



## CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on  
Civic Learning & Engagement

### Immigrant Youth Demographics

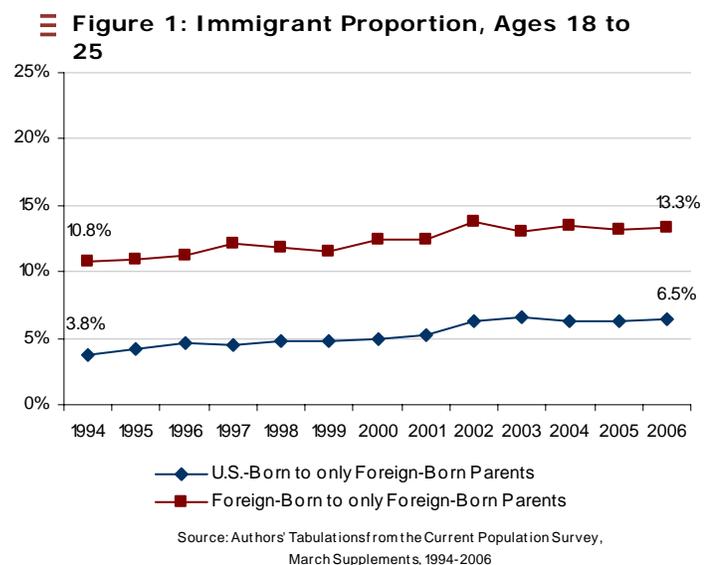
By Karlo Barrios Marcelo and Mark Hugo Lopez<sup>1</sup>  
November 2006

In 2006, 13.3 percent of young people—18 to 25 year olds—were born outside of the United States with an additional 6.5 percent born to only foreign-born parents. This reflects a growing diversity among young people. From 1994 to 2006, the percentage of young people who were born outside of the U.S. grew from 10.8 percent to 13.3 percent. Currently, the immigrant population accounts for 12.1 percent of the entire U.S.

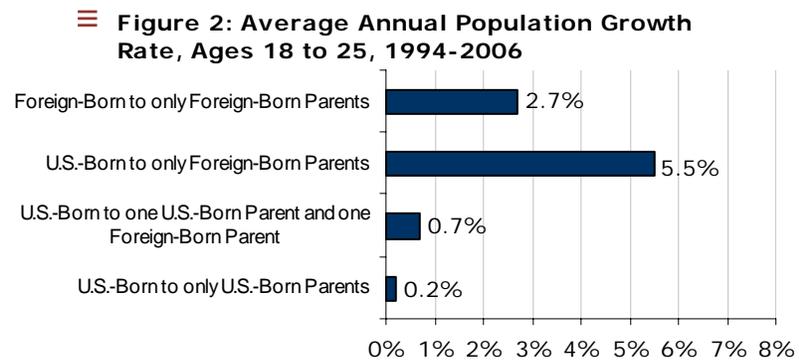
population.<sup>2</sup> This fact sheet presents information on the demographic and nativity characteristics of youth, concentrating on the years 1994 to 2006.

#### *Number of Immigrant Youth*

Not since 1920 have immigrants represented a higher percentage of the U.S. population.<sup>3</sup> Figure 2 shows the average annual population growth rate for young people, ages 18 to 25 between 1994 and 2006. The proportion of U.S.-born youth who are born to only U.S.-born parents grew at the slowest rate during this period—0.2 percent. On the other hand, the foreign-born youth population grew at an average rate of 2.7 percent from 1994 to 2006. Foreign-born youth were not the fastest-growing young population, however. Instead, the proportion of U.S.-born youth with only foreign-born parents grew at more than twice the rate of the foreign-born youth population—5.5 percent.



Thus, while U.S.-born youth who are born to only foreign-born parents were less numerous than their foreign-born counterparts (see Table 1), their population should increase significantly in the coming years as foreign-born youth have children.



Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplements, 1994-2006

Since 1994, the number of immigrant youth has grown by over 1 million, while the number of U.S.-born youth who are born to only U.S.-born parents has increased by over half a million. The immigrant youth population is not the only group to experience large population growth. The number of U.S.-born youth born to foreign-born parents nearly doubled between 1994 and 2006, increasing by nearly 1 million.

**Table 1: U.S. Resident Population of 18 to 25 Year Olds by Immigration Status in Thousands**

	U.S.-Born to only U.S.-Born Parents	U.S.-Born to One U.S.-Born Parent and One Foreign-Born Parent	U.S.-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	Foreign-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	All Residents	All Citizens
1994	23,739	1,340	1,112	3,169	29,360	26,648
1995	23,492	1,206	1,207	3,172	29,077	26,319
1996	23,243	1,230	1,362	3,295	29,130	26,288
1997	22,710	1,283	1,291	3,472	28,756	25,886
1998	22,615	1,347	1,365	3,395	28,722	25,988
1999	23,268	1,185	1,413	3,399	29,265	26,416
2000	23,695	1,103	1,514	3,732	30,044	26,868
2001	23,820	1,284	1,624	3,808	30,536	27,349
2002	23,540	1,224	1,945	4,271	30,980	27,361
2003	23,833	1,200	2,057	4,044	31,134	27,811
2004	24,137	1,329	1,982	4,293	31,741	28,259
2005	24,426	1,389	2,006	4,244	32,065	28,578
2006	24,371	1,403	2,074	4,282	32,131	28,743

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1994-2006

Table 2 shows that immigrants make up a larger percentage of 18-29 year olds (15.4 percent) than of any other age bracket. Similarly, U.S.-born residents with only foreign-born parents represented higher proportions of the 18-to-25 and 18-to-29 age bracket—6.5 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively, than in older age groups, suggesting a greater diversity of immigrant experience among young people compared to adults. Table 3 shows population estimates for all groups.

**Table 2: Percentage of U.S. Resident Population in 2006 by Immigration Status and Age**

	All Ages 0+	Ages 18-25	Ages 26 and older	Ages 18-29	Ages 30 and older
U.S.-Born to only U.S.-Born Parents	77.1	75.9	77.5	74.6	78.0
U.S.-Born to One U.S.-Born Parent and One Foreign-Born Parent	4.2	4.4	3.8	4.2	3.8
U.S.-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	6.3	6.5	3.6	5.9	3.5
Foreign-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	12.1	13.3	15.2	15.4	14.8

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006.

**Table 3: 2006 U.S. Resident Population by Immigration Status and Age in Thousands**

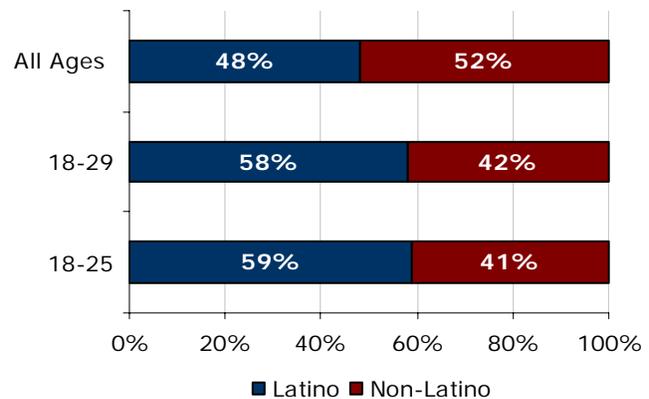
	All Ages 0+	Ages 18-25	Ages 26 and older	Ages 18-29	Ages 30 and older
U.S.-Born to only U.S.-Born Parents	225,906	24,371	144,787	35,603	133,555
U.S.-Born to One U.S.-Born Parent and One Foreign-born Parent	13,234	1,403	7,130	1,990	6,543
U.S.-Born to only Foreign-born Parents	18,307	2,074	6,643	2,816	5,901
Foreign-born to only Foreign-born Parents	35,505	4,282	28,307	7,334	25,255

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

### *Ethnic Composition*

In 2006 the majority (59 percent) of young immigrants, ages 18 to 25, were Latino. Compared to all immigrants, young immigrants are more likely to be Latino.

**Figure 3: Ethnic Composition of Immigrant Residents, 2006**



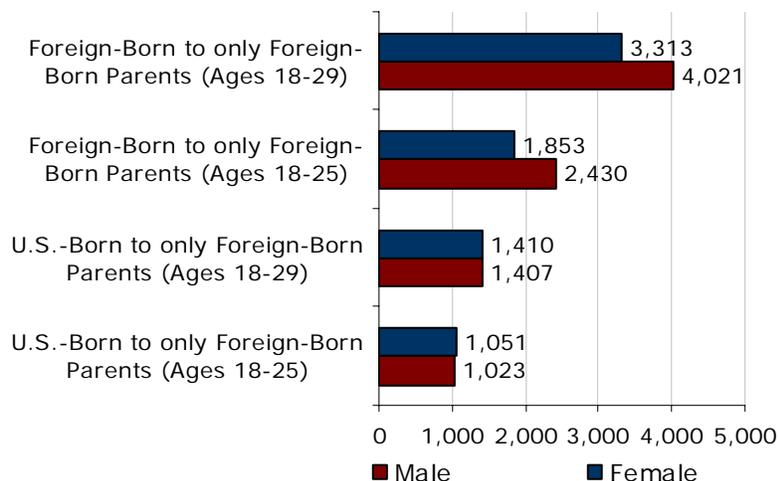
Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

### *Differences in the Gender Distribution of Immigrants and non-Immigrants*

For the general adult population in the U.S., females outnumber males. Among immigrant youth, however, a different pattern is evident. As shown in Figure 4, young immigrant males made up the majority of immigrant youth in 2006. The male majority among immigrants may be due to the fact that many immigrants come to the U.S. for economic reasons and do not bring their families with them

(there is evidence that suggests that married and single foreign-born men come without their families to work in the U.S. and send remittances back to their native country).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 4: 2006 Gender Population by Immigration Status, in Thousands**



Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

Table 4 presents the gender proportions of youths, ages 18 to 25, by nativity status. Male immigrant youth constituted 52.8 percent of the immigrant youth population in 1994, while in 2006 they made up 56.7 percent of population. Thus, the immigrant male youth population has increased in number and proportion (3.9 percentage points) between 1994 and 2006.

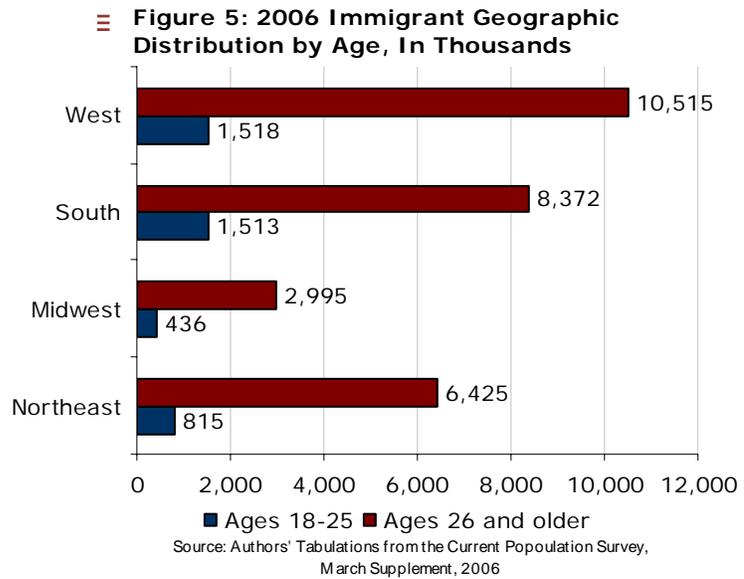
**Table 4: Gender Proportions of Young People, ages 18 to 25, by Immigrant Status**

	1994	2006	1994	2006
	Female	Female	Male	Male
U.S.-Born to only U.S.-Born Parents	50.7%	50.3%	49.3%	49.7%
U.S.-Born to One U.S.-Born Parent and One Foreign-born Parent	45.3%	51.4%	54.7%	48.7%
U.S.-Born to only Foreign-born Parents	52.7%	50.7%	47.3%	49.3%
Foreign-born to only Foreign-born Parents	47.2%	43.3%	52.8%	56.7%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplements, 1994 and 2006

### Regional Distribution of Young Immigrants

Immigrant youth were not equally distributed across all regions and states. Figure 5 shows that immigrant youth were concentrated in the Southern and Western regions of the U.S.<sup>5</sup> Of the states with the highest immigrant populations in 2006, three out of the top four were located in the Southern and Western regions (see Table 5). Furthermore, California had the largest population of immigrants among all states. Young Latino immigrants, ages 18 to 25, were more likely to reside in the Western and Southern regions.



**Table 5: Four States with Highest Immigrant Populations in 2006 by Age in Thousands**

	All Ages, 0+	Ages 18-25	Ages 26 and older	Ages 18-29	Ages 30 and older
California	9,491	1,064	7,776	1,739	7,101
New York	3,991	400	3,301	726	2,975
Texas	3,423	481	2,631	825	2,287
Florida	3,329	332	2,736	587	2,482

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006.

Table 6 shows the top fifteen metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) for immigrants. Los Angeles, New York and Chicago had the three largest immigrant populations for young people. Of the roughly 3.7 million young people, ages 18 to 25, in 2000, about 55 percent of young immigrants lived in the 15 MSAs listed in Table 6.

**Table 6: 2000 Immigrant Population Estimates  
by Metropolitan Statistical Area in Thousands**

Rank	MSA	All Ages	Rank	MSA	Ages 18-25
1	Los Angeles and Long Beach	3,407	1	Los Angeles and Long Beach	462
2	New York and Northeastern NJ	2,980	2	New York and Northeastern NJ	352
3	Chicago, Gary and Lake	1,422	3	Chicago, Gary and Lake	198
4	Miami and Hialeah	994	4	Houston and Brazoria	132
5	Houston and Brazoria	847	5	Orange County, CA	115
6	Orange County, CA	839	6	Dallas and Ft. Worth	111
7	Washington, D.C.	832	7	Washington, D.C.	103
8	San Diego	633	8	Miami and Hialeah	93
9	Oakland	578	9	Atlanta	84
10	San Jose	575	10	San Diego	81
11	Dallas and Ft. Worth	562	11	Phoenix	78
12	San Francisco, Oakland and Vallejo	504	12	San Jose	69
13	Phoenix	433	13	Oakland	68
14	Boston	475	14	Boston	65
15	Atlanta	390	15	San Francisco, Oakland and Vallejo	55

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2000 U.S. Census.

### *English Proficiency*

Young immigrants were less likely to speak English when compared to the entire immigrant population in 2000. Table 7 shows that 10.1 percent of all immigrant reported speaking no English. On the other hand, 13.4 percent of young immigrants reported speaking no English.

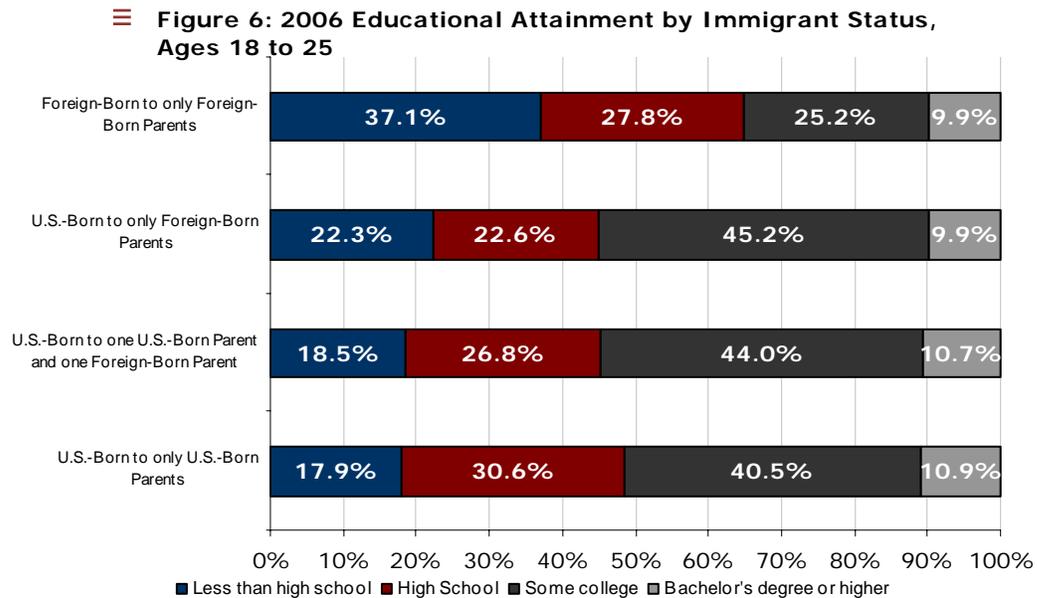
**Table 7: English Proficiency of Immigrants, 2000**

	All Ages	Ages 18-25
Does not speak English	10.1%	13.4%
Yes, speaks only English	16.7%	11.9%
Yes, speaks very well	31.6%	36.9%
Yes, speaks well	21.6%	19.3%
Yes, but not well	18.8%	18.5%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2000 U.S. Census.

### *Educational Attainment Among Immigrants*

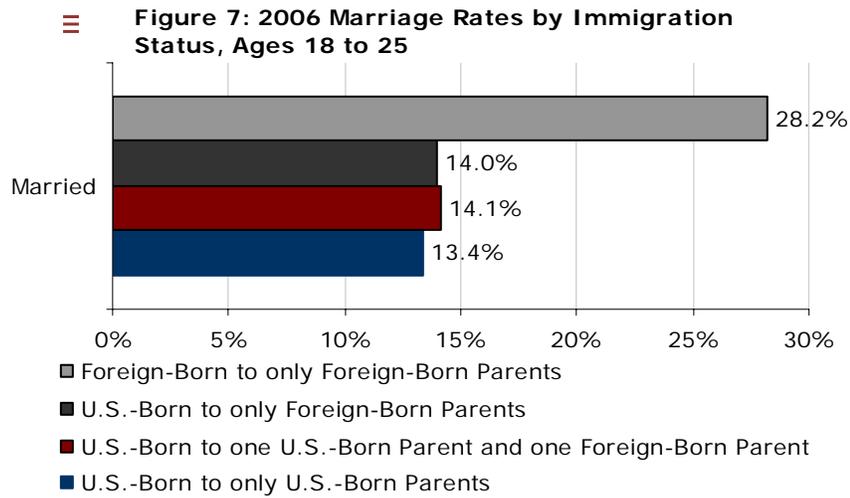
Immigrant youth were less likely to have a high school diploma than U.S.-born youth. Figure 6 shows the educational attainment of youth, ages 18 to 25, by immigration status. All U.S.-born youth followed a similar pattern: the plurality was likely to have some college education, except for immigrant youth. U.S.-born youth with only foreign-born parents were the likeliest to have some college experience. In contrast, foreign-born youth were the least likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher. The concentration of youth with some college experience, but no bachelor's degree, can be attributed to the fact that many are still in college. 39.2 percent of young people reported either full-time or part-time school status in 2006. Immigrant youth reported the lowest level of in-school status—27.2 percent. U.S.-born youth born to only foreign-born parents had the highest in-school rate of 49.2 percent. In 2006, 27.0 percent of the U.S. population, ages 21 and older, had attained a bachelor's degree or more.



Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

## Marriage Rates

Foreign-born young people are more likely to be married than U.S.-born young people. Figure 7 shows that immigrants are more than twice as likely to be married as their U.S.-born counterparts.<sup>6</sup>



Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

## Appendix

**Table A:**  
**2006 At a Glance: Characteristics of Young People,**  
**Ages 18 to 25, by Immigration Status**

	Foreign-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	U.S.-Born to only Foreign-Born Parents	U.S.-Born to one U.S.-Born Parent and one Foreign-Born Parent	U.S.-Born to only U.S.-Born Parents
<b>Total Population Estimate (In Thousands)</b>	4,282	2,074	1,403	24,371
<b>Place of Birth</b>				
Canada	0.8%	*	*	*
Mexico	41.8%	*	*	*
Central America (w/o Mexico)	16.3%	*	*	*
South America	5.9%	*	*	*
Europe	4.6%	*	*	*
Russia	2.1%	*	*	*
Asia	19.0%	*	*	*
Middle East	3.0%	*	*	*
Africa	3.2%	*	*	*
Australia and New Zealand	0.0%	*	*	*
Pacific Islands	0.3%	*	*	*
<b>U.S. Citizenship</b>				
Naturalized Citizen	20.9%	*	*	*
Non-Citizen	79.1%	*	*	*
<b>Year of Arrival</b>				
1980-1989	14.6%	*	*	*
1990-1999	37.6%	*	*	*
2000-2006 (March)	47.7%	*	*	*
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	56.7%	49.3%	48.7%	49.7%
Female	43.3%	50.7%	51.4%	50.3%
<b>Urbanicity<sup>7</sup></b>				
Urban	44.9%	45.7%	32.9%	26.4%
Suburban	42.3%	46.4%	42.3%	41.3%
Rural	4.0%	1.9%	9.0%	16.4%
<b>Region</b>				
Northeast	19.0%	18.5%	19.2%	17.7%
Midwest	10.2%	9.1%	17.7%	26.2%
South	35.3%	21.0%	32.7%	37.3%
West	35.5%	51.4%	30.4%	18.8%
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>				
White	14.1%	14.7%	48.8%	74.5%

Black	6.6%	7.4%	7.8%	15.9%
Hispanic	59.1%	51.0%	32.0%	7.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	19.0%	26.1%	3.3%	0.3%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
Less than high school degree or equivalent	37.1%	22.3%	18.5%	17.9%
High school degree or equivalent	27.8%	22.6%	26.8%	30.6%
Some college	25.2%	45.2%	44.0%	40.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	9.9%	9.9%	10.7%	10.9%
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	28.2%	14.0%	14.1%	13.4%
Single	71.8%	86.0%	85.9%	86.6%

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

\* Not Applicable

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Research Associate and Research Director, respectively, Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, University of Maryland School of Public Policy. We thank Deborah Both, Abby Kiesa, Emily Kirby, and Peter Levine for comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet. All errors in fact or interpretation are our own.

<sup>2</sup> The 2006 foreign-born percentage of the U.S. population is the second highest (the highest was in 2005) percentage since the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated immigration quotas for some racial and ethnic categories.

<sup>3</sup> For a good reference on the percentage of foreign-born people in the United States since 1900, see "The Foreign-Born Population: 1994." Kristin A. Hansen and Amara Bachu. Current Population Reports. P20-486, August 1995.

<sup>4</sup> "Now That I'm Here." Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett and Jean Johnson. Public Agenda. 2003. Survey respondents in the Public Agenda survey ranked 'Better life/Future/U.S. is a great country/Freedoms' and 'Work/Better opportunity/Money' as the top two reasons they immigrated to the United States. 'Family/Family was here/Came as a child' ranks third.

Hispanic Youth Dropping out of U.S. Schools: Measuring the Challenge." Richard Fry. The Pew Hispanic Center. July 12, 2003. Fry states that "Hispanic youth who are educated abroad immigrate to the United States primarily to work." This finding only applies to Hispanic youth.

<sup>5</sup> Geographic regions are classified by the Current Population Survey as follows: Northeastern Region—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont; Midwestern Region—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; Southern Region—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia; and Western Region—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>6</sup> Overall, the marriage rate of young people has been on the decline. Since 1968, marriage rates for young people have declined across the entire young population. Moreover, the marriage rates have declined for all races and ethnicities. See "2006 Youth Demographics." Mark Hugo Lopez and Karlo Barrios Marcelo. Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. 2006. [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

<sup>7</sup> The Urbanicity category will not always equal 100 percent. Some respondents are in a Non-Specified area, which is not reported here.