



Children of Immigrants

Children of immigrants represent a growing share of all children in the United States.

- ◆ An immigrant heads one out of every 6 U.S. families with children (16 percent). The number of immigrant families with children grew by 15 percent between 1995 and 2000.
- ◆ Ten percent of the U.S. population are immigrants, but 20 percent of children are children of an immigrant. One out of every five school-age children is the child of an immigrant. Immigrants represent 5.7 percent of the high-school student population and 3.5 percent of the primary school population (1997).
- ◆ In 20 states, children of immigrants represent more than one-sixth of the child population, thanks to strong dispersal trends among immigrant families.

Most children of immigrants are citizens of the United States.

- ◆ Four out of 5 children of immigrants were born in the United States.
- ◆ Three out of 4 children in families with one more non-citizen parent are citizens (76 percent)
- ◆ Two out of 3 children in families with one or more undocumented parent is a citizen (68 percent).
- ◆ One in 10 children in the United States lives in a “mixed-status family,” in which at least one parent is a non-citizen and one child is a citizen. Fifteen percent of poor children in the United States live in mixed-status families; the share is 50 percent in Los Angeles.

Children of immigrants are likely to face economic disadvantages.

- ◆ More than one-quarter (26 percent) of children living in a low-income family—with an income below the poverty level—is the child of an immigrant. Sixty-five percent of low-income immigrant families with children are two-parent families, compared to only 40 percent of native low-income families with children.
- ◆ Half of immigrant families with children had incomes below twice the poverty level in 2000, compared to only one third of native families with children.
- ◆ Between 1995 and 2000, the number of low-income immigrant families grew by only 7 percent in states with generous social welfare programs for immigrants, compared to 31 percent in states with less generous programs.
- ◆ One in 3 children without insurance is in an immigrant family.
- ◆ Compared to children of children of native parents, children of immigrants are more likely to: lack health insurance (25 percent compared to 11 percent); have no usual source of medical care (14 percent compared to 4 percent); and be “food insecure,” (37 percent compared to 27 percent).

Since welfare reform, immigrant families with children are using fewer benefits.

- ◆ Among legal immigrant families with children, use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) fell by 53 percent between 1994 and 1999; while food stamp use fell by 38 percent.
- ◆ Among refugee families with children, TANF use fell by 78 percent between 1994 and 1999; while food stamp use fell by 53 percent.

Schools face a growing need to serve children of immigrants with limited English skills.

- ◆ Forty percent of foreign-born children have limited English proficiency (LEP).
- ◆ Half of LEP children attend schools in which a third or more of their classmates have LEP.