

Children of Immigrants

Immigration Trends



Fact Sheet No. 1

THE URBAN INSTITUTE 

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This fact sheet is the first in a series of publications on children of immigrants. The series updates the Urban Institute's May 2006 fact sheet that described the characteristics of children of immigrants in the early 2000s. The current series profiles the population of children of immigrants in the United States using data from the 2007 American Community Survey and other sources.

Children in immigrant families are the fastest growing segment of the nation's children population.¹ While the number of children in native families grew by 2.1 million between 1990 and 2007, children of immigrants increased by 8.1 million during this time. The share of children that have at least one foreign-born parent rose rapidly as a result, and now children of immigrants represent more than one in five U.S. children.

Most 1990–2007 Growth in U.S. Children Is from Children of Immigrants

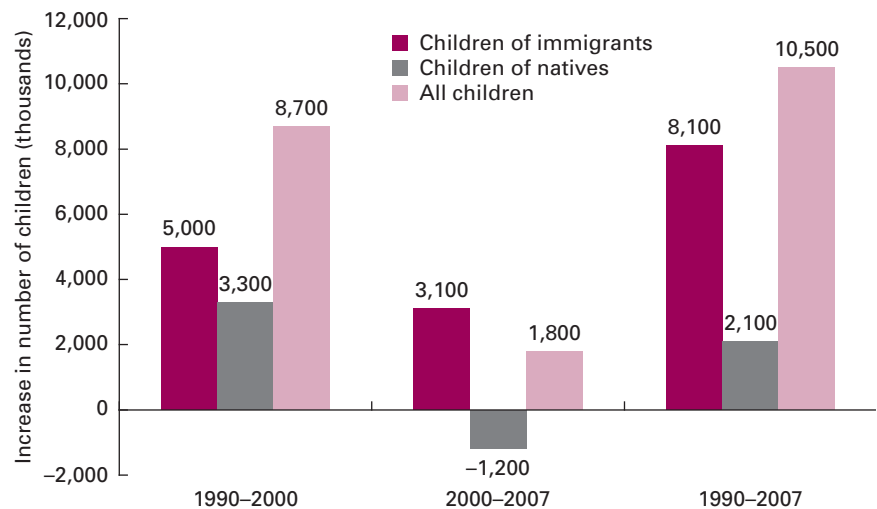
- The rising number of children of immigrants follows directly from the rapid growth in immigration since 1990, with the number of immigrants in the United States nearly doubling from 19.8 million to 38.1 million between 1990 and 2007.² The growth rate was fastest in the 1990s, when the immigrant population reached 31.1 million in 2000, but the numbers continued to increase steadily during the 2000s and reached 38.1 million in 2007.
- As a result, the number of children age 0 to 17 with immigrant parents increased from 8.3 million in 1990 to 13.3 million in 2000 and 16.4 million in 2007. The increase represents a doubling of this population since 1990.

- Children of immigrants contributed 77 percent of the increase in the number of U.S. children between 1990 and 2007. While children of immigrants increased by 8.1 million during this time, children of natives increased more modestly (by 2.1 million, figure 1). Between 2000 and 2007, the number of children of natives actually declined by 1.2 million, while the number of children of immigrants continued to grow.

Rising Shares of Children Have Immigrant Parents in New High-Growth Immigrant States

- Immigrant populations are heavily concentrated in six large states—California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey—where 66 percent of all immigrants live (as of 2007). However, starting in the 1990s, the immigrant populations has grown rapidly in many

Figure 1. Growth in Number of Children of Immigrants and Children of Natives, 1990–2007



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 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

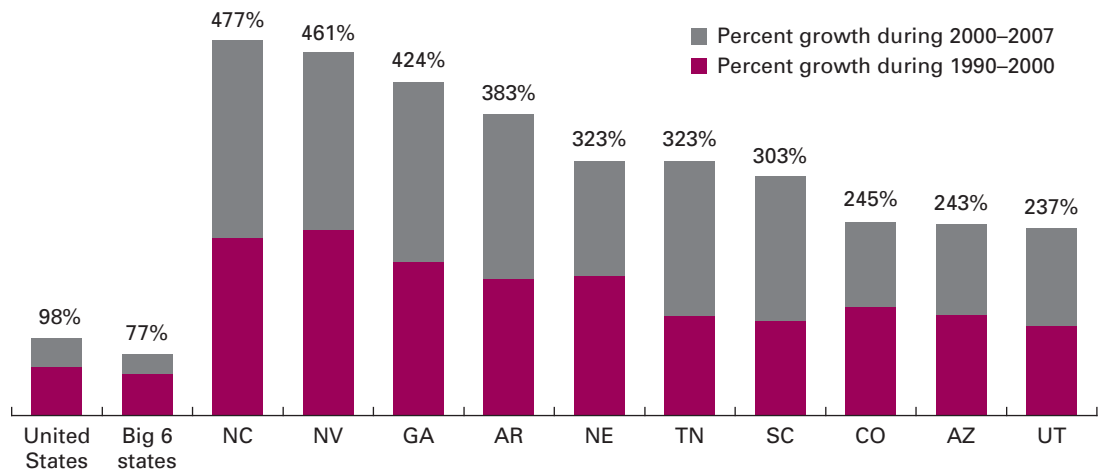
Note: All children include children with parents of unknown nativity (about 2 percent of U.S. children).



western, midwestern, and southeastern states.³ The number of children of immigrants increased 77 percent in the six states with the largest immigrant populations, while many new high-growth immigrant states—such as North Carolina, Nevada, Georgia, Arkansas, Nebraska, Tennessee, and South Carolina—experienced growth rates four to five times as high (figure 2).

- Because of rapid immigration, the share of children that have immigrant parents increased from 13 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2000. In 2007, children of immigrants represented more than one in five children (23 percent).
- The share of children with immigrant parents is larger in states with large immigrant populations or recent high growth in the num-

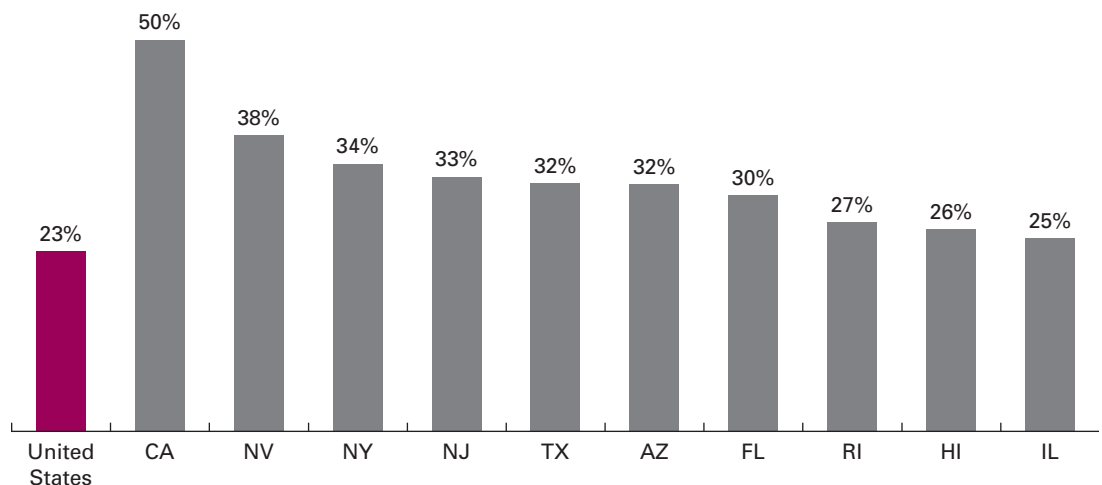
Figure 2. Ten States with the Fastest Increases in Children of Immigrants, 1990–2007



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 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

Note: The big six states are those with the largest immigrant populations: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.

Figure 3. Share of Children That Have Immigrant Parents, Top 10 States, 2007



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.



ber of immigrants. Half of children in California and a third or more of children in Nevada, New York, and New Jersey had immigrant parents in 2007 (figure 3). In Arizona, Florida, Rhode Island, Hawaii, and Illinois, at least a quarter of children had immigrant parents.

More than Half of Children of Immigrants Are Hispanic as Larger Shares of Immigrants Are from Mexico and Latin America

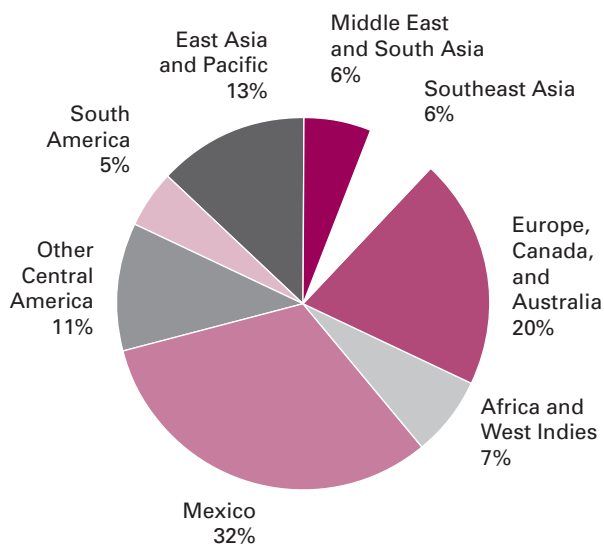
- In 2007, 56 percent of children of immigrants were of Hispanic origin.⁴ Equal shares of children were Asian and white (18 percent each) and fewer children of immigrants (8 percent) were black.
- In 1990, no region of origin predominated: 20 percent of children of immigrants had parents from Europe, Canada, or Australia; 26 percent had parents from Asia; and only 7 percent had parents from Africa (figure 4).⁵ The largest share of immigrants in 1990 came from Mexico and other Latin American countries (48 percent).

- Large immigration flows from Mexico and other Latin American countries during the 1990s further changed the composition of the immigrant population. By 2007, the majority of children of immigrants had parents from Latin America (59 percent). Mexico was the largest source country of immigrants, having grown from a 32 percent share of the children of immigrants to 42 percent (figure 5). A relatively smaller share of children of immigrants had parents from Europe (11 percent in 2007 compared with 20 percent in 1990). Those from Asia (22 percent) and Africa (8 percent) maintained a relatively consistent share over this time.

Most Children of Immigrants Are U.S. Citizens, but Many Have Noncitizen Parents

- Most children of immigrants are U.S. citizens: in 2007, 87 percent of children were citizens. The citizen share has increased from 1990 when 80 percent of children of immigrants were citizens. Almost all citizen children of

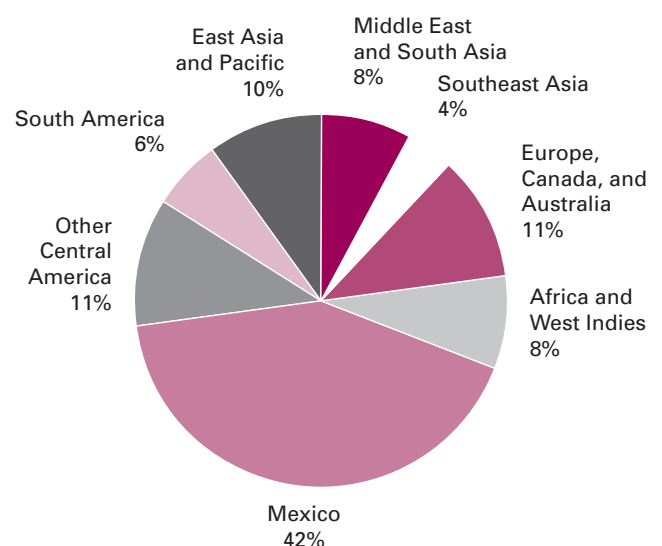
Figure 4. Children of Immigrants by Region of Origin of Parents, 1990



8.1 million children of immigrants

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.

Figure 5. Children of Immigrants by Region of Origin of Parents, 2007

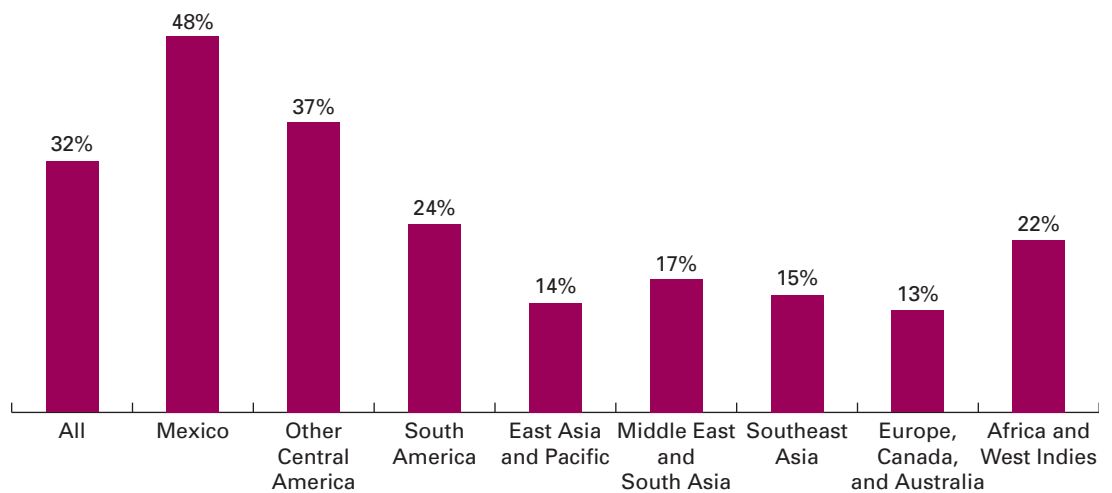


16.4 million children of immigrants

Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.



Figure 6. Share of Children of Immigrants in Mixed-Status Families by Region of Origin, 2007



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

immigrants are citizens by birth (97 percent in 2007), while the rest are citizens by naturalization.

- Younger children are more likely to be U.S. citizens than older children. In 2007, almost all children age 0 to 5 (96 percent) were citizens. The citizen share was lower for children age 6 to 12 (85 percent) and lower still for children age 13 to 17 (79 percent).
- In 2007, 44 percent of children of immigrants lived in families where neither parent was a U.S. citizen, and 32 percent of children of immigrants were in mixed-status families where the children were U.S. citizens and the parents were not.⁶ The share of mixed-status families where citizen children lived with noncitizen parents increased significantly from 24 percent in 1990 to 32 percent in 2007.
- The share of children in mixed-status families varies significantly by region of origin (figure 6). In 2007, almost half (48 percent) of Mexican children of immigrants were in mixed-status families, while less than one-sixth of children of Asian and European parents lived in such families (13 and 14 percent, respectively).

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.

2. Unless stated otherwise, data in this fact sheet are taken from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets (Ruggles et al. 2008) drawn from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample, and the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.
3. 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).
4. The racial/ethnic categories are mutually exclusive. The census survey allows respondents to select more than one racial/ethnic group. Hispanic 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 report “black/African American.” Non-Hispanic whites are those who reported “white” and did not report “black/African American” or “Asian/Pacific Islander.”



5. 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.
6. Noncitizens include legal immigrants, such as legal permanent residents and refugees, and unauthorized immigrants. The U.S. Census data do not identify the legal immigrant status of respondents. In 2008, 4 million children born in the United States had unauthorized immigrant parents (Passel and Cohn 2009).

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