diverse metropolitan area. Many of the issues that commonly affect border communities are not as readily evident because they are masked by San Diego's large, urban population. But significant disparities between Latino and non-Latino children exist in the county. For instance, one-third (33%) of Latino children in San Diego County lacked continuous health insurance in 2001, compared to only 7% of white children. Statewide, one-quarter (24%) of Latino children lacked health insurance.

- **Los Angeles County** has more than three million people of Mexican ancestry and a predominantly Latino child population (58%). The county is home to more than one-third of all of California's Latino children (38%), and more than one-third of all Californians of Mexican ancestry (36%).

The California Border Region: Indicators of Child Well-Being

Latino Children (ages 0-17)

County	Percentage	Number
California	44%	4,050,825
Imperial	82%	36,647
Los Angeles	58%	1,534,979
San Diego	38%	275,446

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Children (ages 5-17) Speaking Spanish at Home

County	Percentage	Number
California	32%	2,188,434
Imperial	71%	24,127
Los Angeles	47%	914,412
San Diego	29%	152,120

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Children (ages 0-17) Born in Mexico

County	Percentage
California	5%
Imperial	13%
Los Angeles	6%
San Diego	6%

Source: Children Now analysis of data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2001 California Health Interview Survey.

Children (ages 0-17) in Poverty

County	All	Latino	White (Non-Latino)
California	19%	27%	9%
Imperial	29%	32%	14%
Los Angeles	25%	30%	9%
San Diego	17%	27%	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

English Learners (grades K-12)

County	Percentage	Number
California	25%	1,559,248
Imperial	49%	16,550
Los Angeles	33%	570,635
San Diego	23%	114,498

Source: Children Now analysis of data from the California Department of Education, 2001-2002.

Note: English Learners are students whose primary language is not English and who have limited English proficiency.

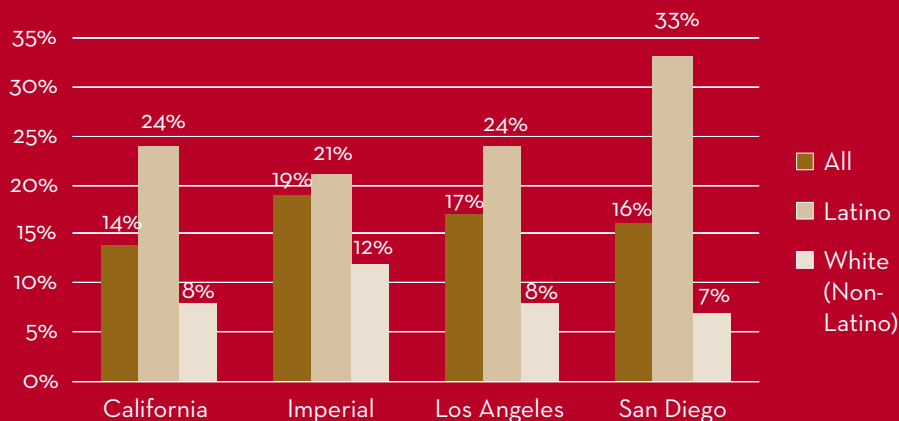
High School Graduates Meeting College Entrance Requirements (UC or CSU)

County	All	Latino	White (Non-Latino)
California	35%	22%	41%
Imperial	20%	17%	25%
Los Angeles	38%	27%	44%
San Diego	38%	22%	46%

Source: Children Now analysis of data from California Department of Education, 1998-2001.³

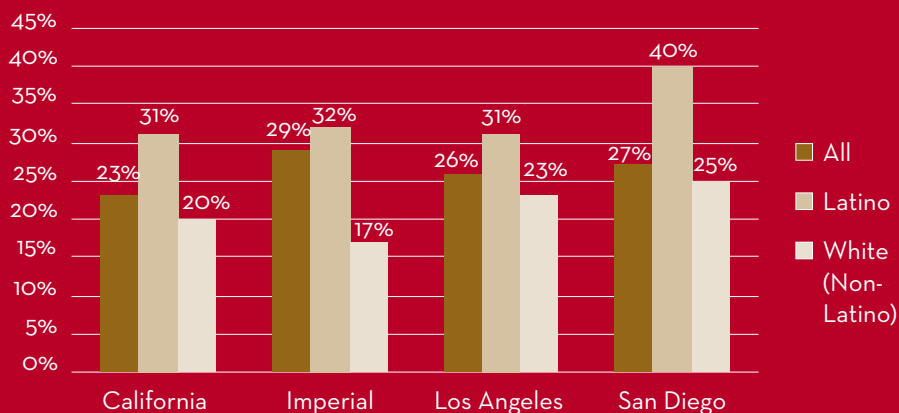
Note: These data measure the percentage of high school graduates who have fulfilled basic requirements for entry to a University of California or California State University school; they are not admission or enrollment rates.

Children (0-17) Lacking Health Insurance



Source: Children Now analysis of data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2001 California Health Interview Survey.

Children (0-17) Lacking Dental Insurance



Source: Children Now analysis of data from the UCLA Center for Healthy Policy Research, 2001 California Health Interview Survey.

The California Border Region: Recommendations

Family Economic Success

- Support hardworking parents in border communities by investing in child care programs that are subsidized for low-income families. Ensure that services are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of working families, including providing care that is available to parents with nontraditional working hours
- Recognizing the strong correlation between parents' English language ability and socioeconomic resources, increase resources for and access to adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents in border communities.⁴
 - Ensure widespread access through California community colleges and other delivery systems.
 - Link ESL classes to child care, preschool and after school programs.
 - Promote English language programs that are integrated with workforce training by prioritizing English language training as a component in workforce investment programs, and by ensuring that the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization appropriates funding and develops integrated training and English acquisition programs for immigrants.
- Maintain California's commitment to programs that invest in immigrant families, including the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides food stamps for qualified working immigrant families, and CalWORKs for Immigrants, which provides cash assistance for children and the relatives who care for them.
 - Fund outreach for these programs, focusing on recruiting individuals in immigrant communities to conduct the outreach in multiple languages, particularly Spanish, and in a variety of settings.

Children's Health

- Increase children's access to health care by increasing enrollment in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families. Most uninsured children in California are already eligible for these programs. Simplify and streamline eligibility and enrollment systems so that families can insure their children more easily.
- Expand locally organized health coverage for children not eligible for state health insurance because of legal status and/or income.
- Support efforts to provide uninsured children with oral health care services in nontraditional settings and by non-traditional providers.
- Promote initiatives to improve interpretation services and cultural competence among health care providers across the state in the public and private sectors.

Children's Education

- Using existing early care programs, establish programs that orient parents of young children to the California public school system.
- Increase the pool of qualified bilingual teachers for early care and K-12 education.
- Improve programs for school-age children who are learning English by offering smaller classes and parent education programs.
- Increase funding for culturally competent after school programs in border cities.
- Improve access to summer and part-time school year employment for youth living in border communities.



“Many times people think that if you're poor, you can't have a house with dignity for you and your children . But you should have a chance like others....people think that you measure accomplishment from the heart to the floor, but I think you measure it from your heart to the sky. What you have in your heart is what you will be. The reality has to be in your heart.” -Esther

Children Now is a research and action organization dedicated to assuring that children grow up in economically secure families, where parents can go to work confident that their children are supported by quality health coverage, a positive media environment, a good early education, and safe, enriching activities to do after school. Recognized for its expertise in media as a tool for change, Children Now designs its strategies to improve children's lives while at the same time helping America build a sustained commitment to putting children first. Children Now is an independent, nonpartisan organization.

Endnotes

- 1 Population Reference Bureau analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, KIDS COUNT Census Data Online, Counties and State Legislative Districts: California, www.aecf.org/kidscount/, generated July 20, 2004.
- 2 Children Now analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Summary File 4, Table PCT 1, <http://factfinder.census.gov>, generated June 28, 2004.
- 3 See Children Now, *California County Data Book 2003* (Oakland, CA: Children Now, 2003); available at www.childrennow.org.
- 4 Children Now, *California Report Card 2004: Focus on Children in Immigrant Families* (Oakland, CA: Children Now, 2004), p. 6-7. Available at www.childrennow.org.

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