


PERSPECTIVES ON LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES

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Children of Immigrants: National and State Characteristics

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In 2007, about 16.4 million children, or more than one in five children in the United States, had at least one immigrant parent.[1] The number of children of immigrants doubled from 8 million in 1990, and their share of all children age 0 to 17 increased from 13 to 23 percent during this period. This large demographic group deserves particular attention because its growth has important implications for federal, state, and local education, health, housing, and family policies. Children of immigrants are also likely to represent a large share of the nation's future labor force. In addition, children of immigrants deserve special attention because they face many universal risk factors to children's well-being, such as lower parental education and family incomes, but they are also adversely affected by factors unique to immigration, such as lack of parental citizenship and English proficiency (Capps et al. 2004; Hernandez 2004).

Yet, no single portrait of children of immigrants holds for every state. Diverse groups of immigrants have dispersed in large numbers to states with historically few immigrants. States also have differing policies for integrating newcomers. While children of immigrants make up 23 percent of all children nationwide, their shares vary significantly by state; children of immigrants make up close to 50 percent of children in California but only 8 percent of children in Arkansas. Similarly, the rate at which their shares grew between 1990 and 2007 varies across states; it more than doubled in Nevada (from 15 to 34 percent) but increased by only a third in Rhode Island (from 18 to 24 percent). Nevertheless, there are also similarities across states; for example, young children are more likely than older children to have immigrant parents.

Up-to-date state information on the characteristics and population size of children of immigrants is essential for planning and implementing educational, health, housing, labor, and other social programs that affect children, their families, and other residents. This brief, a companion to the Urban Institute's new interactive Children of Immigrants Data Tool, provides a glimpse of the national and state characteristics of children of immigrants based on 2005 and 2006 American Community Survey data.[2] This brief highlights national findings and variations across states, while the web tool allows users to obtain more detailed data about individual states. The data tool and accompanying analysis will be updated with new data as they become available, allowing users to track trends over time and study the effects of economic cycles and policy changes. Sample findings discussed in this brief include the following:

- In 2006, children of immigrants made up more than 10 percent of the total child population in 29 states, up from 16 states in 1990.[3]
- Half of children of immigrants live in California, Texas, and New York, but their numbers are growing across the country.
- Young children are more likely to have immigrant parents: 24 percent of children age 0 to 5 have immigrant parents versus 21 percent of children age 6 to 17.

- Almost a third of children of immigrants live in mixed-status families where the children are U.S. citizens but their parents are noncitizens.
- Children of immigrants are substantially more likely to be poor (22 percent) and low income (51 percent) than children of natives (16 and 35 percent, respectively).[4]

Concentration and Dispersal of Immigrants and Their Children

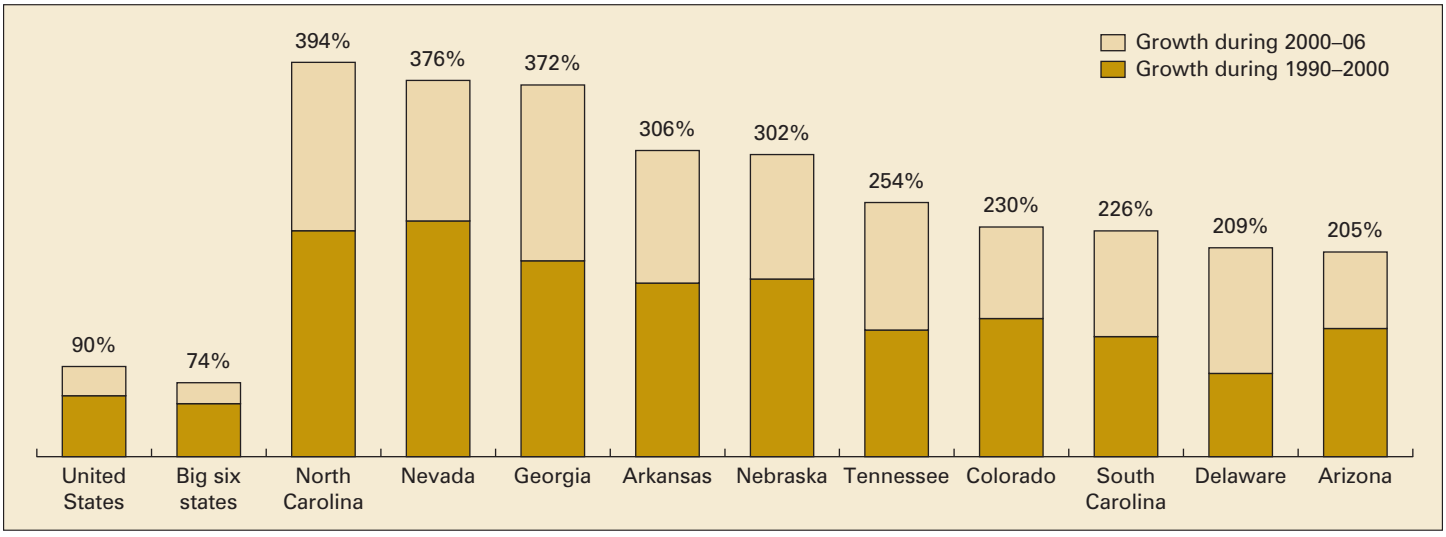
Immigrant populations are concentrated in six large states that have been traditional immigrant destinations (California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), but they are also dispersing throughout the country in large numbers. During the 1990s, the immigrant populations grew rapidly in many western, midwestern, and southeastern states.[5] With increasing immigration flows and dispersal, the number of children with immigrant parents more than doubled in most states between 1990 and 2006. The six states with the largest immigrant populations saw an increase of 74 percent in the number of children of immigrants during this period, but many of the new high-growth immigrant states, such as North Carolina, Nevada, Georgia, Arkansas, and Nebraska, experienced growth rates four to five times as high (figure 1; see appendix table 1 for information by state).

Children of immigrants are still highly concentrated in the traditional immigration states but less so in 2006 than in 1990. In 1990, 73 percent of children of immigrants lived in the "big six" states, but by 2006, the share living in these states had decreased to 67 percent (figures 2 and 3). The share of children of immigrants living in the new high-growth immigrant states increased from 11 to 19 percent during this time.

In 2006, California had the largest population of children of immigrants (4.6 million), accounting for nearly 30 percent of all children of immigrants in the United States. California was followed by Texas (1.9 million), New York (1.4 million), and Florida (1.2 million), which together accounted for an additional 29 percent of children of immigrants (figure 3). Beyond these populous states, children of immigrants were widely dispersed, exceeding 200,000 in states with recent high growth in the number of immigrants, such as Arizona (450,000), Georgia (360,000), Washington (330,000), and North Carolina (260,000), and in other longer-standing immigrant destination states, such as Massachusetts (310,000) and Michigan (250,000).

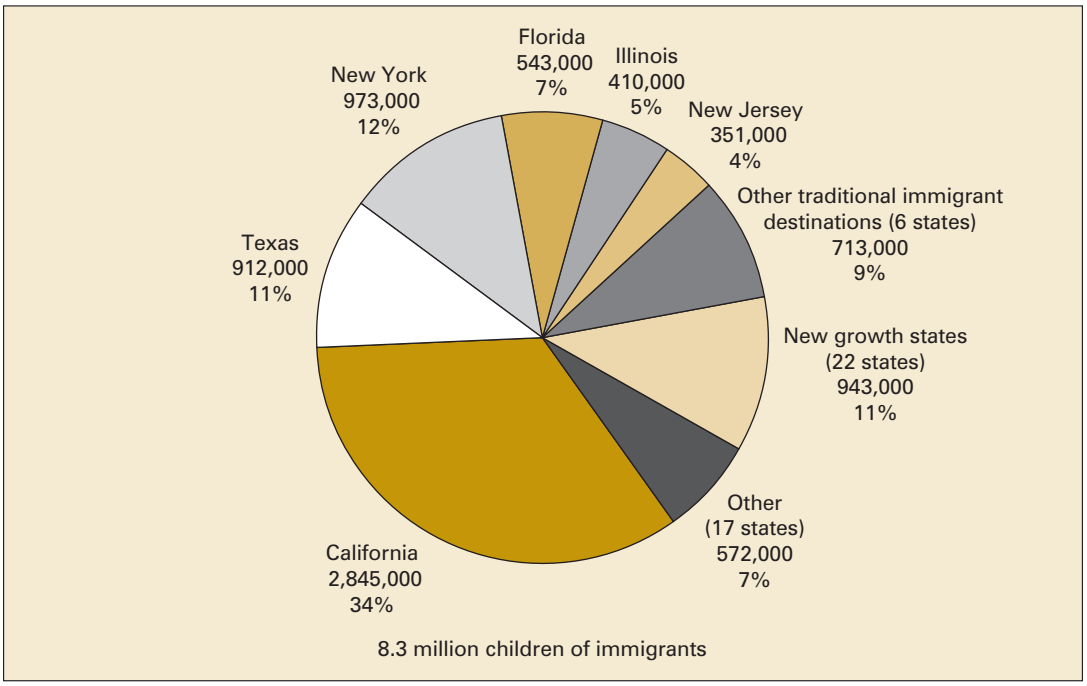
Not surprisingly, the share of all children that have immigrant parents is larger in states with large immigrant populations or recent high growth in the number of immigrants. In 2006, half of children in California and a third of children in New York, Texas, and Nevada had immi-

FIGURE 1. Ten States with the Fastest Increases in Children of Immigrants, 1990 to 2005–06 (percent growth)



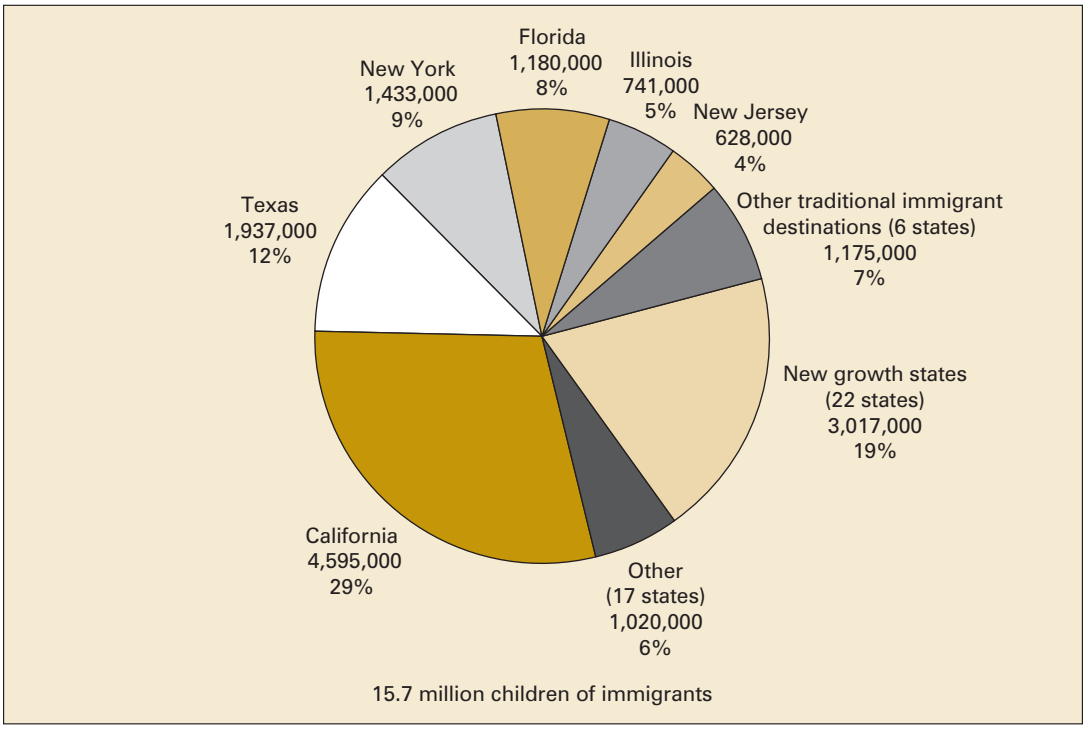
Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample, and the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.
Note: The big six states are those with the largest immigrant populations: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.

FIGURE 2. Distribution of Children of Immigrants across States, 1990



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series dataset drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample.
Notes: "Other traditional immigrant destinations" are Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The new growth states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

FIGURE 3. Distribution of Children of Immigrants across States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.
Notes: "Other traditional immigrant destinations" are Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The new growth states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

grant parents. In Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, and New Jersey, at least a quarter of children had immigrant parents (figure 4).

Growing Impact on Schools

Nationally, younger children are more likely than older children to have immigrant parents. In 2006, the share of young children (age 0 to 5) with at least one immigrant parent was 24 percent, compared with 22 percent of children age 6 to 12 and 20 percent of children age 13 to 17. This indicates that the share of children that have immigrant parents among the school-age population will increase in the near future. In most states, the age distribution follows the national pattern but the magnitude of the age differential differs. In Georgia, children of immigrants represented 19 percent of children age 0 to 5 and 14 percent of children age 6 to 17; in Nevada, these shares were 36 and 34 percent, respectively.

In 2006, children of immigrants accounted for 22 percent of children in preschool and kindergarten, 22 percent of children in elementary school (grades 1 to 5), 21 percent of children in middle school (grades 6 to 8), and 20 percent of children in high school (grades 9 to 12). Children of immigrants accounted for a larger share of children age 3 to 5 that were not enrolled in school (25 percent, figure 5).

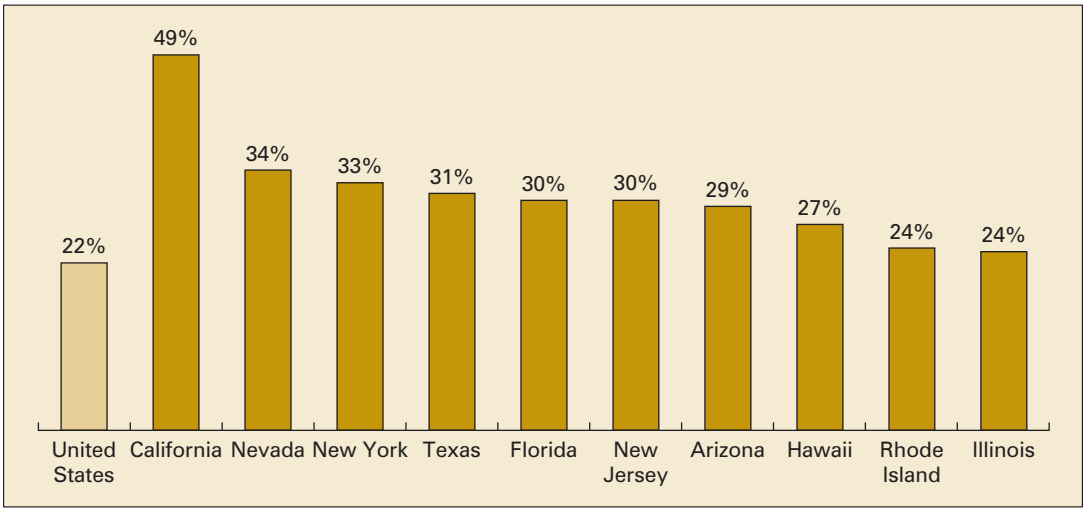
In 2006, there were 12.9 million children of immigrants in the school-age population (age 3 to 17). Four million children with immigrant parents were attending elementary school, while 2.8 million children were in middle school and 2.7 million were in high school. Most young children age 3 to 5 with immigrant parents were enrolled in school—1.9 million were attending preschool or kindergarten—but 1.3 million were not yet enrolled in school. Relatively fewer children of immigrants age 6 to 17 were also not enrolled in school (231,000). The fact that the share of all preschool-age children (24 percent) that have immigrant parents was higher than the share enrolled in preschool (22 percent) indicates some underenrollment in early education settings.

More than Half of Children of Immigrants Are Hispanic

In 2006, slightly more than half (55 percent) of children of immigrants were Hispanic.[6] Nineteen percent were non-Hispanic white and 18 percent were non-Hispanic Asian. Only 8 percent of children of immigrants were non-Hispanic black.

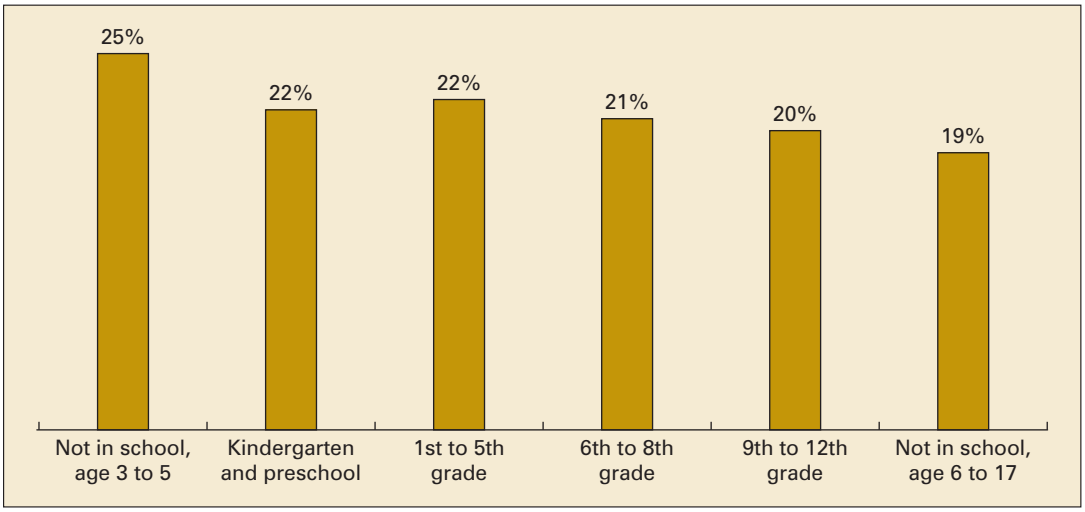
The national origins of immigrant parents shed more light on the racial and ethnic diversity of these children. Most children of immigrants had parents from Latin American countries: 41 percent had parents from Mexico, and 17 percent had

FIGURE 4. Share of Children with Immigrant Parents, Top 10 States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

FIGURE 5. Share of Children of Immigrants by Grade, United States, 2005–06

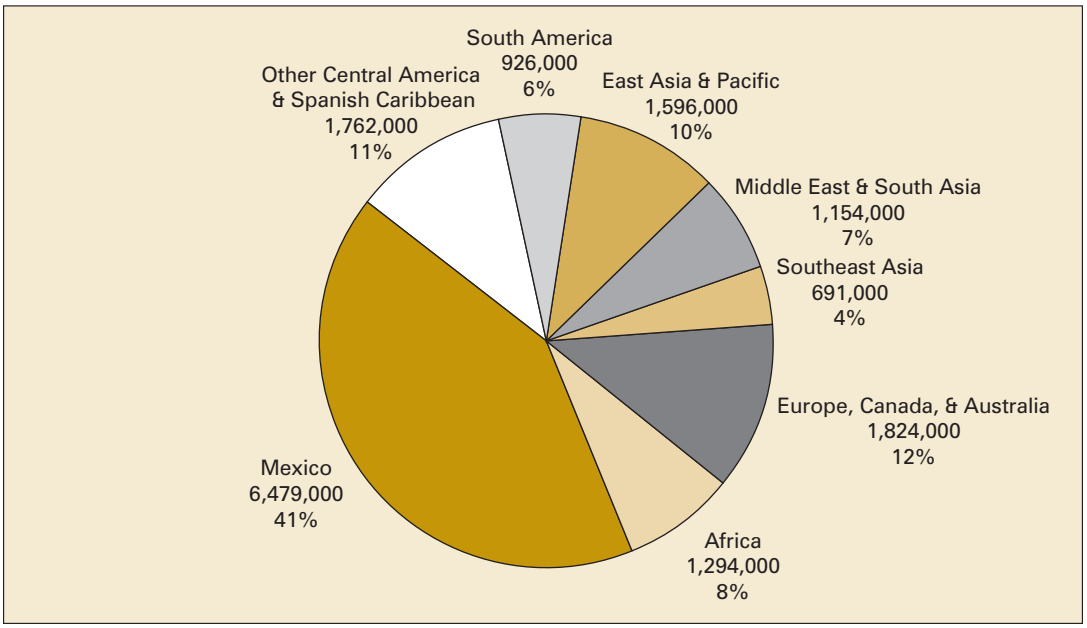


Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

parents from Central and South America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.[7] All other regions of the world, however, were represented significantly: 10 percent of children had parents from East Asia and Pacific, 7 percent from the Middle East and South Asia, 4 percent from Southeast Asia, 12 percent from Europe, and 8 percent from Africa and the West Indies (figure 6).

In 2006, more than two-thirds of children of immigrants were Hispanic in southwestern states near the U.S.-Mexico border—New Mexico (86 percent), Arizona (81 percent), Texas (80 percent), Nevada (70 percent), and Idaho and California (67 percent each). The Hispanic share was also high in Arizona, Colorado, and Nebraska (65 percent each). Asian children, on the other

FIGURE 6. Distribution of Children of Immigrants by Region of Parents' Origin, United States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

hand, represented more than a quarter of children of immigrants in geographically dispersed states: Alaska (38 percent); Minnesota (35 percent); Wisconsin (33 percent); and Pennsylvania, Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Washington (28 percent each). The growing number of immigrants and the larger shares of immigrants from non-European countries in many states have led to demographic changes, with foreign- and native-born Hispanic and Asian children representing larger shares of children in the United States (Capps and Fortuny 2006).

Risk and Protective Factors

Most Children Are Citizens, but Many Have Noncitizen Parents

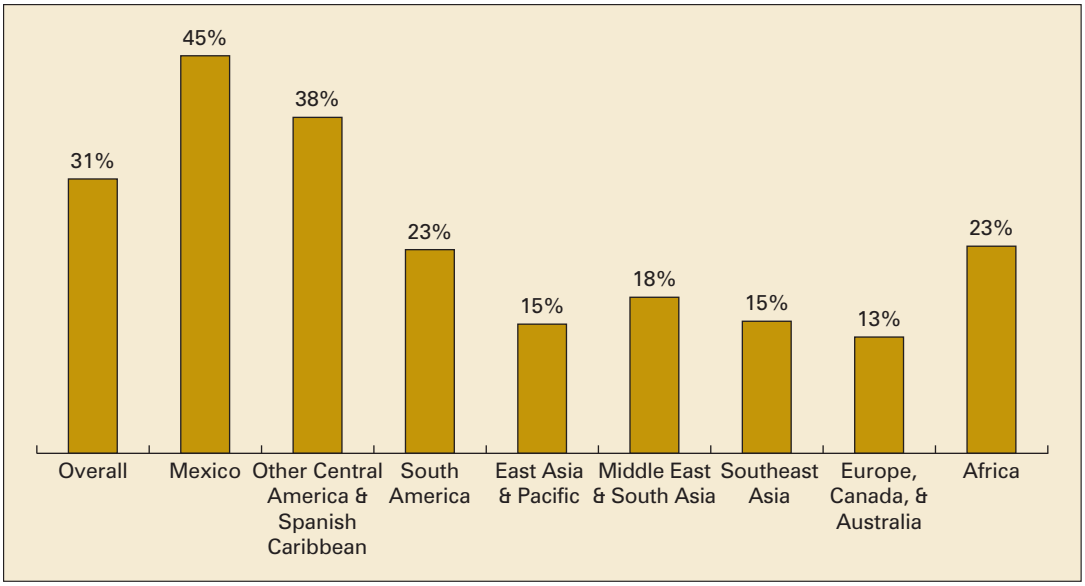
The child's or parents' lack of citizenship is a risk factor for children's well-being because citizenship status affects job opportunities for parents and access to public services for children and their families. Children with unauthorized immigrant parents are especially vulnerable because their parents cannot work legally and are subject to deportation (Capps et al. 2004; Capps, Castañeda et al. 2007). While 86 percent of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in 2006, almost a third (31 percent or 4.9 million children) lived in mixed-status families where the children were citizens but their parents were not.[8] Noncitizen parents might fear interacting with government agencies even though their citizen children are eligible for public services (see Holcomb et al. 2003). This affects children of unauthorized immigrants especially but also children of legally present immigrants.

Children with parents from Mexico and other Central American countries were most likely to live in mixed-status families (45 and 38 percent, respectively), while children with parents from Europe were least likely to live in such families (13 percent, figure 7). In many states, more than a third of children of immigrants lived in mixed-status families: the District of Columbia (42 percent); Arkansas and North Carolina (39 percent each); and Arizona, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, and Oregon (37 percent each). Thus, in many states, outreach efforts for public benefits and services may be complicated by the large number of children with noncitizen parents as their parents may fear coming forward to request assistance.

Most Children of Immigrants Have Limited English Proficient Parents

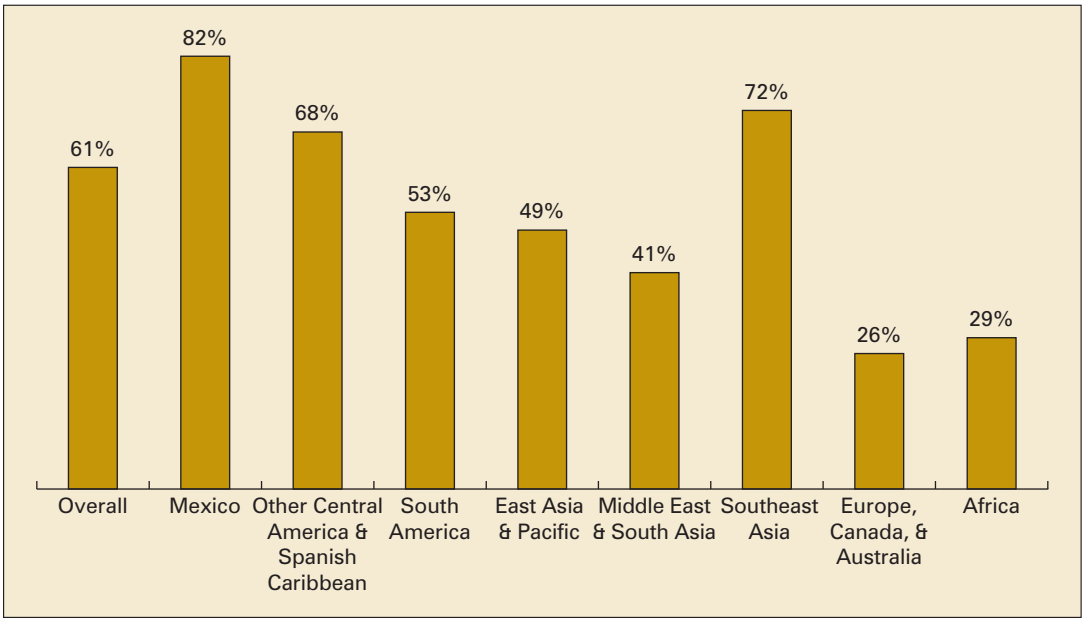
Language and linguistic isolation are other major immigration-related risk factors. Nationally,

FIGURE 7. Share of Children of Immigrants in Mixed-Status Families by Region of Parents' Origin, United States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

FIGURE 8. Share of Children of Immigrants with at Least One Limited English Proficient Parent by Region of Parents' Origin, United States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.
Note: Limited English proficient people are those who report that they speak a language other than English at home and speak English well, not well, or not at all. Those who speak English at home or speak another language but also speak English very well are considered English proficient.

19 percent of children of immigrants age 5 to 17 were limited English proficient (LEP) in 2006, but a much larger share, 61 percent, had one or both parents that were LEP.[9] The LEP status of parents varied by immigrant origin; the vast majority of children with Mexican and Southeast Asian parents had LEP parents (82 and 72 percent, respectively), compared with just 26 percent of children with European parents (figure 8).

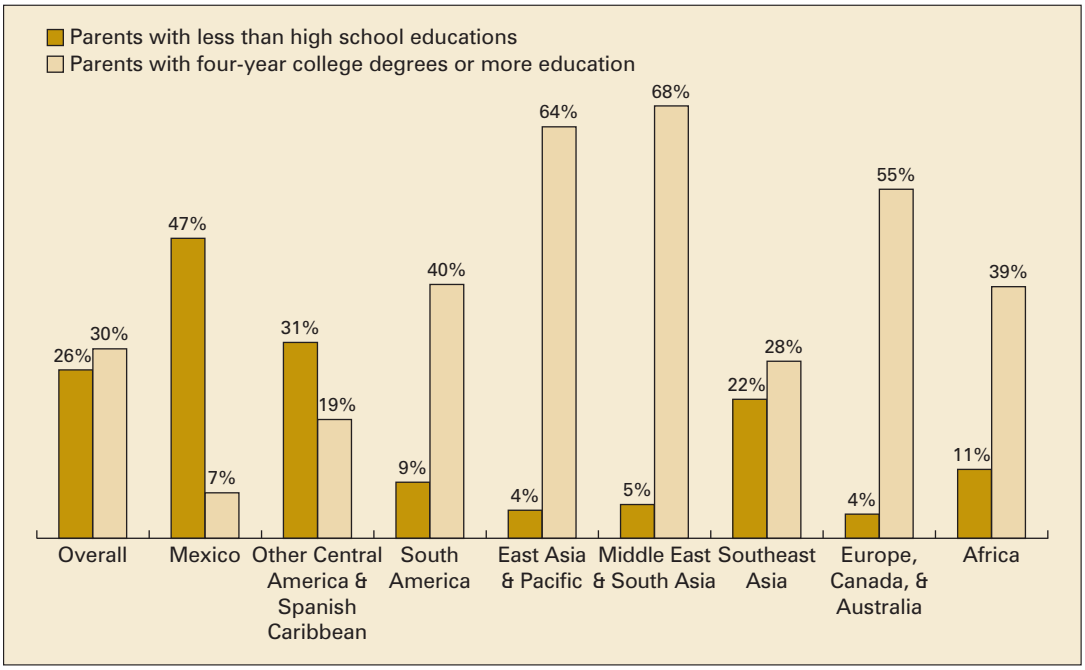
Moreover, more than a quarter of children of immigrants lived in linguistically isolated households where no person age 14 or older spoke English very well.[10] Some states—especially the new growth immigrant states in the west, midwest, and southeast—had higher shares of children in linguistically isolated households: Nebraska (41 percent); South Dakota (40 percent); and Arizona, North Carolina, and Oregon (36 percent each). Large numbers of linguistically isolated children and lack of interpretation and translation resources in states with limited experience settling newcomers can make it challenging for agencies to provide services to these families.

A Quarter of Children of Immigrants Have Parents That Do Not Have High School Degrees

Children of immigrants are also disadvantaged when it comes to parental education. In 2006, 26 percent of children of immigrants were in families where neither parent had completed high school or the equivalent education, compared with only 8 percent of children with native-born parents. Similar to English proficiency, parental education varied by immigrant origin. Immigrants from Mexico were the most likely to lack a high school education (47 percent of children in these families had parents with less than high school educations), while immigrants from Europe and East Asia and Pacific were the least likely (4 percent, figure 9).

Examining higher education, children of immigrants were slightly less likely than children of natives to have at least one parent with a four-year college degree or more education (30 percent versus 34 percent), but parental education varied significantly by immigrant origin as well. The college completion rates for parents from the Middle East and South Asia, East Asia and the

FIGURE 9. Share of Children of Immigrants by Parental Educational Attainment and Region of Parents' Origin, United States 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

Pacific, and Europe were higher than the average rate for native-born parents. The college completion rates for parents from Mexico and Central America and the Spanish Caribbean, though, were significantly lower.

Children of Immigrants Live in Larger Families and Are More Likely to Live with Both Parents

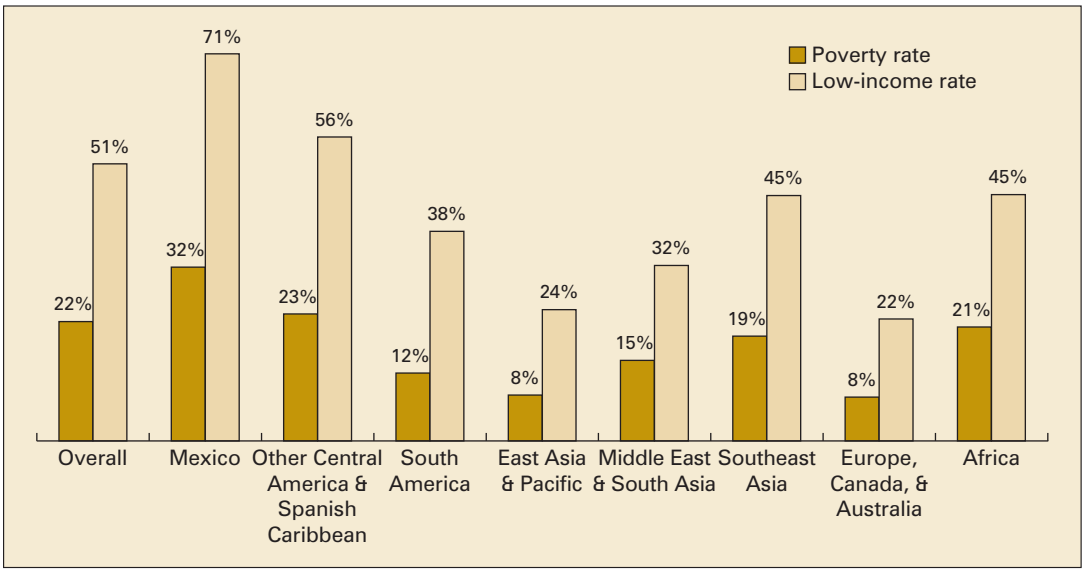
Children of immigrants are more likely to live in two-parent families, a protective factor for children's well-being. Eighty-two percent of children of immigrants lived with both parents in 2006, compared with 70 percent of children with native parents. Children with immigrant parents were also more likely to live in larger families.[11] Forty-three percent of children with immigrant parents lived in families with three or more children, compared with 36 percent of children with native-born parents. Similarly, 25 percent of children of immigrants lived in families with three or more related adults, compared with 14 percent of children of native-born parents.

Having a large number of family members, such as grandparents and older siblings, could be favorable for children's well-being, for instance if more adults are helping with child care. But larger families could also have negative impact when children must compete with siblings for resources and parental attention (Capps et al. 2004; Hernandez 2004).

Children of Immigrants Are More Likely to Be Poor and Low Income

Despite having two parents at home, children of immigrants are more likely to live in poverty than children of native-born parents. Twenty-two percent of children of immigrants were poor in 2006 versus 16 percent of children of natives. Similarly, children of immigrants were more likely to live in low-income families: 51 percent of children of immigrants had family incomes below twice the poverty level, compared with 35 percent of children of native-born parents. Lower educational attainment, limited English proficiency, and lack of citizenship contributed to higher poverty and low-income rates among children with immigrant parents. Family poverty and low-income rates varied by parental origin along roughly the

FIGURE 10. Poverty and Low-Income Rates for Children of Immigrants by Region of Parents' Origin, United States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

same lines as parental education and English proficiency (figure 10).

Children of immigrants fared significantly better in some states than nationally; their poverty rate was 10 percent or lower in Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Virginia, Vermont, and North Dakota. With the exception of Connecticut, the poverty rate for children of immigrants in these states was a few percentage points *lower* than the rate for children of native-born parents; in Connecticut, the poverty rates were the same. In some states, however, more than a quarter of children of immigrants were poor: Alabama, Arizona, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Texas. Except for Alabama, the foreign- versus native-born gap in poverty was much larger in these high-poverty states than nationally (for example, 15 percentage points difference in the poverty rates in Texas versus 6 percentage points nationally). The larger foreign- versus native-born gap suggests that state-specific factors that contribute to higher statewide poverty rates do not fully explain the higher poverty rates for children with immigrant versus native-born parents. Having large shares of recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America that are more likely to be poor might partially explain the poverty gap in these states.

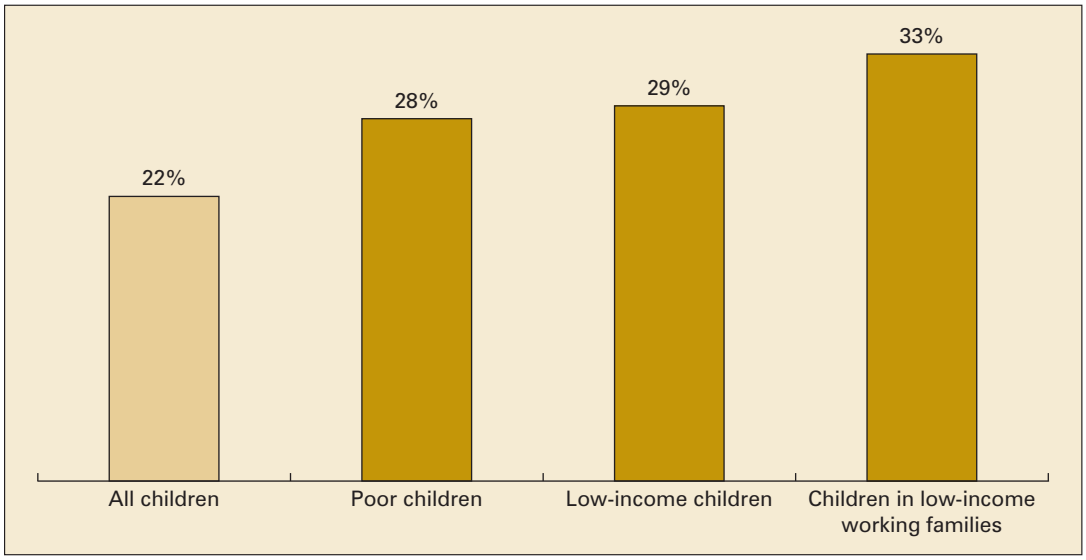
Parental Work Effort Is Very High

Parental work effort does not appear to explain the native- versus foreign-born gap in poverty because there are no significant differences in parental work effort between children of immigrant and children of native-born parents. In 2006, 91 percent of children of immigrants lived in families where parents and/or other relatives were working, compared with 88 percent of children with native-born parents.[12] The vast majority of children were in families with at least one adult, usually the parent, working full time the entire year; this was the case for 82 percent of children of immigrants and 80 percent of children of native-born parents.

In low-income families, however, work effort was demonstrably *higher* among immigrant parents than native-born parents. Looking at children in low-income families, children of immigrants were substantially more likely to live in families with working adults than children of natives (84 versus 70 percent). As a result, children of immigrants were much more likely to live in low-income working families than children with native-born parents—42 versus 25 percent.[13]

Because of higher parental work effort and higher poverty and low-income rates, children of immigrants accounted for 33 percent of all children

FIGURE 11. Share of Children of Immigrants among All Children, Poor Children, Low-Income Children, and Children in Low-Income Working Families, United States, 2005–06



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys.

in low-income working families—significantly higher than their share of all low-income children (29 percent) and of children nationwide (22 percent, as shown in figure 11). This implies that children of immigrants would also account for a disproportionately large share of children eligible for public benefits that support working families when eligibility is based on income.

Use of Public Benefits Is Low

Few immigrant families with children use public benefits, despite their relatively low incomes. Children of immigrants were *less* likely than those of natives to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or to live in households where other family members participated in SNAP (14 versus 17 percent).[14] The lower participation rate for children of immigrants is partly the result of restrictions on immigrants' eligibility: U.S. citizen children and legal immigrant children are eligible for SNAP, but all unauthorized immigrants and most legal immigrants age 18 and older with less than five years of U.S. residency are barred from the federal program (Henderson, Capps, and Finegold 2008).

Participation in SNAP varied across states. In Alabama, only 7 percent of children of immigrants used SNAP versus 22 percent of children of natives despite similar poverty rates (25 percent for children of immigrants and 22 percent for children of natives). A few states, such as California, had higher rates of participation partly because they provided nutritional assistance to legal immigrant adults with less than five years of U.S. residency that are ineligible for federally funded SNAP.[15] In California, the participation rate was the same for children of immigrants and children of natives (12 percent).

Low-income families have higher SNAP participation rates, but the gap between children of immigrants and children of native-born parents in this population group was even larger nationally: 25 percent compared with 42 percent. Thus, the Census household survey data confirm findings from other sources that eligible families with noncitizens and mixed-status families have lower usage rates of SNAP and other benefits.[16] In addition, having parents that are unaware of the benefits for their citizen children, are reluctant to interact with government agencies, and/or have limited English skills to communicate with government agencies may help explain the lower participation of poor and low-income immigrant families in SNAP (Capps and Fortuny 2006; Henderson et al. 2008; Holcomb et al. 2003).

Conclusions

Children of immigrants represent a large and growing share of all children in the United States. Children of immigrants were 22 percent of all children age 0 to 17 nationwide in 2006, but they were almost 50 percent of children in California and 31 percent or more of children in a number of states, including New York, Nevada, and Texas. In fact, the number of states where children of immigrants make up 10 percent or more of the child population increased from 16 in 1990 to 29 in 2006.

Immigration flows, especially from Latin America, appear to have slowed in the past two years, partially because of the economic recession (Papademetriou and Terrazas 2009). This slowdown appears particularly true for unauthorized immigrants, with recent estimates suggesting lack of significant growth in this population in the past three years (Passel and Cohn 2009). The slowdown in immigration, however, does not necessarily translate into a slowdown in the growth rate for children of immigrants since most of these children are born in the United States.

For native-born children of immigrants, birth rates and population momentum will continue to drive population growth regardless of immigration patterns; the fact that children born in 2000 will still be part of the child population until 2018 means that growing birth cohorts since 2000 translate into larger child populations for many years to come. In fact, from 2006 to 2009, when the unauthorized population did not increase by much, the number of native-born children with unauthorized parents continued to rise (Passel and Cohn 2009).

Children of immigrants account for almost a quarter (24 percent) of young children from birth to age 5, indicating that their share in the school-age population will increase in the near future. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for the first time focused on immigrant children, albeit indirectly, by requiring schools to improve the performance of LEP students. But the jury is still out on whether NCLB has successfully improved educational outcomes for these children as well as the other target populations (U.S. Department of Education 2002). The Obama administration has placed reforming NCLB and supporting English language learning programs on its educational agenda; it is possible that a shift in policy focus may create opportunities for advocates, educators, and policymakers to design strategies to improve resources and educational outcomes for LEP and other immigrant children.[17]

Children of immigrants accounted for 29 percent of low-income children nationally in 2006, but poverty and low-income rates for children of immigrants vary widely across states. Differences across states highlight the importance of state and local policies in promoting children's well-being. The 2005–06 snapshot presented in this brief, however, does not reflect the nationwide job losses and high unemployment rates since the recession began in December 2007.[18] The disparities across states have probably been exacerbated by the recession, which has affected states in varying degrees of severity. For example, the unemployment rates in Oregon, South Carolina, Rhode Island, and California have exceeded the national average by 2 to 3 percentage points in the first half of 2009.[19]

Thus, the difficult task of integrating newcomers has been made even more challenging by the current economic climate. This is particularly true for states with high recent growth in their immigrant populations. Many high-growth states, such as Arizona, Nevada, and North Carolina, saw their immigrant populations grow as new immigrants were attracted by the economic and housing boom. But these states are now faced with housing crises, job losses in the construction and service industries, and high unemployment rates among native- and foreign-born residents (Frey et al. 2009; Kochhar and Gonzalez-Barrera 2009; Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005).[20]

Currently, no comprehensive set of federal programs addresses immigrant integration. Federal policies that target low-income children in general, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the earned income tax credit, benefit children of natives as well as children of immigrants. Similarly, adult education, workforce development, and English as a second language are critical for improving immigrant parents' economic prospects and ability to raise children and contribute to the economy. However, without a comprehensive national policy on the integration of immigrants and their children, states and local

governments are primarily responsible for addressing the needs of children and their families.

The burden on states and communities is currently worsened by the economic recession, budget shortfalls, and cuts in public spending (McNichol and Lav 2009). Given that much of the cost of immigrant integration—in particular, education and health care—falls on states and local governments, addressing the needs of immigrant families and children comprehensively would require answering challenging questions. One of the most controversial is whether integration is conceivable as long as issues over legal immigrant status—over which states and local governments have no control—remain unresolved.

Children of immigrants, as they continue to grow in number, are likely to have an increasing impact on educational, health, and other social programs as well as the American economy and society more generally. Addressing the needs of children of immigrants could increase societal outlays in the near term because of the large shares of these children with low parental educations and low family incomes. But, addressing their needs at present, even in a difficult economic climate, helps ensure their greater contributions in the future. Knowing the population size and characteristics of children of immigrants at the state level can facilitate planning for policymakers when implementing programs to address children of immigrants' needs even during times of recession and competing priorities.

Notes

1. An immigrant or foreign-born person is someone born outside the United States and its territories. People born in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other territories, or born abroad to U.S. citizen parents, are native born. Children with immigrant parents have at least one foreign-born parent. See the methods box for more information on data and definitions.
2. Data analyzed in this brief are taken from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample, and the 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys (ACS). See the methods box for more information on data and definitions.
3. The 2006 estimates are averaged across 2005 and 2006.
4. Throughout the brief, "poor" is family income below the federal poverty level and "low income" is family income below twice the federal poverty level. Poverty levels are adjusted for family size. In 2005, the federal poverty level was $19,971 for a family of four, slightly higher for larger families, and lower for smaller families. Twice the federal poverty level was $39,942 for a family of four.
5. Two-thirds of immigrants live in the six traditional destination states. Other states with long histories of foreign-born residents—Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin—had at least 200,000 immigrants each in 1920. In 22 states, the foreign-born populations grew more quickly between 1990 and 2000 than they did in the six traditional destination states. These states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington (Capps et al. 2007; Fortuny, Capps, and Passel 2007).
6. The racial/ethnic categories discussed in this section are mutually exclusive. See the methods box for more information.
7. Countries of origin are grouped based on geography, languages, being a refugee-producing country, and the available sample size in the survey data. For a child with parents from different regions of birth, the child is assigned the region of birth of the mother. See appendix table 2 for a list of countries in each region.
8. The ACS data do not differentiate between legally present immigrants, such as refugees and permanent residents, and unauthorized immigrants.
9. Limited English proficient people are those who report that they speak a language other than English at home and speak English well, not well, or not at all. Those who speak English at home or speak another language but also speak English very well are considered English proficient. English proficiency is not recorded for children under age 5.
10. Linguistically isolated households are households in which no person age 14 or older speaks only English at home or speaks English very well. For more information, see the methods box.
11. The definition of the family in this analysis is more inclusive than the definition employed by the ACS. The ACS family includes the householder and all individuals living with the householder related to him/her by birth, marriage, or adoption. The social family defined here includes also the unmarried partner of the householder and foster children living in the household.
12. "Work" is defined as high or moderate work effort, based on the number of hours worked during the year before the survey. Families are classified as high-work if any adult reports at least 1,800 hours of work in the prior year—approximately equal to 35 hours of work a week for 52 weeks; as moderate-work if adults averaged at least 1,000 hours or the total hours worked is at least 1,800 hours, but no adult reports 1,800 hours of work in the prior year; and as low-work if neither criteria is met (Acs and Nichols 2005).

13. Low-income working families have total family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and have high or moderate work effort.

14. The Food Stamp Program was renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in October 2008.

15. National Immigration Law Center, "Table 12: State-Funded Food Assistance Programs," information updated July 2007, http://www.nilc.org/pubs/guideupdates/tbl12_statefood_2007-07.pdf.

16. Unauthorized immigrants are generally ineligible for public services, while recent legal immigrants are also ineligible for many benefits (see Fix and Passel 2002).

17. The White House, "Issues: Education," http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/.

18. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The Employment Situation: May 2009," news release, June 5, 2009.

19. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Regional and State Employment and Unemployment: May 2009," news release, May 22, 2009.

20. See also Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Extended Mass Layoffs in the First Quarter of 2009," news release, May 12, 2009.

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Methods

Data Source

The primary data sources for the statistics in the Children of Immigrants Data Tool are the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) datasets (Ruggles et al. 2008). The IPUMS datasets are drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample, and the combined 2005 and 2006 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys (ACSs) that together compose a 2 percent sample of the nation's population.

Child-Parent Relationship

The IPUMS data identify one or both parents if the parent(s) are living in the same household as the child. The child-parent relationship in the IPUMS data is biological and social; for example, stepfathers and adoptive fathers are identified in addition to biological fathers. The child-parent relationship in a small number of cases has been imputed using information about all household members (for more information on the child-parent relationship in the IPUMS data, see the IPUMS documentation on Family Interrelationships at http://usa.ipums.org/usa/chapter5/chapter5.shtml).

The child-parent relationship is not defined in the data for a small number of children. When the child is identified as a grandchild of the householder, the immigration status of the grandparent is used for determining the immigration status, citizenship, and region of birth of the parent (for about 2 percent of children in the sample). This leaves about 3 percent of children in the sample for which the immigration status of the parents has not been determined.

For the purpose of describing the education, English proficiency, employment, work effort, and race/ethnicity of the parents, the householder and/or spouse information are used when the child-parent relationship has not been determined.

Definitions

"Immigrant" or "foreign-born" persons are born outside the United States and its territories. Those born in Puerto Rico and other territories or born abroad to U.S. citizen parents are "native born." Immigrants include both legal and unauthorized immigrants, though the latter are somewhat undercounted in the official Census and ACS data. Demographers have estimated that the unauthorized are undercounted by about 10 percent in these data sources (see Passel 2006).

"Children of immigrants" or "children of immigrant parents" have at least one foreign-born parent. "Children of native-born parents" live with two parents that are both native born or a single parent who is native born.

Parental origin is defined by grouping countries based on geography, languages, the refugee shares of all immigrants, and available sample sizes. Countries are grouped in eight origin groups: (1) Europe, Canada, and Australia; (2) Mexico; (3) other Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean; (4) South America; (5) Southeast Asia; (6) East Asia and the Pacific; (7) the Middle East and South Asia; and (8) Africa and the West Indies, where mostly English is spoken. For a child with parents from different regions of birth, the child is assigned the region of birth of the mother. See appendix table 2 for a list of countries in each region.

The racial/ethnic categories are mutually exclusive: Hispanic, non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic Asian, and Native American. The census survey allows respondents to select more than one racial/ethnic group. Hispanics are those who identified themselves as Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Non-Hispanic blacks are those who reported black or African American regardless of additional racial/ethnic groups reported. Non-Hispanic Asians are those who reported Asian or Pacific Islander and did not also report black/African American. Non-Hispanic whites are those who reported white and did not also report black/African American or Asian/Pacific Islander. Native Americans are those who reported American Indian/Alaska Native and did not also report black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or white.

"Family" is defined to include the householder and all individuals living with the householder and related to him/her by birth, marriage, or adoption, as well as the unmarried partner of the householder and foster children living in the household. This definition of the family is more inclusive than the definition employed by the American Community Survey, where the family includes the householder and those related to him/her by birth, marriage, or adoption but excludes unmarried partners and foster children.

"Limited English proficient" persons responded to the ACS that they speak a language other than English at home and that they speak English well, not well, or not at all. Those who speak English at home or who speak another language at home but also speak English very well are considered English proficient.

"Linguistically isolated" households are households in which no person age 14 and older is English proficient. All members of such a household are considered linguistically isolated, even though these households may include English-proficient children under age 14. In such cases where only the children are English proficient, they may be providing interpretation for their parents.

"Low-income" families have total family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In 2005, the federal poverty level was $19,971 for a family of four, slightly higher for larger families, and lower for smaller families.

"Low-income working families" have total family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and have high or moderate work efforts. Family work effort is classified as high if any adult reports at least 1,800 hours of work in the prior year—approximately equal to 35 hours of work a week for 52 weeks. Family work effort is defined as moderate if adults average at least 1,000 hours or the total hours worked is at least 1,800 hours, but no adult reports 1,800 hours of work in the prior year. Family work effort is low if adults average 1,000 hours or less *and* total hours worked are less than 1,800 (Acs and Nichols 2005).

APPENDIX TABLE 1. Number and Share of Children of Immigrants in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, 1990 and 2005/06

	1990			2005/06			Growth, 1990–2005/06		
State	Number	Share of children	Rank	Number	Share of children	Rank	Number	Percent	Rank
Alabama	20,736	2%	33	50,169	5%	34	29,433	142%	18
Alaska	13,020	8%	41	18,520	10%	43	5,500	42%	42
Arizona	148,507	16%	8	452,798	29%	7	304,291	205%	10
Arkansas	12,409	2%	42	50,423	8%	33	38,014	306%	4
California	2,845,182	38%	1	4,594,664	49%	1	1,749,482	61%	36
Colorado	69,507	8%	17	229,231	20%	15	159,724	230%	7
Connecticut	98,347	13%	14	152,935	19%	20	54,588	56%	38
Delaware	9,030	6%	45	27,908	14%	40	18,878	209%	9
District of Columbia	13,210	12%	40	18,208	17%	44	4,998	38%	44
Florida	543,022	19%	4	1,179,806	30%	4	636,784	117%	24
Georgia	75,842	5%	16	357,856	15%	8	282,014	372%	3
Hawaii	67,174	25%	18	78,596	27%	28	11,422	17%	46
Idaho	16,696	6%	37	45,974	12%	37	29,278	175%	15
Illinois	409,902	14%	5	740,727	24%	5	330,825	81%	32
Indiana	42,039	3%	25	106,579	7%	23	64,540	154%	17
Iowa	16,700	2%	36	46,413	7%	36	29,713	178%	14
Kansas	32,882	5%	31	76,827	12%	30	43,945	134%	21
Kentucky	15,399	2%	38	39,120	4%	39	23,721	154%	16
Louisiana	41,235	3%	26	45,836	4%	38	4,601	11%	49
Maine	14,859	5%	39	13,791	5%	45	-1,068	-7%	50
Maryland	120,516	11%	13	252,501	19%	13	131,985	110%	26
Massachusetts	205,722	16%	7	312,926	22%	10	107,204	52%	39
Michigan	138,523	6%	9	245,444	10%	14	106,921	77%	35
Minnesota	52,405	5%	21	155,005	13%	19	102,600	196%	12
Mississippi	10,221	1%	44	20,228	3%	42	10,007	98%	27
Missouri	35,605	3%	29	85,071	6%	27	49,466	139%	20
Montana	5,097	2%	48	6,655	3%	48	1,558	31%	45
Nebraska	12,175	3%	43	48,966	11%	35	36,791	302%	5
Nevada	43,440	15%	24	206,967	34%	17	163,527	376%	2
New Hampshire	17,325	6%	35	27,048	9%	41	9,723	56%	37
New Jersey	351,382	20%	6	628,025	30%	6	276,643	79%	34
New Mexico	51,966	12%	22	93,122	19%	26	41,156	79%	33
New York	973,392	24%	2	1,432,868	33%	3	459,476	47%	41
North Carolina	51,942	3%	23	256,829	12%	12	204,887	394%	1
North Dakota	3,605	2%	51	6,624	5%	49	3,019	84%	29
Ohio	91,815	3%	15	138,387	5%	21	46,572	51%	40
Oklahoma	33,955	4%	30	77,811	9%	29	43,856	129%	23
Oregon	56,096	8%	19	161,543	19%	18	105,447	188%	13

APPENDIX TABLE 1. (continued)

State	1990 Number	1990 Share of children	1990 Rank	2005/06 Number	2005/06 Share of children	2005/06 Rank	Growth, 1990–2005/06 Number	Growth, 1990–2005/06 Percent	Growth, 1990–2005/06 Rank
Pennsylvania	125,756	5%	12	228,416	8%	16	102,660	82%	30
Rhode Island	40,358	18%	27	56,603	24%	32	16,245	40%	43
South Carolina	20,610	2%	34	67,163	7%	31	46,553	226%	8
South Dakota	3,756	2%	50	6,798	4%	47	3,042	81%	31
Tennessee	27,030	2%	32	95,765	7%	25	68,735	254%	6
Texas	912,255	19%	3	1,937,360	31%	2	1,025,105	112%	25
Utah	38,454	6%	28	113,989	15%	22	75,535	196%	11
Vermont	6,205	4%	47	5,111	4%	51	-1,094	-18%	51
Virginia	125,967	9%	11	292,389	17%	11	166,422	132%	22
Washington	136,800	11%	10	329,242	22%	9	192,442	141%	19
West Virginia	7,367	2%	46	8,240	2%	46	873	12%	48
Wisconsin	52,955	4%	20	97,369	8%	24	44,414	84%	28
Wyoming	4,550	3%	49	5,205	5%	50	655	14%	47
United States	**8,262,943**	**13%**		**15,726,051**	**22%**		**7,463,108**	**90%**	
Big six states	**6,035,135**	**25%**		**10,513,450**	**36%**		**4,478,315**	**74%**	
Other traditional immigrant destinations	**713,118**	**6%**		**1,175,477**	**10%**		**462,359**	**65%**	
New growth states	**909,730**	**5%**		**3,016,806**	**13%**		**2,107,076**	**232%**	
Other	**604,960**	**7%**		**1,020,318**	**12%**		**415,358**	**69%**	

Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series dataset from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample.

Notes: The big six states are those with the largest immigrant populations: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey. Other traditional immigrant destinations are Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The new growth states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

APPENDIX TABLE 2. Region and Country of Birth of Immigrants

Europe, Canada, and Australia
Albania
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Macedonia
Moldova
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Ukraine
United Kingdom
USSR
Uzbekistan
Yugoslavia

Bermuda
Canada

Australia
New Zealand

Other Central America and Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
Belize
Costa Rica
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Nicaragua
Panama

Cuba
Dominican Republic

East Asia and Pacific
China
Fiji
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Japan
Korea
Malaysia
Micronesia
Philippines
Samoa
Singapore
Taiwan
Tonga

Middle East and South Asia
Afghanistan
Bangladesh
India
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Nepal
Pakistan
Saudi Arabia
Sri Lanka
Syria
Turkey
Yemen

Southeast Asia
Cambodia
Laos
Myanmar
Thailand
Vietnam

Mexico
Mexico

South America
Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Guyana
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

Africa and West Indies
Algeria
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Egypt
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guinea
Kenya
Liberia
Morocco
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
Sudan
Tanzania
Uganda
Zimbabwe
Antigua & Barbuda
Bahamas
Barbados
Dominica
Grenada
Haiti
Jamaica
St. Vincent & The Grenadines
St. Kitts-Nevis
St. Lucia
Trinidad & Tobago

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This brief is part of the Urban Institute's Low-Income Working Families project, a multiyear effort that focuses on the private- and public-sector contexts for families' success or failure. Both contexts offer opportunities for better helping families meet their needs.

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