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CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

Reaching All Children?

*Understanding Early Care and Education
Participation Among Immigrant Families*

By Hannah Matthews and Danielle Ewen



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High-quality, early education is critical to prepare children to

succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Research shows that high-quality, early education programs can particularly benefit low-income children and those most at risk of school failure by supporting their healthy development across a range of measures.¹ Because young children learn from their surroundings at all times, early education occurs in multiple settings and has many names—including child care, Head Start, preschool, and pre-kindergarten. Research demonstrates that it is the quality of a program that is most important to a young child’s development. Indicators of quality that encourage conditions in which children are better able to learn and grow include low teacher-child ratios, small group sizes, qualified teaching staff, positive teacher-child interactions, parental involvement, and access to comprehensive services such as health care and mental health services.

Children born to immigrant parents often face multiple risk factors that would make their participation in quality early education programs particularly beneficial; yet, these children appear less likely to participate in such programs. For children of immigrants, early education has the potential to address issues of school readiness and language acquisition, and to ease integration for them and their families into American society and its education system. Early education programs can enable children of immigrants to enter elementary school with more advanced English skills, making them more prepared to learn and to succeed. Programs that contain a high-quality comprehensive services component can connect families to much-needed health and other social services, and provide recently arrived immigrants with an introduction to services and facilities available in their communities. Children with special needs in immigrant families can benefit, as can all children, from early intervention and programs that connect their families to additional support services. Family literacy programs and other parental involvement components can help immigrant parents learn English in order to gain employment skills and actively participate in their children’s formal education from the beginning.

High-quality early education benefits low-income children and those most at risk of school failure.

One out of every five children in the United States is the child of an immigrant.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, children in immigrant families are the fastest growing segment of the nation’s child population. During the 1990s, the population of children of immigrants grew at a rate seven times that of children of native-born families. Most of these children were born in the United States; they will attend schools across the country and grow to be adult workers contributing to the nation’s economy. One out of

every five children in the United States now lives in a family with at least one foreign-born parent.² By 2015, the share of children of immigrants is projected to rise from 20 percent to 30 percent of the nation's school population.³ As communities strive to ensure the success of all

Who are Children of Immigrants?

In this paper, the term *children of immigrants* refers to children under the age of 18 who are either foreign-born or born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent.

Young children of immigrants refers to children of immigrants below the age of six. Ninety-three percent of young children of immigrants are second-generation immigrants—children who were born in the United States to foreign-born parents. Therefore, nearly all young children of immigrants are U.S. citizens. *Mixed status* refers to families in which at least one sibling or parent is not a U.S. citizen and at least one is. The majority of young children of immigrants live in mixed-status families; 81 percent have a noncitizen parent and 26 percent are estimated to have an undocumented parent (see Figure 1).⁷

children, it is important that policymakers and early education professionals identify and respond to the needs of immigrant families so that they are included in the growing number of early education initiatives at the state and local levels and so that teachers, schools, and early childhood programs are prepared to appropriately serve children of immigrants and their families. Identifying barriers and improving access to quality early education programs can increase the participation of children of immigrants in such programs.

marital status, education, and income.⁴ Several of the characteristics that are associated with low levels of early education and care enrollment are prevalent among many immigrant families. Children of immigrants are more likely than children of U.S.-born citizens to live in households characterized by poverty, low parental educational attainment, and low maternal employment. They are also more likely to live in two-parent households; compared with other two-parent households, these households are less likely to have two working parents and are more likely to be low-income or poor. For a variety of reasons, including federal restrictions on eligibility and fear of government, immigrant families are also less likely to utilize public benefits that may lessen the hardships associated with poverty.⁵ In addition to socio-economic

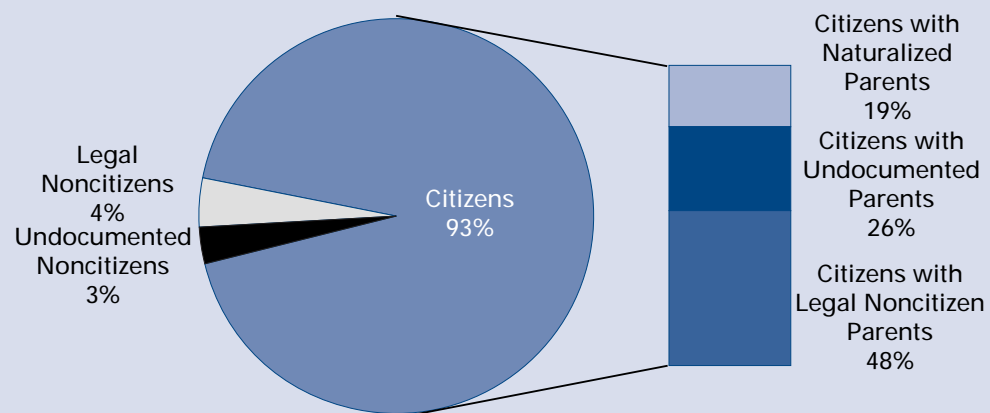
characteristics, immigrant families likely face additional barriers to accessing quality early care and education that are unique to the immigrant experience.

Many immigrant households have characteristics that are associated with low levels of participation in early education and care.

This paper summarizes evidence about the participation of young children of immigrants in early care and education programs as well as relevant demographic and socio-economic characteristics of immigrant families that likely influence children's participation in early learning pro-

grams.⁶ It then discusses policy recommendations for state and local administrators of pre-kindergarten and other early care and education programs, and proposes areas for additional research.

Figure 1: Legal Status of Children of Immigrants under Age Six and Their Parents, 2002



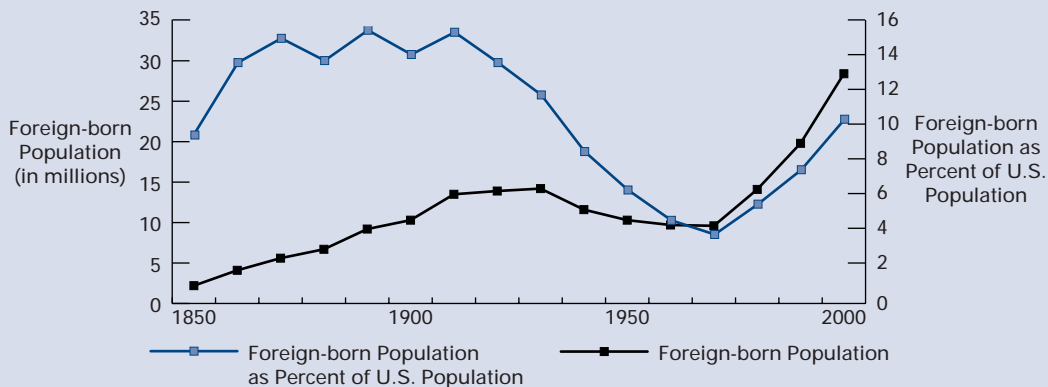
Source: Capps, Randy, et al. *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants*. 2005.

The Current Immigration Context

Migration has emerged as a global phenomenon in the past decade with most developed countries experiencing rapid rates of immigration accounting for large portions of population and employment growth. In more than 50 countries, immigrants comprise over 15 percent of the population.⁸ The United States is neither unique nor an exception to this trend. In 2004, the U.S. foreign-born population was at an all-time high; an estimated 34 million foreign-born persons were living in the United States and comprised nearly 12 percent of the total U.S. population.⁹ Yet in historical terms, the share of foreign-born in the United States is not exceptionally large—the population has risen and fallen as a share of the total U.S. population from 15 percent during the early 1900s to below 5 percent in 1970 (see Figure 2).¹⁰ During the 1990s, the country's immigrant population grew by 57 percent; half of all the foreign-born persons currently in the United States arrived in the last 15 years.¹¹ Though the rate of entry peaked at the end of the last decade and then declined significantly after 2001, over one million foreign-born persons continued to enter the country annually through 2004.¹²

Immigrants come to the United States for a variety of reasons including reunification with family members already in this country, employment and economic opportunity, and humanitarian and political relief. The foreign-born population includes naturalized citizens, lawfully present noncitizens, and undocumented noncitizens. Over a third of the foreign-born are naturalized citizens. Nearly two-thirds are noncitizens, which includes both persons who are law-

Figure 2: The Foreign-Born Population, 1850-2000

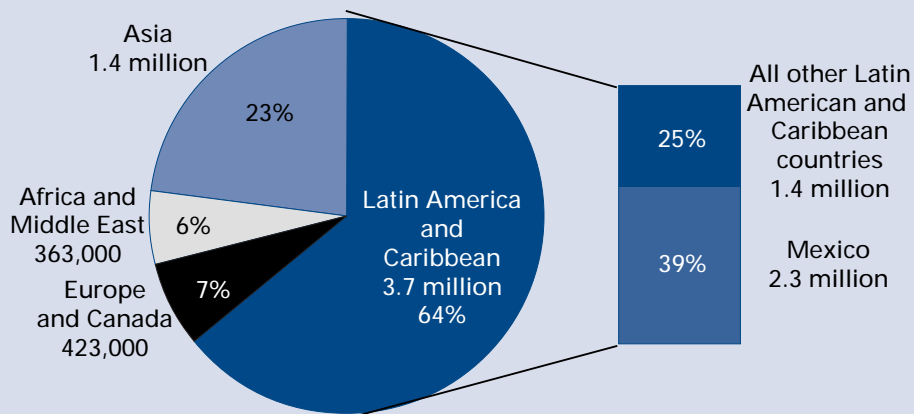


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*. 2001.

fully present in the U.S. and those who are undocumented.¹³ Estimates of the undocumented immigrant population range from seven to ten million, comprising up to 29 percent of the total foreign-born population.¹⁴

Recent immigrants to the United States are more diverse than immigrants of earlier decades. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the majority of immigrants were European; since the 1960s, Latin American and Asian immigrants have entered the country in unprecedented num-

Figure 3: Regions of Origin for Immigrant Parents of Children under Age Six, 2002

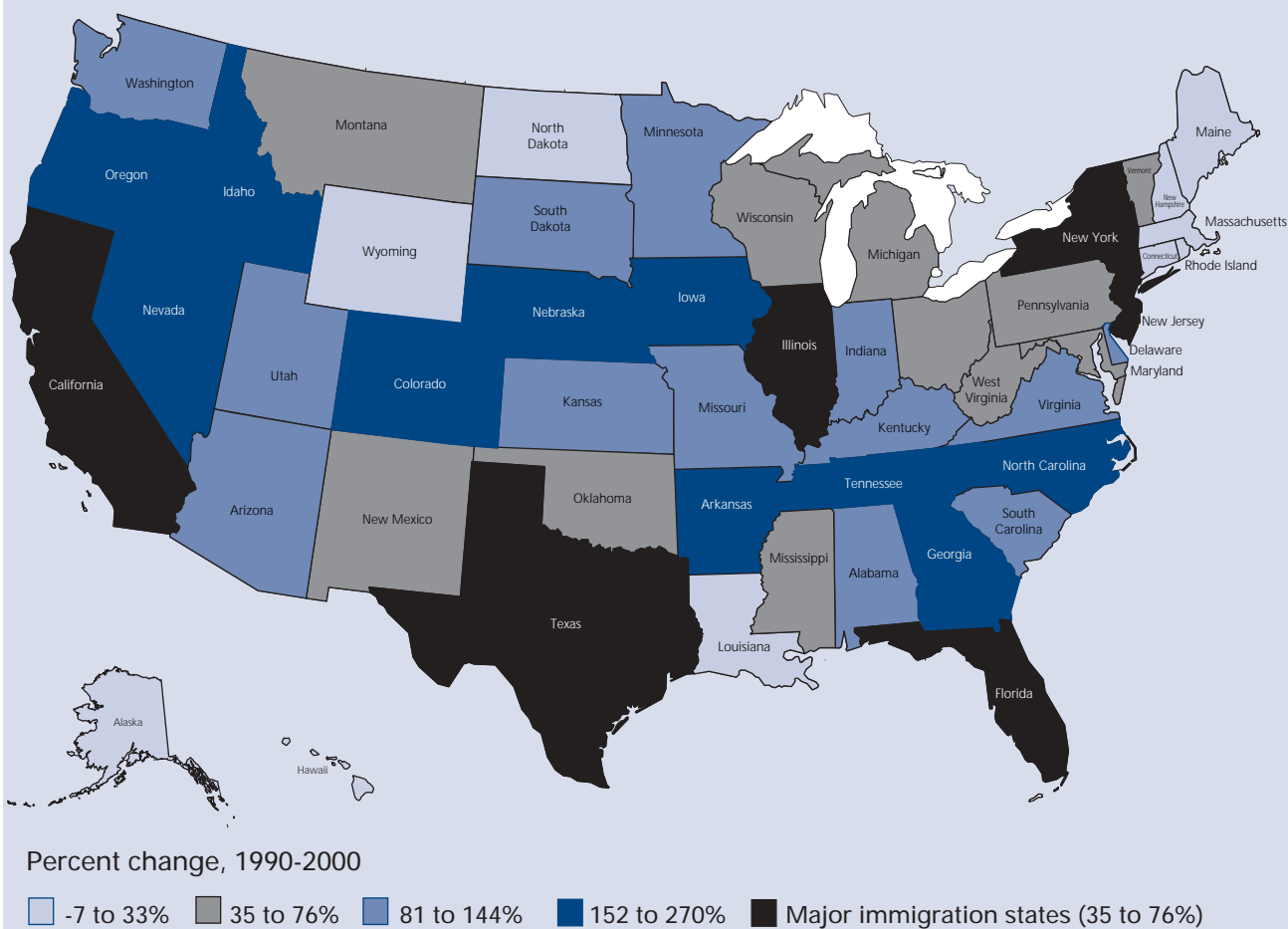


Source: Capps, Randy, et al. *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants*. 2005.

bers. Today’s immigrants speak a multitude of languages and their countries of origin span the globe (see Figure 3).

Immigrants are also more dispersed within the United States than in previous decades. Immigrant families are settling in cities, suburbs, and towns across the country, including those that have not traditionally held large immigrant populations. In 19 states, primarily in the West and Southeast, the foreign-born population increased by more than 100 percent—and in some cases more than 200 percent—during the last decade (see Appendix I).¹⁵ These new receiving communities may have little experience providing services to immigrants and may lack established support networks; families settling in these areas may face additional needs for services and greater barriers to securing them.

Figure 4. Children of Immigrants under 6 across the United States, 1990-2000



Source: Capps, Randy, et al. *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants*. 2005

Early Care and Education Participation among Children of Immigrants

The majority of children under the age of six regularly spend some portion of time in the care of someone other than a parent.¹⁶ Parents choose the most appropriate child care arrangements for their children based on a variety of factors including quality, affordability, availability, preference for a particular provider or type of setting, and the need for part-day or full-day care during work hours. This often includes piecing together multiple care arrangements—nearly 40 percent of children of working mothers have more than one regular child care arrangement each week.¹⁷ (In this paper, unless otherwise noted, we refer to children’s primary care arrangements.)

Recent data from the Urban Institute’s National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF)¹⁸ show that when young children of immigrants are in non-parental care, their child care patterns mirror those of children of U.S.-born citizens. Yet, young children of immigrants are less likely to participate in every type of non-parental care arrangement than children of U.S.-born citizens and are more likely to be in the care of a parent.¹⁹ Even when both parents work at least part-time, young children of immigrants remain more likely to be in parental care or to be without a regular child care arrangement. Earlier analysis, from the first national study using Census data to compare child care use among young children of immigrants and young children of U.S.-born citizens, found that children of immigrants were more likely to use relative care and less likely to use center-based care compared to children of U.S.-born citizens. However, center-based care was the most common non-parental primary care arrangement for all families.²⁰

Children of immigrants are less likely to participate in every type of non-parental care arrangement than children of U.S.-born citizens.

What NSAF or Census data do *not* provide is any information related to the quality or educational content of the child care settings that families use. As previously stated, early education programs include a range of public and private child care, preschool and pre-kindergarten programs. The data also do not provide information on the child care *preferences* of families, only their child care *arrangements*. Because families select child care based on multiple factors, it is impossible to infer whether and how children’s care arrangements might differ if parents were not constrained by factors such as affordability, proximity to work, or need for full-day care during particular hours.

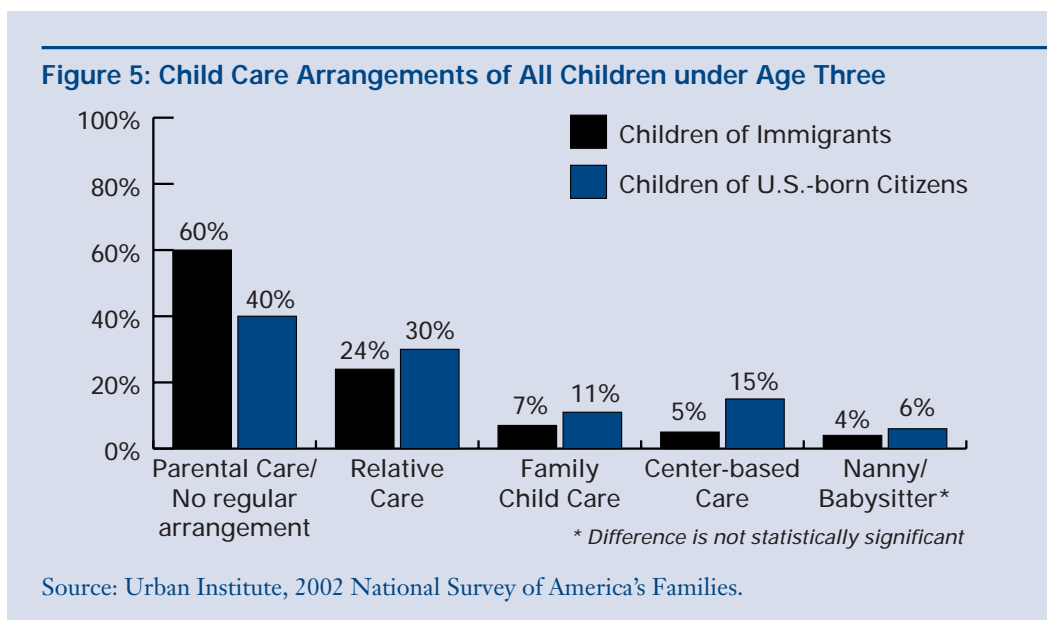
Participation by Age

Infants and Toddlers. Among all children under age three (without regard to parental work status):

* **The majority of children of immigrants under age three are in parental care or do**

not have a regular care arrangement (60 percent compared to 40 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens).

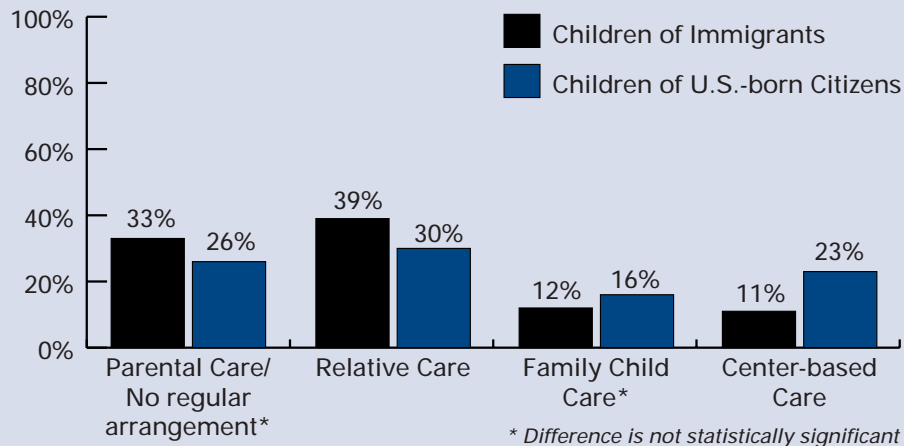
- * **Relative care is the most common child care arrangement for all children under age three**, but it is less common for children of immigrants than for children of U.S.-born citizens (24 percent compared to 30 percent).
- * **Center-based care is infrequent for children of immigrants under age three**—only 5 percent are in center-based care, compared with 35 percent in other care arrangements (see Figure 5).²¹



Parents who work outside the home are more likely to use a regular non-parental child care arrangement. However, the differences in child care use between immigrant and U.S.-born families persist among working-parent families.²² Among children under age three with **working parents**:

- * **The majority of children under age three with working immigrant parents are in some type of child care** (67 percent, compared to 74 percent of children of working U.S.-born citizen parents).
- * **Relative care is the most common child care arrangement for all children under age three with working parents**; it is *more* common for children of working immigrants than for children of working U.S.-born citizens (39 percent compared to 30 percent).
- * **Children under age three whose parents are working immigrants are half as likely to be in center-based care than children of working U.S.-born citizens** (11 percent, compared to 23 percent, see Figure 6).²³

Figure 6: Most Common Child Care Arrangements of Children under Age Three with Working Parents

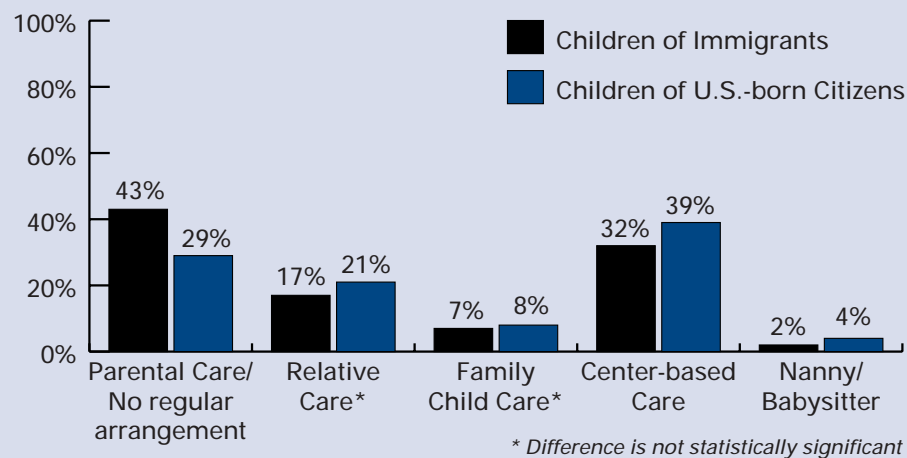


Source: Urban Institute, 2002 National Survey of America's Families

Three- to Five-Year-Olds. Among all children ages three to five (without regard to parental work status):²⁴

- * **Children of immigrants ages three to five are more likely to be in parental care or to be without a regular care arrangement** (43 percent compared to 29 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens).
- * **Center-based care is the most common arrangement among all children ages three to five in non-parental care**, but it is less common for children of immigrants than for children of U.S.-born citizens (32 percent compared to 39 percent). (See Figure 7).²⁵

Figure 7: Child Care Arrangements of All Children Ages Three to Five

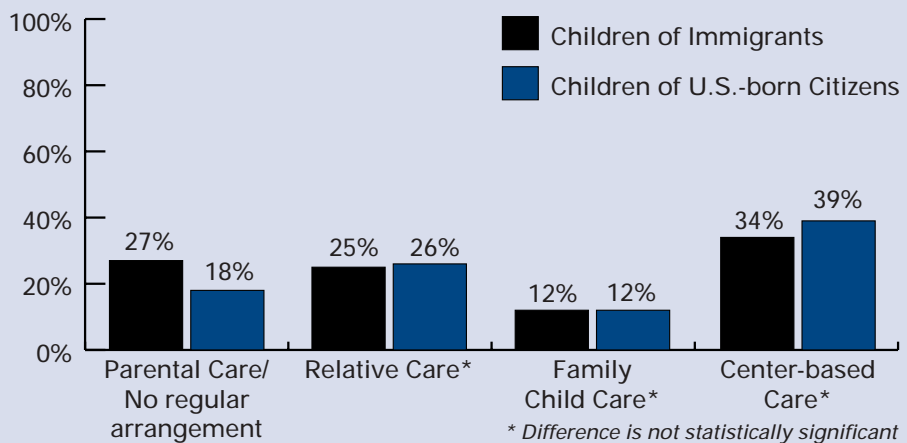


Source: Urban Institute, 2002 National Survey of America's Families

Among children ages three to five with **working parents**:

- * **The majority of children ages three to five with working immigrant parents are in some type of child care** (73 percent compared to 82 percent of children of working U.S.-born citizens).
- * **Center-based care is the most common arrangement among all working families**; over one-third of all children ages three to five are in center-based care and children of working immigrants are only slightly less likely to be in centers than children of working U.S.-born citizens (the differences are not statistically significant).
- * **Approximately a quarter of all children ages three to five with working parents are in relative care**, and the differences between families are not significant (see Figure 8).²⁶

Figure 8: Most Common Child Care Arrangements of Children Ages Three to Five with Working Parents



Source: Urban Institute, 2002 National Survey of America's Families.

Preschool, Center-Based Care, and Kindergarten

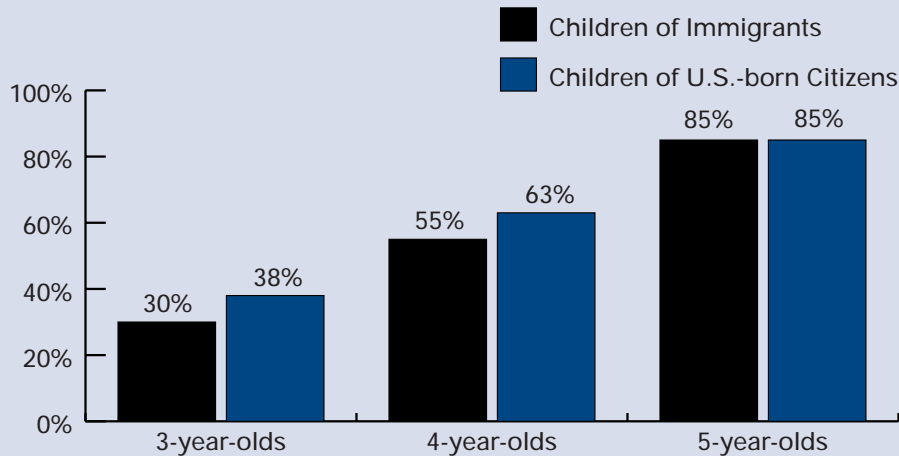
Until age five, children of immigrants are less likely than children of U.S.-born citizens to participate in preschool (or center-based care) or kindergarten. At age five, all children attend some type of early education program (including kindergarten) at equal rates.²⁷ Several studies have concluded that children of immigrants are less likely to attend preschool compared to children of U.S.-born citizens.²⁸ Census data on preschool enrollment—which may include the full range of public and private programs—suggest that children of immigrants are under-enrolled in preschool; these children comprise just 16 percent of all children attending preschool, compared to 22 percent of all children under the age of six and 21 percent of all children attending kindergarten.²⁹

Participation in preschool or kindergarten varies by age:

- * At age three, 30 percent of children of immigrants attend preschool, compared to 38 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens.
- * At age four, 55 percent of children of immigrants attend either preschool or kindergarten compared to 63 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens.
- * At ages four and five, a larger share of children of immigrants attend kindergarten, compared to U.S.-born citizens; the latter attend preschool at higher rates at both ages.
- * At age five, children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born citizens are equally likely to participate in some early education program. Eighty-five percent of both groups of children attend either a preschool program or kindergarten (see Figure 9).³⁰

Census data suggests that children of immigrants are under-enrolled in preschool.

Figure 9: Preschool/Kindergarten Enrollment by Age



Source: Hernandez, Donald, 2004.

Preschool and kindergarten enrollment vary significantly by country of origin:

- * At ages three through five, children in immigrant families with origins in Australia, Canada, China, Haiti, India, New Zealand, West and Central Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia and the Middle East, and the English-speaking Caribbean have the highest rates of enrollment in preschool or kindergarten, above the average rate for children of U.S.-born citizens.

- * At ages three through five, children in immigrant families with origins in Central America, Indochina, Mexico, and the Pacific Islands have the lowest rates of enrollment in preschool or kindergarten, below average for all children of immigrants and below the average for children in U.S.-born citizen families.
- * At ages three and four, children of immigrants with Mexican origins and children of native-born families with Mexican origins have the lowest rates of preschool enrollment of any group of immigrants. They also have below average rates of kindergarten enrollment. Children of native-born families with Mexican origins also have the lowest rates of preschool enrollment among all U.S.-born citizens at ages four and five. Mexico is the country of origin for nearly 40 percent of immigrant families with young children and no other country accounts for the origin of more than 3 percent of these families—therefore, the experiences of children of Mexican immigrants play a large role in driving national trends among all young children of immigrants, including low rates of participation in preschool.³¹

Most Common Countries of Origin for Immigrant Parents with Young Children

1. Mexico, 39%
2. India, 2.8%
3. Philippines, 2.7%
4. Vietnam, 2.4%
5. El Salvador, 2.3%
6. Haiti, 1.8%
7. Dominican Republic, 1.5%
8. Guatemala, 1.2%
9. Canada, 1.2%
10. China, 1.2%

Source: Capps, Randy, et al. *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants*. 2005

Participation in Head Start

Over a quarter of all young children of immigrants live in a household with an income below the federal poverty level.³² All children of immigrants who otherwise qualify for Head Start based on family income are eligible to participate in the program. Because citizenship and immigration status are not factors in eligibility, information on immigration status is not collected and it is difficult to determine the extent of immigrant participation in Head Start. According to data from the 1996 National Household Education Survey children of immigrants were 20 percent less likely to attend Head Start than children of natives.³³ Surveys of Head Start families in the late 1990s found that just under a fifth of all Head Start parents were foreign-born, including half of all parents who reported Spanish as the primary language spoken in their home.³⁴

Over a quarter of all young children of immigrants live in poor households.

English Language Learners in Preschool

English Language Learner (ELL) students—individuals who are learning English as their second language—make up nearly 10 percent of the national student population in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, with over 44 percent of all ELL children enrolled in pre-kindergarten through third grade.³⁵ The majority, but not all, ELL students are children of immigrants.³⁶ When data on immigrant status are not available, primary language is often used as a proxy for analysis.

The extent to which ELL children may be under-enrolled in preschool is not fully known.

- * **State Preschool Programs.** At least 38 states and the District of Columbia have one or more state-funded preschool initiatives.³⁷ State preschool may be delivered exclusively in public schools or a combination of schools and community-based settings, including privately operated child care and Head Start, among others. Most states limit enrollment by funding capacity or target eligibility to children who are particularly at-risk of school failure, including children in low-income families and children with disabilities. At least 12 states include ELLs among their targeted at-risk group or use ELL status to prioritize enrollment among eligible children.³⁸
- * **Preschool in Public Schools.** Preschool that is delivered in public schools is a subset of state preschool programs, which may include non-school settings. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that the representation of ELL children among pre-kindergarten students in public elementary schools was greater than their representation among all public school students. ELL children comprised 15 percent of public school pre-kindergarten students compared to 9 percent of all public school students.³⁹ This is most likely due to the concentration of ELLs among young children compared to older children.
- * **Head Start.** From 2002 to 2004, while the number of children enrolled in Head Start preschool increased by 4 percent, the number of children from non-English speaking homes increased by 10 percent. In 2004, 28 percent of Head Start children lived in a household where English was not the primary language. Spanish was the primary language spoken in 83 percent of those households.⁴⁰ The share of Head Start children whose primary language is not English closely approximates the share of school-age poor children who speak a language other than English, and the share of poor young children whose parents are immigrants.⁴¹

Head Start and English Language Learners

In recent years, Head Start has made a concerted effort to reach out to ELLs and their families and to support programs that are serving large numbers of ELLs, including the convening of a focus group to identify strategies to support ELLs and the creation of an ELL Toolkit with information for providers.⁴² Over 20 standards in the Head Start Program Performance Standards specifically refer to home language, learning English, or the cultural background of families and children. Programs are required to meet the needs of ELL children and their families in multiple service areas including education, family partnerships and health and developmental services.⁴³ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires programs receiving federal funding, including Head Start, to provide meaningful access to services, activities and programs for limited English proficient individuals.

Head Start programs have reported difficulty enrolling and communicating with non-English speaking families as well as difficulty recruiting well-trained bilingual staff or staff that speak all multiple languages represented among students in the program.⁴⁴ Head Start performance standards require that when a majority of children speak a language other than English, there must be at least one staff member who speaks their home language.

Factors Affecting Participation in Preschool and Center-based Care

Multiple factors likely contribute to the lower participation of immigrant families in early education programs including demographic factors, language, culture, and immigration status and citizenship. Research on demographic factors shows that children who are low-income, have a mother who does not work outside of the home, or have a mother with little formal education are the least likely to participate in preschool. There is little formal research to explain how language, culture and immigration status may affect participation. Results from Census data indicate that parent's education, income, and language ability account for most of the preschool enrollment gap between children in immigrant families from Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Indochina—and white children in native-born families.⁴⁵

Demographic Factors

The following factors are particularly likely to influence participation rates.

- * **Children of immigrants are more likely to be living in low-income households.** Over a quarter of all young children of immigrants are poor and over one-half live in households with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold (see Figure 10).⁴⁶ Overall, children in families below 200 percent of poverty are less likely to participate in early education programs than are children in higher-income families.

* **Children of immigrants are more likely to have parents with less formal education.**

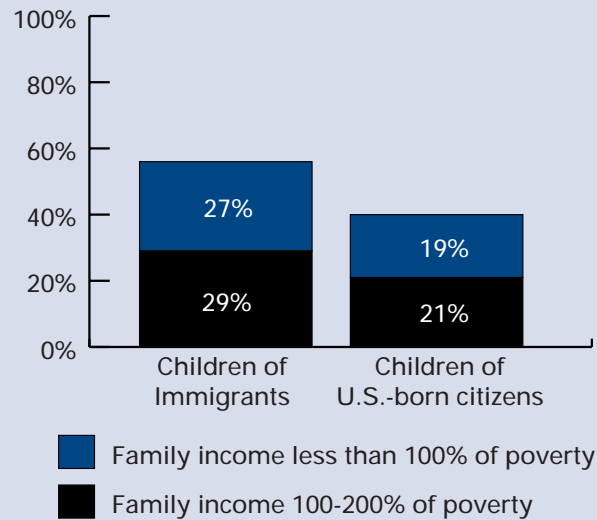
Nearly 30 percent of young children of immigrants have a parent with less than a high school degree, compared to only 8 percent of young children of U.S.-born citizens.⁴⁷ Parents with fewer years of formal education are less likely to enroll their children in early education programs.

* **Children of immigrants are more likely to live in two-parent households but less likely to have two working parents.**

Eighty-six percent of young children of immigrants live in two-parent households, compared to 75 percent of young children in U.S.-born citizen families. Both parents are less likely to work in immigrant households than U.S.-born citizen households: 43 percent of young children of immigrants live in a family with two working parents, compared to 50 percent of young children of U.S.-born citizens.⁴⁸ This likely affects whether a regular child care arrangement is necessary as a work support. Non-working mothers with preschool age children are half as likely to have a child in non-parental care as mothers of preschool age children who are working.⁴⁹

* **The nature of immigrant employment may limit child care options.** Immigrants are over-represented among the low-wage workforce. In 2002, while immigrants comprised 11 percent of the U.S. population, they comprised 14 percent of the U.S. labor force and 20 percent of the U.S. low-wage labor force.⁵⁰ Low-wage workers are more likely to be working irregular and non-traditional shifts, nights, and weekends which makes securing child care even more difficult⁵¹—in some cases, working non-traditional hours may enable a non-working parent to care for a child during night or weekend shifts.

Figure 10: Low-Income and Poverty Rates for Children under Age Six, 2002



Source: Capps, Randy, et. al., 2005.

Limited English Proficiency

Over half of all young children of immigrants have at least one parent who is limited English proficient (LEP). Nearly one third of all young children of immigrants live in homes characterized as linguistically isolated—where no one over the age of 13 speaks English fluently or exclusively.⁵² LEP status is associated with lower earnings and increased rates of poverty, food insecurity, and other hardships that are detrimental for children.⁵³ Limited

English proficiency may also make it more difficult for parents to find information about child care and early education opportunities.⁵⁴

Children from immigrant families with origins in English-speaking developed countries are more likely to be enrolled in preschool compared to children of immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, East and Central Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East.⁵⁵

Immigration Status and Citizenship

Most young children of immigrants live in mixed-status families. While many legal immigrants eventually become naturalized citizens,⁵⁶ the majority of young children of immigrants have a noncitizen parent, even though they themselves are likely to be citizens. In the United States, a 1982 Supreme Court decision made clear that citizenship status was not a permissible basis for denying access to public education.⁵⁷ As such, children of immigrants are eligible to attend public schools and may receive services under Title I of No Child Left Behind, the federal program that provides resources for at-risk children, regardless of citizen or immigration status.

Other federal programs have various rules around how the immigration status of the parent or child affects eligibility.

- * **Child Care and Development Block Grant**—eligibility for child care subsidies turns on a child’s immigration status, not a parent’s status.⁵⁸
- * **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**—legal immigrant families are generally ineligible for TANF assistance during their first five years in the United States, subject to limited exceptions; in a mixed status household, a citizen child may be eligible for assistance while parents and other family members are ineligible during their first five years in the country after having immigrated.
- * **Head Start**—eligibility is not related to immigration status.

In practice, however, noncitizen parents may not feel comfortable coming forward to claim public benefits, even if their child is a U.S. citizen. Fears over public disclosure of immigration status may make some parents reluctant to enroll their children in early education programs. Undocumented parents may be apprehensive about accessing services for fear of deportation or affecting their future prospects for citizenship. Legally resident noncitizen immigrants may also be wary of accessing public services prior to approval of citizenship status.

Policy Recommendations for States and Local Communities

To ensure that quality pre-kindergarten and other early education programs address the needs of and are accessible to immigrant families, a range of actions might be taken by states and local communities. They can:

- * **Work cooperatively with community organizations serving immigrants.** Organizations that work with immigrant families can serve as a bridge to link families and early education programs. Including representatives of immigrant communities in the planning and implementation of early education programs may help identify and address issues of access specific to immigrant families. A dialogue among immigrant service providers and the early education community may find that certain collaborations would be particularly helpful to address issues of access.
- * **Create a demographic profile of young children in the community.** Identifying who is likely to need early education services in an area will help to avoid a “one size fits all” approach to outreach and service provision. Data on the size, origin, and spoken languages of local immigrant populations are available through the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, school districts may collect information on the languages spoken by children in the K-12 system. Federal programs—such as Head Start and the Food Stamp Program—are required to collect data on local LEP populations and therefore may be able to share information on the languages spoken in an area. Information should be updated often, as the composition of many communities is changing rapidly.
- * **Conduct a community needs assessment in cooperation with local immigrant organizations.** A needs assessment may help administrators to identify the early care and education needs of immigrant families in their communities and the gaps in service provision and participation. Assessments should be conducted in cooperation with local immigrant service organizations. Questions should cover the supports or services immigrant families need for young children, the components of early education programs that are most critical for their participation, and the barriers families face in accessing services. Once specific needs are identified, a plan for addressing any gaps in services or participation can be established. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 guidance on providing LEP individuals with meaningful access to services may be helpful to state and local policymakers as they think about improving access to all programs.⁵⁹
- * **Recruit bilingual staff and increase training for staff working with young children of immigrants.** Programs must be prepared to serve immigrant families from a diverse set of countries. Bilingual staff should be recruited, as should staff who are trained in teaching strategies for second language acquisition and ELL children, and staff qualified to work with linguistic and culturally diverse children and families. Current staff should also be able to access training in cultural sensitivity and be familiar with diverse cultural norms among immigrant groups in their communities. This will require new and different types of train-

ing for providers in every type of setting and a willingness to adapt to the distinct needs of immigrant families.

- * **Assess current enrollment requirements.** Programs should consider how enrollment requirements such as providing social security numbers, proof of employment, or documenting U.S. citizenship may discourage immigrant families from participating.
- * **Provide guidance on immigrant eligibility for early childhood programs.** Immigration status may make parents reluctant to enroll their children in preschool programs or out-of-home care. Administrators of early childhood initiatives should provide guidance to local programs on how immigration status affects eligibility for early childhood programs, such as Head Start, public preschool, and child care subsidies.
- * **Disseminate program information within local immigrant communities.** Given the linguistic and cultural differences of many immigrant families, methods of outreach that are used with other low-income populations may be less effective. It may be that immigrant families are involved with other programs and benefits, and that access points will therefore differ from those of other families. In addition to outreach in multiple languages, multimedia approaches should be used to reach families who may not be literate in their home language.
- * **Include all settings in early education initiatives.** It is important to create strategies that reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers, playgroups, family child care homes, and child care centers in order to ensure that young children of immigrants receive quality educational experiences in all settings.
- * **Encourage early education programs to promote parent involvement.** Partnerships with parents and other family members should be a critical component of any early learning setting. Programs should find ways for parents who do not speak English to be involved in the classroom and in their child's learning. Ongoing communication between school and home could be encouraged by ensuring that all materials for home are translated and by enlisting interpreters to communicate regularly with parents.

Questions for Further Research

Additional research could help to explain why children of immigrants are under-served in early care and education programs, and could help identify effective practices and policies for ensuring that immigrant families are able to access culturally appropriate, quality programs that fit their needs.

The following questions could serve to guide future research endeavors.

- * What are the cultural preferences for early care and education, and how do they vary among immigrant families, according to children's ages, by setting, and by parental employment?

- * How do the early education experiences of children of immigrants differ by ethnicity, generational status, country of origin and primary language?
- * Among noncitizen parents with citizen children, how does parental immigration or documentation status affect children's access to early education?
- * How do immigrant families navigate the child care system; how knowledgeable are they about available child care subsidies?
- * What barriers—for example, related to language and culture—do immigrant families face in making informed decisions about available early education programs?
- * What is the significance of many children of immigrants beginning kindergarten at an earlier age than children of U.S.-born citizens? Are differences in participation related to family preference or issues of access?
- * What can we determine about the quality of the early educational experiences of children of immigrants?
- * What are the most effective ways to reach out to different immigrant groups in order to make quality early education programs accessible to them?

Conclusion

Young children of immigrants face many hardships that put them at greater risk for negative early childhood development and limit the likelihood that they will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. Although these children stand to benefit greatly from early education programs, they currently participate at lower rates than children of U.S.-born citizens. More research is needed to enable communities to effectively serve the growing numbers of immigrant families and to develop diverse strategies to meet the needs of immigrants from every country of origin. While they face difficulties, these children—the majority of whom are citizens and will live in the United States permanently—strengthen our country by contributing to its rich cultural and linguistic diversity. It is imperative that these children have access to high-quality education to lessen their vulnerability to hardships and to promote their healthy development and educational success.

Appendix I. The Foreign-Born Population by State (all ages), 1990-2000

State	Foreign-Born Population, 1990	Foreign-Born as Percent of Total State Population, 1990	Foreign-Born Population, 2000	Foreign-Born as Percent of Total State Population, 2000	Percent Change in Foreign-Born Population, 1990-2000	Percent of Foreign-Born Population Living in Poverty, 1999
Alabama	43,533	1%	87,772	2%	102%	20%
Alaska	24,814	5%	37,170	6%	50%	11%
Arizona	278,205	8%	656,183	13%	136%	25%
Arkansas	24,867	1%	73,690	3%	196%	23%
California	6,458,825	22%	8,864,255	26%	37%	19%
Colorado	142,434	4%	369,903	9%	160%	18%
Connecticut	279,383	9%	369,967	11%	32%	10%
Delaware	22,275	3%	44,898	6%	102%	14%
Dist. of Columbia	58,887	10%	73,561	13%	25%	18%
Florida	1,662,601	13%	2,670,828	17%	61%	17%
Georgia	173,126	3%	577,273	7%	233%	17%
Hawaii	162,704	15%	212,229	18%	30%	13%
Idaho	28,905	3%	64,080	5%	122%	22%
Illinois	952,272	8%	1,529,058	12%	61%	13%
Indiana	94,263	2%	186,534	3%	98%	16%
Iowa	43,316	2%	91,085	3%	110%	18%
Kansas	62,840	3%	134,735	5%	114%	19%
Kentucky	34,119	1%	80,271	2%	135%	18%
Louisiana	87,407	2%	115,885	3%	33%	18%
Maine	36,296	3%	36,691	3%	1%	13%
Maryland	313,494	7%	518,315	10%	65%	10%
Massachusetts	573,733	10%	772,983	12%	35%	14%
Michigan	355,393	4%	523,589	5%	47%	14%
Minnesota	113,039	3%	260,463	5%	130%	20%
Mississippi	20,383	1%	39,908	1%	96%	21%
Missouri	83,633	2%	151,196	3%	81%	19%
Montana	13,779	2%	16,396	2%	19%	19%
Nebraska	28,198	2%	74,638	4%	165%	20%

State	Foreign-Born Population, 1990	Foreign-Born as Percent of Total State Population, 1990	Foreign-Born Population, 2000	Foreign-Born as Percent of Total State Population, 2000	Percent Change in Foreign-Born Population, 1990-2000	Percent of Foreign-Born Population Living in Poverty, 1999
Nevada	104,828	9%	316,593	16%	202%	15%
New Hampshire	41,193	4%	54,154	4%	31%	10%
New Jersey	966,610	13%	1,476,327	18%	53%	11%
New Mexico	80,514	5%	149,606	8%	86%	29%
New York	2,851,861	16%	3,868,133	20%	36%	18%
North Carolina	115,077	2%	430,000	5%	274%	19%
North Dakota	9,388	2%	12,114	2%	29%	22%
Ohio	259,673	2%	339,279	3%	31%	14%
Oklahoma	65,489	2%	131,747	4%	101%	23%
Oregon	139,307	5%	289,702	9%	108%	20%
Pennsylvania	369,316	3%	508,291	4%	38%	15%
Rhode Island	95,088	10%	119,277	11%	25%	18%
South Carolina	49,964	1%	115,978	3%	132%	19%
South Dakota	7,731	1%	13,495	2%	75%	19%
Tennessee	59,114	1%	159,004	3%	169%	18%
Texas	1,524,436	9%	2,899,642	14%	90%	24%
Utah	58,600	3%	158,664	7%	171%	19%
Vermont	17,544	3%	23,245	4%	32%	10%
Virginia	311,809	5%	570,279	8%	83%	11%
Washington	322,144	7%	614,457	10%	91%	19%
West Virginia	15,712	1%	19,390	1%	23%	18%
Wisconsin	121,547	3%	193,751	4%	59%	17%
Wyoming	7,647	2%	11,205	2%	47%	15%
U.S. Total	19,769,306	8%	31,109,889	11%	57%	18%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Percent of foreign-born living in poverty is the percent of foreign-born with a 1999 income below the federal poverty level.

Appendix II. Top Three Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population by State (all ages), 2000

State	Top Three Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population (as a Percent of all Foreign-Born)	State	Top Three Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population (as a Percent of all Foreign-Born)
Alabama	Mexico (27%) Germany (8%) India (5%)	Idaho	Mexico (55%) Canada (7%) United Kingdom (4%)
Alaska	Philippines (24%) Korea (11%) Canada (8%)	Illinois	Mexico (40%) Poland (9%) India (6%)
Arizona	Mexico (66%) Canada (4%) Germany (2%)	Indiana	Mexico (33%) Germany (5%) India (5%)
Arkansas	Mexico (46%) El Salvador (6%) Germany (5%)	Iowa	Mexico (28%) Vietnam (7%) Bosnia Herzegovina (6%)
California	Mexico (44%) Philippines (8%) Vietnam (5%)	Kansas	Mexico (47%) Vietnam (7%) India (4%)
Colorado	Mexico (49%) Germany (5%) Canada (4%)	Kentucky	Mexico (19%) Germany (8%) India (6%)
Connecticut	Jamaica (7%) Italy (7%) Poland (7%)	Louisiana	Vietnam (15%) Honduras (10%) Mexico (8%)
Delaware	Mexico (18%) India (8%) United Kingdom (6%)	Maine	Canada (41%) United Kingdom (7%) Germany (6%)
Dist. of Columbia	El Salvador (22%) Jamaica (4%) China (3%)	Maryland	El Salvador (8%) India (6%) Korea (6%)
Florida	Cuba (24%) Mexico (7%) Haiti (7%)	Massachusetts	Portugal (9%) Dominican Republic (6%) Canada (5%)
Georgia	Mexico (33%) India (5%) Vietnam (4%)	Michigan	Mexico (11%) Canada (10%) India (7%)
Hawaii	Philippines (48%) Japan (10%) Korea (8%)	Minnesota	Mexico (16%) Laos (10%) Vietnam (6%)

State	Top Three Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population (as a Percent of all Foreign-Born)	State	Top Three Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population (as a Percent of all Foreign-Born)
Mississippi	Mexico (24%) Vietnam (8%) Germany (7%)	Pennsylvania	India (7%) Italy (6%) Korea (5%)
Missouri	Mexico (17%) Germany (7%) Vietnam (6%)	Rhode Island	Portugal (18%) Dominican Republic (14%) Guatemala (8%)
Montana	Canada (28%) Germany (11%) United Kingdom (7%)	South Carolina	Mexico (27%) Germany (7%) United Kingdom (6%)
Nebraska	Mexico (41%) Vietnam (7%) Guatemala (5%)	South Dakota	Mexico (10%) Canada (8%) Germany (7%)
Nevada	Mexico (49%) Philippines (10%) El Salvador (4%)	Tennessee	Mexico (28%) Germany (5%) India (5%)
New Hampshire	Canada (23%) United Kingdom (8%) Germany (5%)	Texas	Mexico (65%) Vietnam (4%) El Salvador (4%)
New Jersey	India (8%) Dominican Republic (6%) Philippines (5%)	Utah	Mexico (42%) Canada (5%) Germany (3%)
New Mexico	Mexico (72%) Germany (4%) Canada (2%)	Vermont	Canada (34%) United Kingdom (8%) Germany (7%)
New York	Dominican Republic (11%) China (6%) Jamaica (6%)	Virginia	El Salvador (10%) Korea (7%) Philippines (6%)
North Carolina	Mexico (40%) India (4%) Germany (4%)	Washington	Mexico (24%) Canada (8%) Philippines (8%)
North Dakota	Canada (25%) Germany (8%) Bosnia Herzegovina (6%)	West Virginia	Germany (9%) India (9%) United Kingdom (8%)
Ohio	India (8%) Germany (6%) Mexico (6%)	Wisconsin	Mexico (28%) Laos (9%) Germany (7%)
Oklahoma	Mexico (43%) Vietnam (8%) Germany (5%)	Wyoming	Mexico (35%) Canada (10%) Germany (7%)
Oregon	Mexico (39%) Canada (6%) Vietnam (6%)	U.S. Total	Mexico (30%) Philippines (4%) India (3%)

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

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