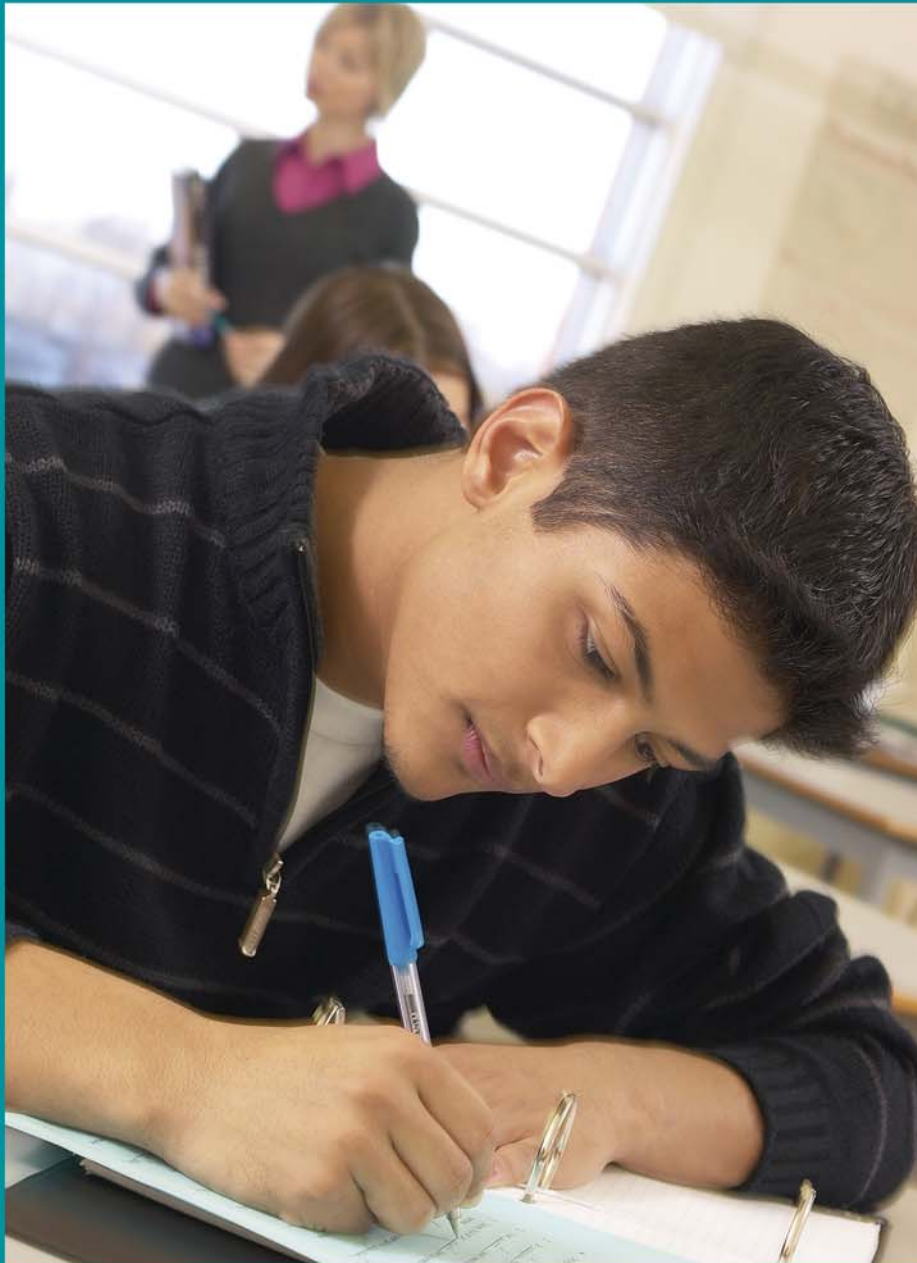


# LOS ANGELES ON THE LEADING EDGE

## IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INDICATORS AND THEIR POLICY IMPLICATIONS

BY MICHAEL FIX, MARGIE MCHUGH, AARON MATTEO TERRAZAS, AND LAUREN LAGLAGARON

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NATIONAL CENTER ON IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY

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Immigrant Integration Indicators and  
Their Policy Implications

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our nation's immigration policies and debates have traditionally been concerned almost entirely with questions of who, how many, and what kinds of immigrants should be admitted to the country. Yet, our immigrant integration policies—the ultimate test of whether immigration succeeds in creating stronger communities and enhancing US economic competitiveness—are skeletal, ad hoc, and greatly underfunded.

There is no national office charged with guiding immigrant integration policy and helping determine how the costs and responsibilities for those policies should be allocated among the different levels of government. In the absence of congressional action on pressing immigration and integration matters, integration policies are falling, by default, to increasingly restive and cash-strapped state and local governments.

As the gateway for millions of new immigrants who arrived in the United States in the mid to late 20th century, Los Angeles became a multicultural mosaic that today stands at the leading edge of national immigration trends. Even as new immigrants have turned away from Los Angeles and other traditional gateway cities in search of new destinations, Los Angeles County remains the largest immigrant metropolis in the nation, with more than one-third of its 9.9 million residents and nearly half its workforce comprised of immigrants.

Federal inaction on immigration policy has led to a large, settled unauthorized population, the largest of any county in the nation. First- and second-generation immigrants together accounted for over half of the Los Angeles County population in 2004. And 55 percent of children in Los Angeles are second-generation immigrants (native-born children of foreign-born parents). With its sizeable population of second-generation immigrants, and its complex mix of first-generation naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees, and unauthorized immigrants, Los Angeles is now experiencing the human legacy of decades of sustained, large-scale immigration.

As this report will show, Los Angeles is not only on the leading edge of demographic change due to immigration, it is also on the leading edge of the many unresolved immigrant integration issues facing our nation and the cities and states where immigrants now reside. The future vitality of the Los Angeles economy and body politic depends on immigrants and their children—and on the investments made in integrating them into the mainstream of civic life and the economy. And, while traditional gateways and new destinations across the country face similar challenges and opportunities in the area of immigrant integration, nowhere is the scale of the undertaking as significant as in Los Angeles:

- Over 40 percent of all students in Los Angeles schools are English Language Learners (ELLs). The great majority are US citizens, and the number of ELL

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students—almost 330,000—is three times higher than the next highest district in the nation.

- Almost half (46 percent) of the Los Angeles County workforce is foreign born, a share three times higher than the United States as a whole.
- One-third of Los Angeles adults are ELLs, a number that rose from 1.7 million to 2.3 million between 1990 and 2006.
- With 40 percent of adult immigrants lacking a high school diploma, and 43 percent of California’s recent Latin American immigrants who entered after age 25 with a bachelor’s degree or higher employed in unskilled jobs, workforce incorporation and economic mobility questions loom large for both high- and low-skilled immigrants.

With the county on the leading edge of the nation’s rapidly changing, immigrant-led demographics, Los Angeles provides a laboratory for policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address immigrant integration issues in a more coordinated way. Several trends in the Los Angeles population indicate that this is a strategic moment for such action:

- The share of newcomers—immigrants who arrived in the United States during the preceding decade—among the foreign born in Los Angeles is at its lowest level since the 1970s. In 2000, newcomer immigrants were 36 percent of the foreign-born population in Los Angeles compared to 54 percent in 1990, 57 percent in 1980, and 42 percent in 1970.<sup>1</sup>
- The share of the county’s foreign-born population who are naturalized citizens almost doubled from 9 to 16 percent between 1990 and 2006.
- The first generation is rapidly ceding ground to the second generation: second-generation children made up 55 percent of the county’s entire child population in 2004 compared to just 40 percent in 1990.

The rising share of naturalized citizens and second-generation immigrants means that, even if federal inaction on immigrant integration policy remains a significant challenge, state and local policymakers, and immigrant communities themselves, have increased opportunity to catalyze change.

High rates of immigrant workforce participation and the inexorable push toward incorporation of their children into the mainstream of civic and economic life must be leveraged with smart integration policy and investment strategies if Los Angeles, and indeed our nation, are to meet the unprecedented challenges of the baby boom generation’s retirement and stalled growth in the native workforce. If state and local policymakers are both

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1. Julie Park, Dowell Myers, and Sung Ho Ryu, *Evaluating the Changes in the Inflow and Outflow of Immigrants in Los Angeles Between the 1980s and 1990s*, Working paper PDRG04-05, Population Dynamics Research Group, School of Policy, Planning, and Development, University of Southern California, September 2004.

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innovative and contemplative with their investments, they can offer policy solutions to improve the education, labor force, and health outcomes of immigrants and their descendants. And, given the weight of immigrants and their descendants in the overall Los Angeles population, the region only stands to benefit. So does the nation, which can learn as Los Angeles serves as a laboratory for approaches that promote the success of immigrants and thereby the broader US society.

## I. Integration Imperatives

Given the size of today's immigration flows and the pressures the globalizing economy is placing on local US communities and markets, there are several strong imperatives for the public and private sectors to take a more proactive approach to immigrant integration:

- **Promoting the region and the nation's economic self-interest as the baby boom generation retires, as the growth of the native-born labor force stalls, and as global competition for labor intensifies.** Given current and projected labor market challenges, the nation—and key engines of the national economy, such as Los Angeles—cannot afford to have a substantial share of their workforce poorly educated and unable to meet the economy's escalating demands for high worker productivity. Sustaining productivity and paying our health and Social Security bills will require that this largely younger first- and second-generation population succeeds in schools and the labor market, and becomes deeply invested in the American community.
- **Addressing the mismatch between the country's relatively generous immigration policies and its ad hoc and underfunded immigrant integration policies.** Despite the transformative nature of immigrant demographic trends in recent decades, the integration of immigrants remains an afterthought in policy discussions and could be considered one of the most overlooked issues in American governance. This inattention to immigrant integration has meant that few resources have been dedicated to the issue; the institutional infrastructure is skeletal; and that the community of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners addressing these issues is quite small.
- **Countering the decline of mediating institutions that have traditionally served to advance immigrant integration, such as urban schools, unions, large US-based manufacturers, and political parties.** In addition to the decline of institutions that helped in the past, new policies introduced by welfare and illegal immigration reform in 1996 removed key supports should immigrants fall on hard times, barred legal immigrants from the social safety net, and shifted even greater responsibility for their care to the states. Further, these changes all come at a time of government disinvestment in many social welfare programs.
- **Responding to the collapse of comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the US Congress.** Although meaningful integration strategies were largely left out of proposals for comprehensive immigration reform, the enactment of a broad legalization program would have brought millions of unauthorized immigrants



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out of the shadows and allowed for their formal integration into local communities. The collapse of comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the summer of 2007 presents extremely difficult integration challenges for Los Angeles County, with its large and settled unauthorized immigrant population.<sup>2</sup> Their mobility is limited, and the integrating resources that might have been provided through a federal impact-aid program will not be forthcoming.

## **II. Population and Other Trends That Shape the Immigrant Integration Conversation**

In order to provide a framework for considering key immigrant integration indicators and their policy implications, the report presents a detailed review of key demographic trends in the Los Angeles foreign-born and second-generation populations, segmenting the population by legal status and immigration categories.

Key findings include the following:

### ***Scale Issues in Los Angeles and Limited Institutional Capacity***

One obvious challenge to immigrant integration in Los Angeles is simply the scale of the enterprise. Almost half of the Los Angeles workforce is foreign born. (Nationwide, the share is 15 percent.) With over 9.9 million residents, roughly one-third (36 percent) of the population is foreign born, and one-quarter is second-generation immigrants (the children of immigrants).

Over 40 percent of all students in Los Angeles schools are ELLs. The number of ELLs enrolled in Los Angeles schools—330,000—is almost three times larger than the school system with the next highest number of ELL children in the United States. Similarly, the unauthorized population of Los Angeles (roughly 1 million) is almost twice the size of the unauthorized population in New York City, the metropolitan area with the next highest number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States.

In addition to issues of scale, the complex governance and jurisdictional issues facing Los Angeles County and its many city governments and service-delivery systems complicate systemic planning and reform efforts that might improve integration-related services. The lack of dedicated structures within government to coordinate such efforts also likely impedes progress.

### ***Large, But Comparatively Settled, Unauthorized Population***

Few challenges to integrating the nation's and the county's immigrant population are greater than those posed by the number of unauthorized immigrants. As noted above, of the roughly

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2. Karina Fortuny, Randy Capps, and Jeffrey Passel, *The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2007).

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12 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, roughly 1 million live in Los Angeles.

The presence of a large unauthorized population raises numerous policy and practice issues for local governments, not least of which are those having to do with “mixed-status families.” In Los Angeles, about 537,000 children have one or more unauthorized parents—or roughly one in five children (20 percent) under age 18. Nationwide, the share of such children is about 6 percent, and in California it is about 14 percent. Given that unauthorized status has been found to generate negative spillover effects on both the noncitizen *and* citizen children in households with unauthorized parents,<sup>3</sup> the unusually large number of mixed-status families in Los Angeles presents unique challenges to policymakers and all those working to improve education, health, and other relevant outcomes for the children of Los Angeles.

However, Los Angeles not only faces unique challenges but unique opportunities as well. Two characteristics of the county’s unauthorized population stand out in addition to its size. First is a comparatively low rate of growth compared to the nation. Second is its comparatively settled nature, with a significant share having lived in the United States for 10 years or more. Both characteristics should mitigate the integration challenges to which a potential legalization program would give rise. In addition, the relatively settled nature of the population would seem to indicate that many of these immigrants would have progressed somewhat on integration indicators, such as knowledge of English, understanding of US school practices, and basic integration into the civic life of local communities.

### ***Refugee Declines***

Nationwide, refugee admissions have dropped and remained low in recent years; this has had far-ranging implications for the integrating institutions that have administered the refugee resettlement system, including the weakening or dissolution of many local programs that provided resettlement services. Los Angeles, with its large population of refugees, would likely be an important site for resettlement if and when the flow of refugees increases (as many predict it will). Rebuilding the capacity and skill of the refugee service-delivery system to successfully resettle new waves of refugees is an important national challenge, but one that may affect Los Angeles disproportionately.

### ***Rise in the Number of Naturalized Citizens***

At the same time, the share of immigrants in Los Angeles who are naturalized citizens is rapidly rising—a positive indicator of current and future integration, given the avenues to civic engagement that are open to citizens (voting, jury duty, holding public office) but closed to many noncitizens. While the foreign born remained a relatively constant percentage of the

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3. Frank D. Bean, Susan K. Brown, Mark A. Leach, and James Bachmeier, *Becoming Stakeholders: The Structure, Nature and Pace of U.S. Integration Among Mexican Immigrants and Their Descendants*, Report to the Merage Foundation for the American Dream Symposium on Immigrant National Leaders, May 2007.

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Los Angeles County population between 1990 and 2006 (ranging between 33 and 36 percent), the percentage of naturalized citizens among the foreign born almost doubled from 9 to 16 percent between 1990 and 2006.

### ***Lawful Permanent Residents Who Are Eligible to Naturalize***

Three million lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in California were eligible to naturalize in 2005 but had not done so; an additional 736,000 will become eligible by 2010. We know from national studies that over half of these “eligibles” are Limited English Proficient (LEP), have lower educational attainment, and have more limited incomes than naturalized immigrants. Given recent changes to the naturalization process, they will face a more difficult citizenship test and a much more expensive application fee.

### ***Diversity***

Los Angeles has a diverse population. In 2006, Mexicans accounted for less than half of the foreign born in Los Angeles (42.7 percent), with the next largest populations including (in order of size), El Salvador (7.6 percent), China (6.3 percent), the Philippines (6.1 percent), Guatemala (4.6 percent), Korea (4.4 percent), Iran (3.0 percent), Vietnam (2.7 percent), Taiwan (1.9 percent), and Armenia (1.6 percent). The challenge of integration, then, falls to a wide range of both established and newer, emerging communities.

### ***Implications of Shifts in Legal Status of Immigrants in Los Angeles***

Generally speaking, the changing dynamics within the immigrant population in Los Angeles may be opening opportunities to redeploy and better target investments and community assets. The noncitizen population is falling; the number of new immigrants is declining; and the size of the unauthorized population is stable. The first generation is gradually ceding ground to a second generation that will be composed of citizens who, at minimum, will enjoy the same rights as other citizens. If history is any guide, their incomes should rise along with educational achievement and the quality of their jobs. But, while analyses of the second generation are generally hopeful, they find that Mexicans and Latinos continue to lag significantly when it comes to college attendance and completion—important, obvious targets for public investment.<sup>4</sup>

These population trends create a variety of challenges for elected officials, government agency administrators, local service providers, and others that cut across individual issue areas and imply ongoing needs to

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4. Roger Waldinger and Renee Reichl, “Today’s Second Generation: Getting Ahead or Falling Behind?” in *Securing the Future, US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*, ed. Michael Fix (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007).

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- address linguistic and cultural competence issues in service-delivery systems and training of frontline workers in program eligibility issues;
  - develop and maintain expertise in federal, state, and local issues on the use of different identity documents and in confidentiality provisions for the collection and sharing of immigration status information;
  - understand and address barriers preventing those who are eligible to naturalize from doing so—for example, English instruction needs, application costs, and availability of application assistance;
  - understand and address the particular issues associated with barriers to services for children in mixed-status households;
  - analyze the strengths and weaknesses of refugee resettling institutions with an eye toward preserving expertise and key capacities given the prospects of higher flows in the future.

Finally, the large and settled nature of the unauthorized population argues for a leadership role on the part of Los Angeles municipal officials in national debates about the nature of a possible legalization program, including, but not limited to, appropriate impact aid for localities with large numbers of unauthorized residents. Similarly, should a legalization program be enacted, local government entities will likely need to play a coordinating role across government agencies and with community stakeholders to ensure that eligible individuals are able to enroll in the program.

### **III. Implications for Key Policy and Service Areas**

After addressing macro population trends and their implications for Los Angeles, the report moves to a review of individual program and service areas that are particularly relevant to the discussion of immigrant integration indicators. The data raise numerous questions about policy responses and investments at the federal, state, and local levels that would support key integration goals, and that would more fairly apportion the costs of integration efforts across the different levels of government. Of course, employers, private foundations, civic and service-providing organizations, and immigrants themselves should also be considered potential investors in and leaders of such integration initiatives.

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5. These estimates are based on assumption of the English skills that immigrants will require for full integration into US society. This includes sufficient English language proficiency in order to pass the citizenship test (those 24 and older) and to fully participate in the country's civic and political life. For young adults ages 17 to 24, we assume a somewhat higher target level of English proficiency—sufficient to engage in postsecondary education without the need for remediation services.

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Highlights of key issue areas explored in the report include the following:

### ***Adult English Language Instruction***

Language represents a powerful barrier to integration nationwide and particularly in areas with highly concentrated immigrant communities such as Los Angeles. According to our estimates, there are over 2 million Angeleno adults who are LEP and would need some level of English instruction, including roughly 805,000 adult LPRs, 545,000 adult unauthorized immigrants, 640,000 adult naturalized citizens and refugees, and 74,000 native-born citizens.<sup>5</sup> While Los Angeles receives substantial state support to provide adult English language instruction through its adult education system and community colleges, concerns about issues like program accessibility, relevance, student persistence, and performance, and the ability of current providers to meet the demand that would be triggered should a legalization program be enacted in coming years, must be addressed if the needs of adult LEP individuals are to be met.

The issues language instruction provision raises go beyond simple supply to include the nature of the adult English instruction available. While program offerings may be quite varied and robust, to immigrant students they often appear as an unintegrated mix of basic English, civics, citizenship, workplace and family, health, or financial literacy classes. Further, while many immigrants seek classes that will improve their job prospects and earnings, instruction geared to vocational English and workforce skills is usually in short supply.

As the data presented in this report suggest, there may also be a mismatch between the basic English proficiency levels taught in most classes and the higher proficiency levels and differing instructional needs of many LEP adults.

### ***Recognition of Foreign Credentials***

Despite popular assumptions that highly educated immigrants do not pose a challenge to immigrant integration, high education qualifications do not appear to guarantee immigrants' economic integration. Our research finds that 43 percent of recent Latin American immigrant workers to California who entered the country after they were 25, with a bachelor's degree or higher, were employed in unskilled jobs.<sup>6</sup> Much talent, then, is going unused: often the result of an inefficient system for translating foreign credentials into qualifications that US employers understand.

### ***Poverty and Public Benefits***

While poverty rates have stopped rising for immigrants, they have been increasing among the native population—a worrying sign, perhaps, of the stalled progress of the second generation and one that calls for further analysis. Moreover, despite popular assumptions to the contrary, participation rates for low-income LPR families nationwide are lower than those for citizen

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6. This analysis includes both legal and unauthorized immigrants.

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families in three federal public benefits programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Patterns of public benefits use among low-income immigrant families in Los Angeles mirror national trends, where legal noncitizens are much less likely to use TANF and Food Stamps but almost as likely to use Medicaid.

### ***Health Care and Uninsurance***

The data on health coverage we array nationwide and for Los Angeles are particularly disheartening. Nationwide, low-income noncitizen children in noncitizen families were three times more likely than low-income citizen children with US-born parents to be uninsured. Low-income *legal* noncitizen children and *refugee* children were twice as likely as their citizen counterparts to be uninsured nationally. In Los Angeles, noncitizens are 21 percent of the total population, but they make up 44 percent of the county's uninsured.

### ***ELLs and PreK–12 Education***

While the number of ELL students in Los Angeles is declining, their number and characteristics underscore the challenges of meeting their needs. Eighty percent of ELLs in elementary schools and 49 percent of ELLs in secondary schools were born in the United States and were presumably educated in US schools. The predominance of these “long-term LEP” children reflects a breakdown in instruction and the need for accountability. At the same time, large shares of foreign-born elementary and secondary students arrived within the past three years. Thus, the ELL population in Los Angeles and the United States is dominated by two subpopulations: the recently arrived and long-term LEP individuals. Both pose difficult and distinct challenges for schools, challenges that are arguably complicated by California's Proposition 227, which restricts bilingual education.

But there are opportunities here as well. Our analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress finds that “former” ELLs perform as well as their non-ELL counterparts. In other words, for many students, ELL is a *transitional* status. The key is to determine which practices promote success for transitioning out of ELL status and replicating those successes for all children. The powerful imperatives of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to identify and serve ELL children is challenging schools across the nation, and particularly in Los Angeles, to improve the performance of these students. Our own research on immigrant integration has made clear that several complex issues urgently need addressing: the development of reliable assessments, valid accommodations, teacher supply and quality, challenging and reliable curricula, and parent involvement strategies that can serve both education and civic engagement goals.

### ***Implications for Civic Engagement***

The decline in noncitizens, the rise in the naturalized population, and the growth in the second generation in Los Angeles all point to significant new opportunities to promote the

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involvement of immigrants in civic and political life. A strategy that builds on demography and catalyzes informed engagement by immigrants and other stakeholders could create the energy and focus needed to address the challenges and opportunities posed by integration issues, and, at the same time, build a more vibrant and cohesive Los Angeles community.

Focusing on language and civics instruction, for example, would give immigrants the skills and confidence to participate more fully in the social and civic life of Los Angeles. Promoting naturalization, registration, and voting would lead to greater political engagement on issues important to immigrant communities and the broader California and US electorates. And efforts to welcome and support the year-round participation of all immigrants and their family members on key issues, such as quality schools, access to affordable health care, and job-training opportunities, could revitalize civic life in many communities and across Los Angeles, while also furthering integration goals and priorities.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As this report makes clear, the particular demographic trends that have shaped the population of Los Angeles over the past 30 to 40 years place it on the leading edge of issues related to the integration of immigrants and their families into the mainstream of the US economy and civic life. Los Angeles is unique in the size of its immigrant population, the large presence of unauthorized and mixed-status families, and the growing size of the second generation and its concerns. As it engages and responds to the opportunities and challenges these trends present, Los Angeles is illuminating the path for elected officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders across the country who are beginning to grapple with the imperative for immigrant integration and the ad hoc nature of most responses thus far.

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## INTRODUCTION

### LOS ANGELES ON THE LEADING EDGE

Situated on the southwestern edge of the United States, Los Angeles is in many respects the country's gateway to the emerging countries of Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific. During the last quarter of the 20th century, Los Angeles County was also on the leading edge of national immigration trends. Today, despite slowing inflows of new immigrants, it remains the leading edge of the nation's immigrant integration challenges, and accordingly, it provides a roadmap to the policy implications of these challenges.

Los Angeles was the gateway for millions of new immigrants who arrived in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century. During these decades, Los Angeles became a multicultural mosaic. By the 1990s, however, newly arriving immigrants began shifting away from so-called traditional gateway cities—such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago—to new destinations, including Las Vegas, Nevada; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Washington, DC. Although it continues to attract significant numbers of new arrivals, Los Angeles has ceased to be an immigrant mecca. During the 1990s, it actually experienced a decline in the number of new immigrants it received.<sup>7</sup>

But while the flows of new immigrants have dispersed across the United States, Los Angeles not only remains a major destination, it also confronts the human legacy of decades of sustained immigration. Federal inaction on immigration policy has led to a large, settled unauthorized population in the county. US Census Bureau data suggest a rising number of native-born Angelenos, but the distinction between foreign and native born masks an important underlying trend: rapid growth of the second and higher generations, that is, the native-born children and grandchildren of immigrants.

Perhaps foreshadowing the challenges that new destination cities and states around the country will face in the future, Los Angeles County is now confronting the real challenges—and real opportunities—of immigrant integration.

While our nation's *immigration* policies and debates have traditionally been concerned almost entirely with questions of who, how many, and what kinds of immigrants should be

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7. Patrick Golier, Julie Park, and Dowell Myers, "Summary of Overall Socioeconomic Status Changes of the Foreign Born Population in Los Angeles" (working paper PDRG04-02, Population Dynamics Research Group, School of Policy, Planning and Development, University of Southern California, May 2004).



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admitted to the country, our *immigrant integration* policies—which will determine to a significant degree whether immigration succeeds—are skeletal, ad hoc, and underfunded.

Immigrant integration is a complex phenomenon that can be understood and described in many ways. *We define integration broadly as the process by which immigrant newcomers achieve **economic mobility** and **social inclusion** in the larger society. This definition implies a **two-way process** that involves changes on the part of not just immigrants but also of members of the receiving community.* Although policies governing the admission of immigrants to the United States have traditionally been a federal prerogative, immigrant integration has historically occurred at the local level primarily through the efforts of families, employers, schools, churches, communities, and local benevolent societies.<sup>8</sup>

In light of recent political developments at the national level—including the collapse, in June 2007, of comprehensive immigration reform proposals in the US Senate—it is likely that local communities will continue to play the lead role in immigrant integration. In this paper, we outline some of what we view to be the most critical national trends in immigrant integration in the United States, citing parallel or distinct trends in Los Angeles County and in California. We also provide separate analyses for key policy and service areas, including primary and secondary education, adult literacy, workforce training, poverty, insurance, and healthcare.

In some cases, we draw on existing data and analysis. In others, such as the estimates of demand for adult English language instruction, we conducted fresh analyses for this report. We conclude each chapter by synthesizing the broad trends that any integration agenda in Los Angeles County should address, and then we suggest a number of policy and investment options for consideration. Ultimately, our objective is to provide an analytical framework for these issues and catalyze dialogue about them both within and across the different policy areas, levels of government, and groups of stakeholders, who must act on them.

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8. Michael Fix, ed., *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007).

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK: INTEGRATION IMPERATIVES AND TRENDS

There are, we think, four strong imperatives for taking a more proactive approach to immigrant integration: (1) economic self-interest, given evolving demographic and global economic trends; (2) an institutional mismatch between immigration and immigrant integration policies in the United States; (3) the decline of mediating institutions that have traditionally served to advance immigrant integration; and (4) last year's collapse of comprehensive immigration reform in the US Congress and the continued controversy this issue will provoke until agreement can be reached at the federal level on fundamental changes to our immigration laws.

#### **Economic Self-Interest**

The nation's integration policy—like its immigration policy—should not only flow from its charitable values, but also from deeply self-interested motives, as the United States is challenged by the convergence of several demographic and global economic trends:

- the aging of the baby boom generation and its impending retirement
- no real growth within the prime-age native labor force
- intense new competition in globalized markets

Assuming current immigration levels continue, immigrants will account for approximately half of the growth of the working-age population in the United States between now and 2015, and immigrants will account for *all* labor force growth from 2015 to 2025, when the share of the native born in the working-age population is projected to decline.<sup>9</sup> As the native-born population ages, immigrants will increasingly constitute the productive portion of the US population.

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9. B. Lindsay Lowell, Julia Gelatt, and Jeanne Batalova, *Immigrants and Labor Force Trends: The Future, Past and Present. A Report to the Independent task Force on Immigration and America's Future* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2006).

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Concurrent to this demographic shift, global competition for high-skilled laborers has and will continue to intensify. Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of science and engineering jobs in the United States that are filled by doctorate-level workers born abroad increased from 24 to 38 percent.<sup>10</sup> Europe produced twice as many science and engineering PhDs in 2000 as the United States, while Asia has taken the lead in graduating science and engineering students. If current trends continue, 90 percent of the world's PhD-holding scientists and engineers will live in Asia by 2010.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, as the premium placed on science and engineering skills in the worldwide economy rises, the scores of US high school students in math and science continue to be among the lowest of the 30 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>12</sup> In a global knowledge economy, high-skilled immigrants will remain vital to economic sustainability in the United States, California, and the Los Angeles region. Immigrants are also vital to lower-skilled segments of the Los Angeles economy, such as transportation, entertainment, logistics, and agriculture.

## Institutional Mismatch

A second reason to confront our integration challenges is the mismatch between the nation's immigration policies—which, however broken, are on the whole comparatively generous—and its immigrant integration policies. There is no national office charged with immigrant integration to guide policy and, in the absence of congressional action, integration policies fall, by default, to an increasingly restive set of state and local governments. California, with the nation's largest immigrant population, has no processes or structures that allow it to consider the impact of immigrants on key state services, analyze trends, or plan responses (see, for example, the recommendations of the June 2002 Little Hoover Commission report).<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, at the Los Angeles County and city levels, no such government-coordination structures or processes exist either. Admittedly, the existence of such structures or processes would not guarantee better planning or responses to immigrant flows or integration issues, and many individual agencies have attempted to understand and respond to the complex demographics of the population. However, the absence of such coordination likely results in reduced leveraging of government and community resources; slower uptake of best practices; and potential duplication in research, planning, and even service-delivery efforts.

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10. United States National Science Board, *The Science and Engineering Workforce—Realizing America's Potential* (Washington, DC: National Science Foundation, 2003).
  11. Doris Meissner, Deborah W. Meyers, Demetrios Papademetriou, and Michael Fix, *Immigration and America's Future: A New Chapter* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2006).
  12. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World* (Paris: OECD, 2007).
  13. Little Hoover Commission, *We The People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians* (Sacramento, California: Little Hoover Commission, 2002), <http://www.lhc.ca.gov/lhcdir/166/report166.pdf>.

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## Decline in Mediating Institutions

The neglect on the part of policymakers and federal agencies is particularly relevant given the recent decline of other institutions that have historically been central to immigrant integration, including unions, manufacturing firms, urban schools, churches, and local political party machines. For example, the share of foreign-born wage and salary workers who belong to unions fell between 1996 and 2006, and, despite service-industry union efforts to organize new immigrants, immigrant workers remain underrepresented in manufacturing, construction, and other labor unions.<sup>14</sup>

## The Collapse of Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The collapse of comprehensive immigration reform legislation in the US Senate in 2007 will certainly complicate the business of immigrant integration, slowing progress for communities with large unauthorized populations and many mixed-status families. While it is hard to make predictions, the defeat does not bode well for the important piecemeal reforms that were included in the bill and that might have provided some federal action to facilitate the integration of particular immigrant subgroups. These include the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would offer a path to legalization for students who were brought to the United States by their illegally resident parents, as well as the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security (AgJOBS) bill, which would reform the temporary worker program for perishable crop agriculture and include a legalization program. In fact, the Senate subsequently rejected the DREAM Act in a 52–44 vote that fell short of the 60 votes needed to bring the bill to the Senate floor for debate.<sup>15</sup>

The defeat of comprehensive immigration reform holds powerful implications for Los Angeles County, whose 9.9 million residents include an estimated unauthorized population of 1 million.<sup>16</sup> It removes a powerful impetus for this large unauthorized population to learn English, as legalizing immigrants would have been compelled to pass the naturalization test in English in order to remain in the United States. And, although the provisions were in a formative state, the collapse also removes, for the foreseeable future, any prospect of substantial impact aid for state and local governments for providing health or language services to the unauthorized population. Ultimately, the failure of immigration reform will only make the legal and resource challenges of immigrant integration more difficult at the state and local levels.

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14. Chuncui Velma Fan and Jeanne Batalova, “Foreign-Born Wage and Salary Workers in the US Labor Force and Unions,” *Migration Information Source*, August 2007, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=638>.
  15. Julia Preston, “Bill for Immigrant Students Fails Test Vote in Senate,” *New York Times*, October 25, 2007.
  16. Includes the Los Angeles-Long Beach Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), which is composed uniquely of Los Angeles County. Karina Fortuny, Randy Capps, and Jeffrey Passel, “The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States” (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2007).

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## Summary: The National Framework

The rationale for focusing on immigrant integration stems from the need to respond to powerful global economic forces including

- the aging of the baby boom generation
- no growth in the working age share of the native workforce
- intense new competition in globalized labor markets

A more active focus on integration should also attempt to address

- the mismatch between comprehensive immigration policies and ad hoc and underfunded integration policies
- the decline of important mediating institutions, such as unions and urban schools
- the collapse of immigration reform in the US Congress, which leaves state and local governments with large unauthorized populations but no new federal support to respond to their needs

### ***Policy and Investment Implications:***

- Localities with large and diverse immigrant populations, such as Los Angeles County, should build their capacity to analyze immigration and integration trends and their implications for policy and funding decisions at all levels of government. Building this competency is especially important given the federal government's lack of research or tracking of the impacts of immigration policies on states and localities.
- Local government responses to the impacts of immigration in large and complex jurisdictions like Los Angeles likely require both horizontal and vertical approaches—that is, cross-agency (horizontal) coordination and planning efforts, as well as individual-agency (vertical) service-adaptation efforts.

Private organizations can encourage reticent or resource-poor state and local governments to examine the challenges and opportunities that immigration poses to their communities, and support efforts to fill agency coordination or service gaps.

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## CHAPTER 2

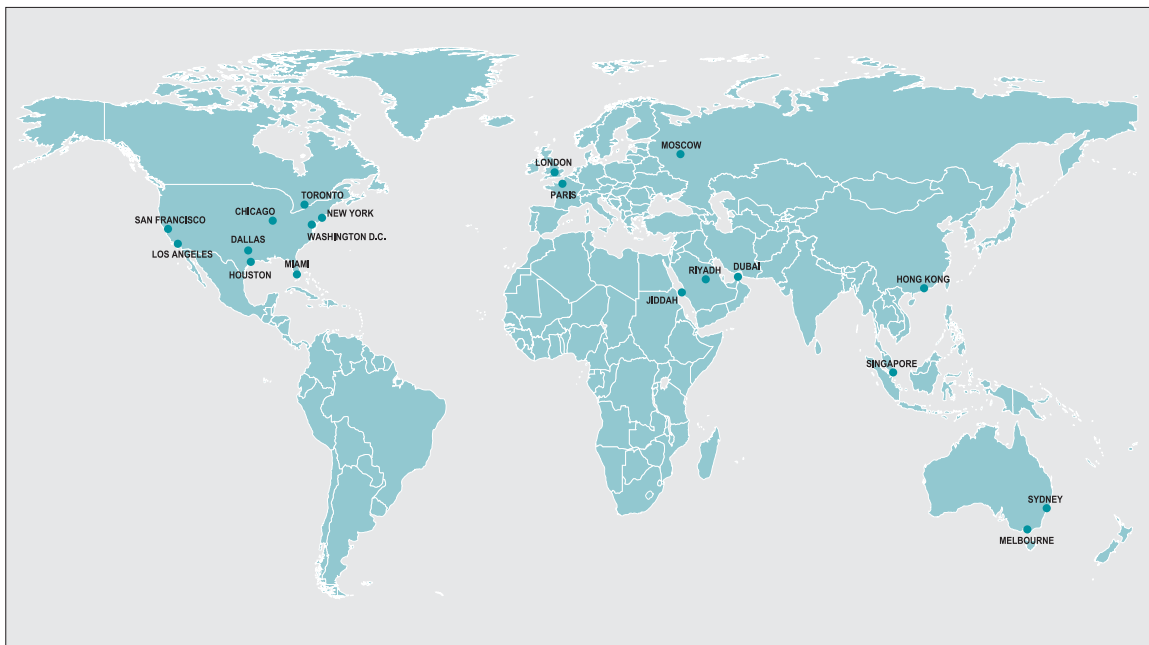
### IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES AND LOS ANGELES

The challenges and opportunities of integration are shaped by three immigration-driven demographic changes: (1) high and shifting flows, (2) the increasing dominance of the second generation, and (3) changes in the immigrant population's legal status.

#### High Flows

In some ways, the map below (Figure 1) captures these flows at a glance. It reveals that, as of 2007, almost half of the *metropolitan areas* in the world with 1 million or more immigrants,

**Figure 1. Cities with 1 Million or More Foreign-Born Residents**



Source: Migration Policy Institute 2007.

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including Los Angeles, are in the United States. Further, these US destinations are not all traditional gateway cities: they now include the Washington, DC, and the Dallas metropolitan areas, for example.

Stated differently, the power of these national flows means that:

- one in eight US residents are immigrants (12 to 13 percent)
- children of immigrants are 27 percent of *all* US children age 18 and under
- children of immigrants make up 30 percent of all low-income children (i.e., children living in families with incomes under 200 percent of the federal poverty line)

Nationwide, 75 percent of the children of immigrants are US born and are citizens. Almost two-thirds of children with one or more unauthorized parents are US citizens. Among children of immigrants under age six, 93 percent are US citizens. These citizen children enjoy full legal rights to most public benefit and service programs, such as the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

### ***Immigration to Los Angeles***

A look at immigration flows to Los Angeles reveals a somewhat different picture. According to the 2006 American Community Survey, there are approximately 3.5 million foreign-born residents in Los Angeles County. They represent nearly 36 percent of the county's total population—a rate nearly three times higher than the nation as a whole (see Figure 2).

Los Angeles has a diverse population. In 2006, Mexicans accounted for less than half of the foreign born in Los Angeles (42.7 percent), with the next largest populations including (in order of size), El Salvador (7.6 percent), China (6.3 percent), the Philippines (6.1 percent), Guatemala (4.6 percent), Korea (4.4 percent), Iran (3.0 percent), Vietnam (2.7 percent), Taiwan (1.9 percent), and Armenia (1.6 percent). The challenge of integration, then, falls to a wide range of both established and newer, emerging communities.

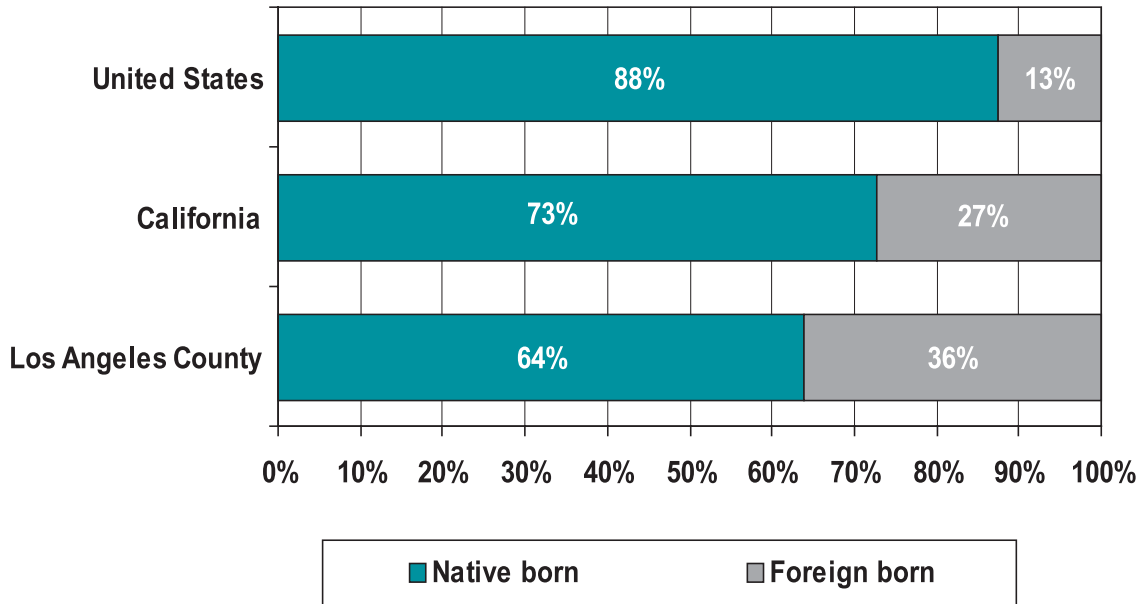
Rapid growth in the immigrant population in Los Angeles County and California was very much a product of the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, a different trend has emerged: the number of new immigrants to Los Angeles *declined* by nearly 20 percent between 1990 and 2000 (see Figure 3). The 2000 US census showed that the share of newcomers—immigrants who arrived in the United States during the last ten years—among the foreign born in Los Angeles was at its lowest level since the 1970s. In 2000, newcomer immigrants were 36 percent of the foreign-born population in Los Angeles compared to 54 percent in 1990, 57 percent in 1980, and 42 percent in 1970.<sup>17</sup>

As Passel and Zimmermann have demonstrated, this decline in the growth of the California and Los Angeles County immigrant populations resulted from the dispersal of the immigrant

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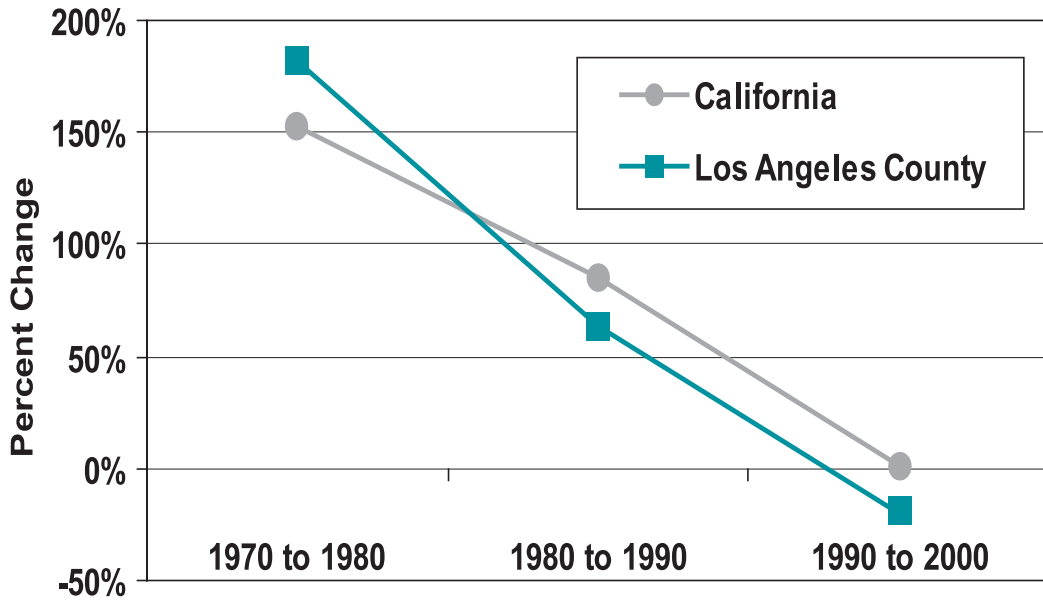
17. New immigrants are defined as those who arrived in the United States within the past ten years. Patrick Golier, Julie Park, and Dowell Myers, “Summary of Overall Socioeconomic Status Changes of the Foreign Born Population in Los Angeles” (working paper PDRG04–02, Population Dynamics Research Group, School of Policy, Planning and Development, University of Southern California, May 2004).

**Figure 2. Population by Nativity, 2006**



Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2006 American Community Survey data.

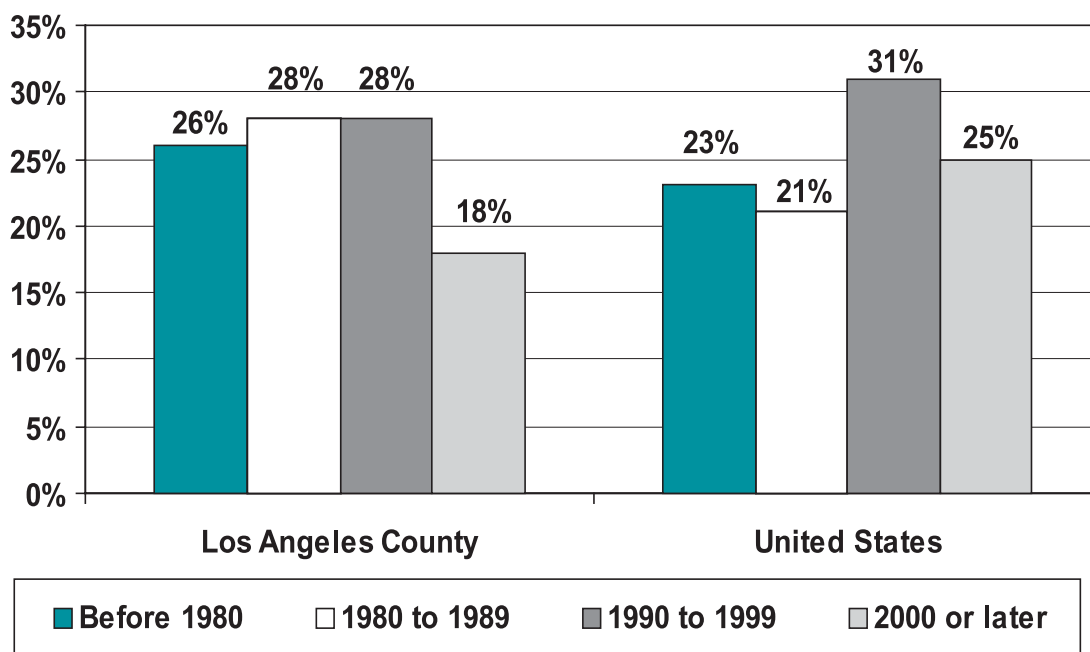
**Figure 3. Percent Change in Volume of New Immigrants to California and Los Angeles County, 1970 to 2000**



Note: New immigrants are defined as those who arrived in the United States within the previous ten years.  
 Source: US census 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 in Park, Myers, and Ryu 2004.



**Figure 4. Period of Entry of the Foreign Born in Los Angeles County and the United States, 2006**



Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2006 American Community Survey data.

population to nontraditional receiving states across the country—a pattern that initially emerged in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, recent arrivals are a smaller share of the foreign born in Los Angeles County than in the United States overall (see Figure 4).

## Legal Status Changes

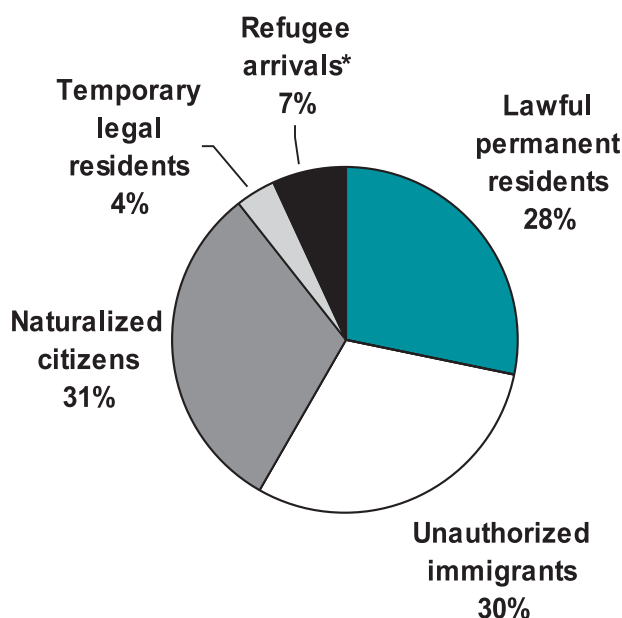
A second macro trend that presents both challenges and opportunities for integration is rapid changes in the legal status of the immigrant population. We will mention three trends, some of which have been more prominent than others in the public debate. They are (1) changes in the unauthorized immigrant population, (2) increases in the number of naturalized citizens, and (3) declines in the number of refugees but increases in protection for victims of human trafficking.

### *The Unauthorized*

There are approximately 37 million foreign-born individuals residing in the United States. As Figure 5 indicates, the unauthorized population nationwide is now roughly the same size (30

18. Jeffrey Passel and Wendy Zimmermann, *Are Immigrants Leaving California? Settlement Patterns of Immigrants in the Late 1990s* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2004).

**Figure 5. Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 2005**



*Note:* The temporary legal migrant population shown in this figure includes an adjustment for Current Population Survey omissions. \*Refugee arrivals are for post-1980 only.  
*Source:* Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of augmented March 2005 Current Population Survey, in Passel 2006.

percent of the total foreign-born population, or 11.1 million people) as the naturalized (31 percent, or 11.5 million people). The unauthorized population is also about the same size as the lawful permanent resident (LPR) population (28 percent, or 10.5 million people), which has more than doubled as a share of the immigrant population over the past decade.<sup>19</sup>

From an integration perspective, it is especially troubling that, nationwide, 5 million children live in households with one or more unauthorized parents, and that 2 million of these children are themselves unauthorized. In Los Angeles County, there are about 537,000 children with one or more unauthorized parents—about 20 percent of its child population. While it may be intuitive, powerful new evidence from Los Angeles is emerging that growing up in these households is leading to persisting intergenerational disadvantages, including lower high school graduation rates and lower rates of college attendance, even among citizen children.<sup>20</sup>

19. Jeffrey Passel, *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the US* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2006), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf>. More recent estimates of the unauthorized population in the United States approach 12 million. Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Christopher Campbell, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2006*, Office of Immigration Statistics, US Department of Homeland Security, August 2007.
20. Frank D. Bean, Susan K. Brown, Mark A. Leach, and James Bachmeier, *Becoming Stakeholders: The Structure, Nature and Pace of U.S. Integration Among Mexican Immigrants and Their Descendants*, Report to the Merage Foundation for the American Dream Symposium on Immigrant National Leaders, May 2007.

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## ***The Unauthorized in Los Angeles***

Trends in the Los Angeles County unauthorized population differ in some important ways from those nationwide.

First, while the unauthorized population has grown rapidly across the United States, in Los Angeles it has remained relatively stable. The unauthorized population in Los Angeles County increased just slightly between 2000 and 2004, from 937,000 to 1.0 million, and the unauthorized share of the metropolitan population remained constant at 10 percent during the same period. By contrast, the United States as a whole experienced a 23 percent growth of the unauthorized population, from 8.4 million in 2000 to 10.3 million in 2004. The share of the national population that is unauthorized grew from 3.0 to 3.6 percent.<sup>21</sup>

Second, despite the slow growth of the unauthorized population, the Los Angeles metropolitan area still had more than twice as many unauthorized immigrants—about 1 million—than any other metropolitan area in 2004.

Third, the unauthorized in Los Angeles appear to be more “settled” than those in other major metropolitan areas: 49 percent of unauthorized immigrants in Los Angeles arrived in the United States more than ten years ago; nationwide the rate is around 35 percent. This means that the unauthorized in Los Angeles are more likely to have had children in the United States and are more likely to have established stronger bonds to their communities.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Rising Naturalized Citizen Population***

There has been a sharp, if often overlooked, increase in the number and share of immigrants who are naturalized citizens over the past decade, despite the arrival of many new immigrants. The number of naturalized immigrants increased from 7.2 million (48 percent of those eligible to naturalize) in 1995 to 12.4 million (59 percent of those eligible to naturalize) in 2005, although the share remains at historic lows (see Figure 6).

The shares vary for different nationality groups. Among Mexicans, for example, the proportion naturalized among the eligible population peaked at 36 percent in 2004 before declining slightly to 35 percent in 2005. By contrast, 77 percent of immigrants from the Middle East and 71 percent of immigrants from Asia who were eligible to become citizens had done so by 2005.<sup>23</sup> Refugees also display high naturalization levels, in part because of the difficulty of return to their country of origin, and, in part, perhaps, to the long-term integrating effects of federal refugee resettlement program services.<sup>24</sup>

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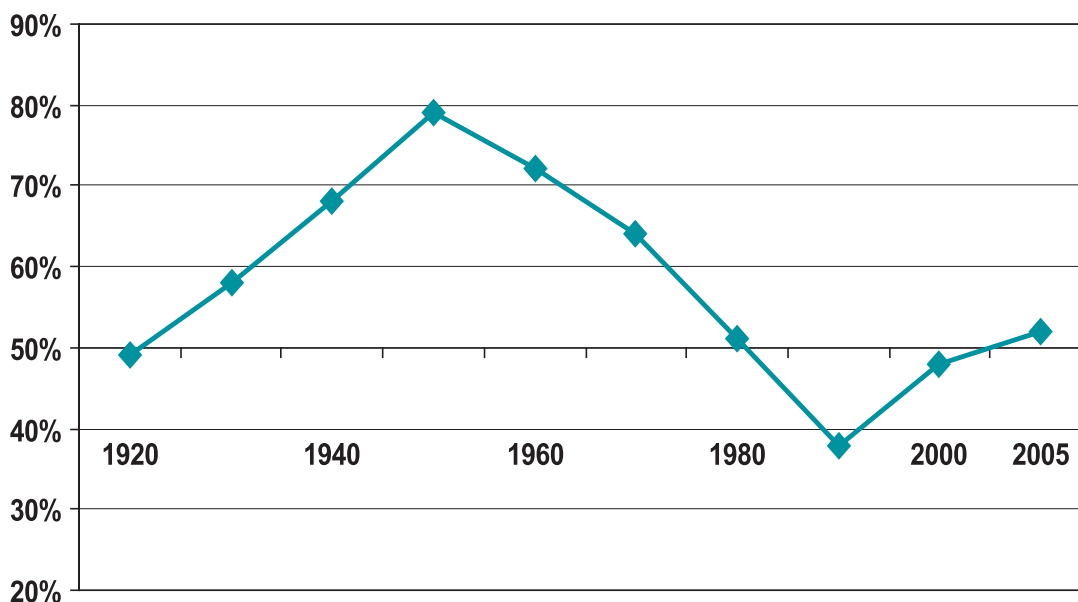
21. Fortuny, Capps, and Passel, *The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2007).

22. Ibid.

23. Jeffrey S. Passel, *Growing Share of Immigrants Choosing Naturalization* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2007).

24. For example, see Kathleen Newland, Hiroyuki Tanaka, and Laura Barker, *Bridging Divides: The Role of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations in Refugee Integration*, (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007), [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Bridging\\_Divides.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Bridging_Divides.pdf).

**Figure 6. Percent Naturalized Among Lawful Permanent Residents in the United States, 1920 to 2005**



Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of augmented March CPS, 1995 to 2005, and estimates drawn from decennial census data for 1920 to 1990, in Passel 2007.

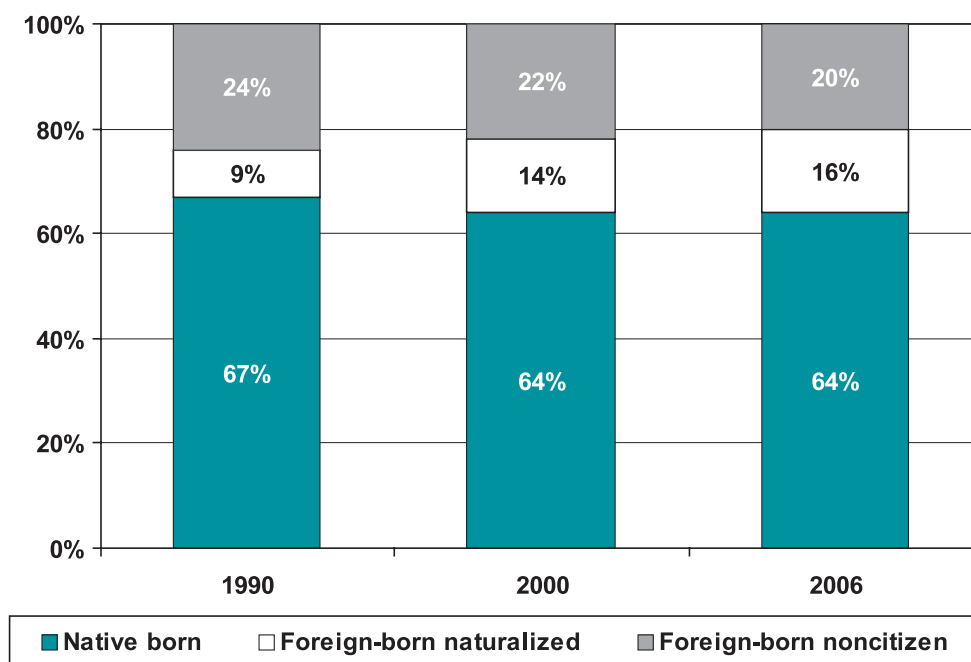
While we have witnessed a sharp rise in the size of the naturalizing population, there are nonetheless approximately 8.5 million LPRs who are eligible to naturalize who have not done so. A large share of this eligible population is Limited English Proficient (LEP) (55 percent), has less than a high school education (38 percent), and lives in poverty (24 percent).<sup>25</sup> Some cities, notably New York and Boston, have launched citywide efforts to encourage this population to naturalize and to facilitate the process.

### ***The Naturalized in Los Angeles***

We see similar and perhaps even more promising trends among immigrants in Los Angeles. While the foreign born remained a relatively constant percentage of the Los Angeles County population between 1990 and 2006 (ranging between 33 and 36 percent), the percentage of naturalized citizens among the foreign born increased from 9 to 16 percent between 1990 and 2006. Concurrently, the percentage of noncitizens declined from 24 to 20 percent during the same period (see Figure 7).

25. In this paper, we use the terms English Language Learner (ELL) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) interchangeably.

**Figure 7. Population of Los Angeles County by Citizenship, 1990, 2000, and 2006**



Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of 1990 and 2000 US census data and 2006 American Community Survey data.

Despite this progress, there were nearly 3 million LPRs eligible to naturalize in California in 2005, with an additional 736,000 LPRs who should become eligible by 2010.

The characteristics of the legal immigrant population that is eligible to naturalize but has not done so raise two integration policy issues. One is the rising costs of naturalization. A 2007 fee increase raised the total minimum cost for naturalization for a family of four to \$2,430.<sup>26</sup> For a family of four whose income falls within the Department of Health and Human Services's poverty guidelines, applying for US citizenship under the new fee framework would absorb 12 percent of their annual household income.<sup>27</sup> With one-fifth of Los Angeles's foreign born living in poverty, the high cost of naturalization can be especially prohibitive for low-income LPRs who are eligible to naturalize.

A second issue is the increased English proficiency likely needed to pass the citizenship test. Beginning in October 2008, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will administer a redesigned naturalization exam to all applicants, which is intended to make the cit-

26. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), *G-1055 Fee Schedule*, Effective July 30, 2007, <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/G-1055.pdf>.

27. US Department of Health and Human Services, *The 2007 HHS Poverty Guidelines*, Updated January 24, 2007, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/07poverty.shtml>.

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izenship process and exam “more meaningful.”<sup>28</sup> The new exam will include fewer fact-based questions and more questions about US democratic principles, such as the meaning of “self-government.” The revised exam will still test English speaking, reading, and listening skills. While USCIS officials assert that the new test will not be more difficult, some immigrant advocacy groups claim the test could become harder for LPRs with less education and English ability, due to its reliance on testing for understanding of abstract concepts.<sup>29</sup>

### **Changing Legal Status of the Immigrant Population: Refugees**

Another important shift in immigrants’ legal status has been the sharp decline in the number of refugees admitted to the United States, from 122,066 in 1990 to 41,150 in 2006. From an integration perspective, many integrating institutions at state and local levels have been supported by the refugee resettlement program, the only express federal immigrant integration program. However, as refugee numbers dwindled, so did refugee resettlement funding and capacity.

Between 1995 and 2007, Los Angeles County resettled the largest number of refugees of any California county—28,411, or 23 percent of the state total—including many from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. If, in the future, the United States accepts increased numbers of refugees—notably from Iraq—Los Angeles County will likely be the destination for a significant share.

### **Transition from First to Second Generation**

After high flows and the changing legal status of many immigrants, a third macro immigration trend that affects integration is the rapid transition of the California and the Los Angeles population from the first to the second generation. Second-generation immigrants in California in 2004 accounted for 21 percent of the state’s residents and number 7.4 million people.<sup>30</sup> These numbers reflect a significant shift from 1970, when second-generation immigrants were 16 percent of the state’s population, or 3.1 million people. Within the state, the share of second-generation immigrants in the total population is largest in Los Angeles County (26 percent).

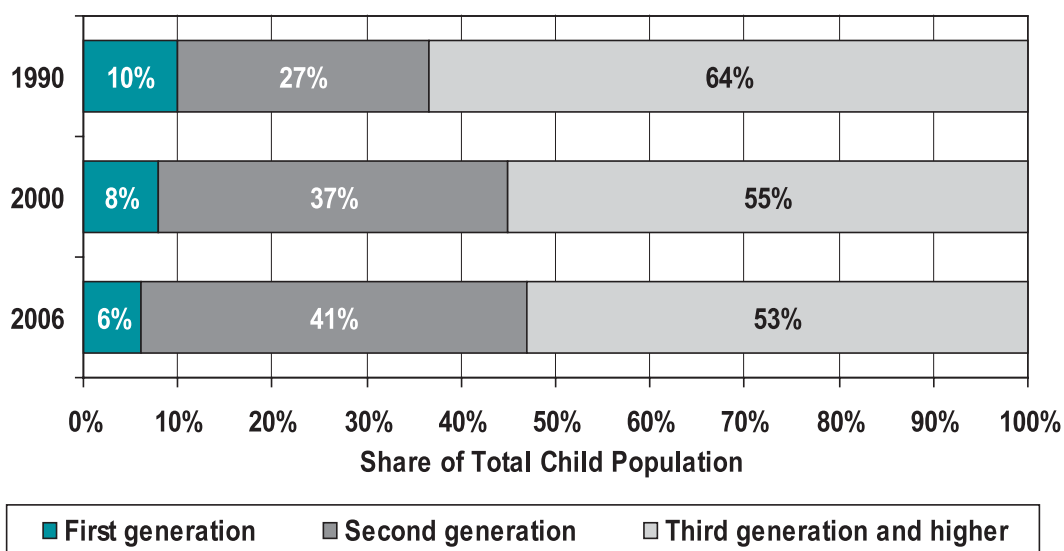
The demographic bias toward the second generation in California and in Los Angeles is even more pronounced among children. In 2006, there were about 3.9 million second-generation children in California, over twice the number in Texas (1.6 million), the state with

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28. US Citizenship and Immigration Services, “USCIS Naturalization Test Redesign,” (news release, November 30, 2006), <http://www.uscis.gov/files/pressrelease/FactSheetNatTest113006.pdf>; US Citizenship and Immigration Services, “USCIS Announces New Naturalization Test,” (news release, September 26, 2007), [http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/FAQs\\_Redesign\\_Naturalization\\_Test.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/FAQs_Redesign_Naturalization_Test.pdf).
  29. For example, see Catholic Legal Immigration Network, *A More Perfect Union: A National Citizenship Plan* (Washington, DC: Catholic Legal Immigration Network, 2007), <http://www.cliniclegal.org/DNP/citzplan07/final-complete.pdf>.
  30. This section draws on data presented in S. Karthic Ramakrishnan and Hans Johnson, *Second Generation Immigrants in California* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2005).

the next largest population of second-generation children. Since 1990, the share of second-generation children among all children in California has steadily increased while the share of first-generation children has steadily decreased (see Figure 8). This generational trend is even more pronounced in Los Angeles County. As of 2004, second-generation children were 55 percent of the county's child population.

Latinos and Asians and Pacific Islanders (API) account for 76 percent of the second generation in California, and nearly 90 percent of second-generation children who will reach adulthood during the next two decades are Latino or API. Compared to neighboring counties, second-generation immigrants of Latino origin are more numerous in Los Angeles County, where the top countries of origin of second-generation children in 2004 included Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. By contrast, the top countries of origin of second-generation immigrants in neighboring Ventura, Orange, and San Bernardino counties included Mexico, El Salvador, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Canada.

**Figure 8. Children of Immigrants as a Percentage of All Children Ages 17 and under in California, 1990, 2000, and 2006**



*Note:* First generation includes foreign-born children of at least one foreign-born parent, second generation includes US-born children of at least one foreign-born parent, and third generation includes all native-born children of two native-born parents.

*Sources:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of 1990 and 2000 US census data and 2006 American Community Survey data.

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## Summary: Key Demographic Trends

There are a number of critical demographic trends that provide a framework for thinking broadly about immigrant integration needs in Los Angeles County and possible responses to them. A more detailed look at their implications for specific policy and service areas will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

- High flows over past decades: 36 percent of Los Angeles County residents are immigrants, a number nearly three times that of the nation as a whole.
- The post-1990 slowdown in the number of new immigrants to Los Angeles.
- The large but, in contrast to the United States as a whole, much more stable size and settled character of the unauthorized population.
- The sharp rise in the naturalized citizen population between 1990 and 2006.
- A decline in the flow of refugees to the United States, but the possibility of higher refugee flows to Los Angeles in the near future.
- The large size of the legal immigrant population in California that is eligible to naturalize but has not done so.
- The emergence of the second generation (i.e., US-born children of immigrants): second-generation children made up 55 percent of the child population in Los Angeles County in 2004.

### ***Policy and Investment Implications:***

- The diversity of Los Angeles County's population—by immigration status, nationality group, language and other measures—indicates a continuing need to address linguistic and cultural competence issues in service-delivery systems and training of frontline workers in program eligibility issues. Expertise must also be developed and maintained in federal, state, and local issues related to the use of different identity documents and in confidentiality provisions regarding the collection and sharing of immigration status information. The cross-agency nature of these competencies indicates that they would, perhaps, most effectively be developed and coordinated through a central office.
- Barriers preventing those who are eligible to naturalize should be explored and understood—for example, English instruction needs, application costs, and availability of application assistance. In addressing barriers, effective approaches will likely include ones that leverage existing service-delivery networks.
- The large and settled nature of the unauthorized population argues for a leadership role on the part of Los Angeles municipal officials in national debates about the nature of a possible legalization program, including, but not limited to, appropriate impact aid for localities with large numbers of unauthorized residents. Similarly, should a legalization program be enacted, local



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government entities would likely need to play a coordinating role across government agencies and with community stakeholders to ensure that eligible individuals could enroll in the program.

- Particular issues associated with barriers to services for children in mixed-status households should be understood and addressed.

The strengths and weaknesses of refugee-resettling institutions should be explored with an eye toward preserving expertise and key capacities given the prospects of higher flows in the future.

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## CHAPTER 3

### IMMIGRANTS IN THE LABOR FORCE

The power of the nation's high immigration flows ripples through the nation's workforce where, unlike in Europe, immigrants are overrepresented. While immigrants are 12 percent of US residents, they are 15 percent of all workers. Within the low-skill and low-wage segments of the labor force, immigrants are 21 percent of low-wage workers (i.e., with incomes below 200 percent of the minimum wage) and almost half—45 percent—of all low-skilled workers in the United States (i.e., who have not graduated from high school).<sup>31</sup> As Figure 9 indicates, the share of immigrant workers who are LEP has risen dramatically in recent decades, and stands at roughly two-thirds of those who have entered since 2000.

The bimodal character of the immigrant workforce—with large concentrations of both low- and high-skill workers—is widely recognized. Thus, on the high-skill end, we see that immigrants are

- one in four doctors;
- two in five medical scientists;
- one in five computer programmers;
- one in three US computer software engineers.<sup>32</sup>

#### Credentialing Issues

The challenge of economic integration affects not just low-skilled immigrants but many high-skilled immigrants in the United States as well. As a forthcoming Migration Policy Institute study indicates, fully 43 percent of recent Latin American immigrants in California who entered the United States after they were 25 and who hold at least a bachelor's degree were working in unskilled jobs (see Figure 10).<sup>33</sup> Thirty-eight percent of those in California for ten or more years were still working in unskilled jobs.<sup>34</sup> Asians entering with high skills meeting

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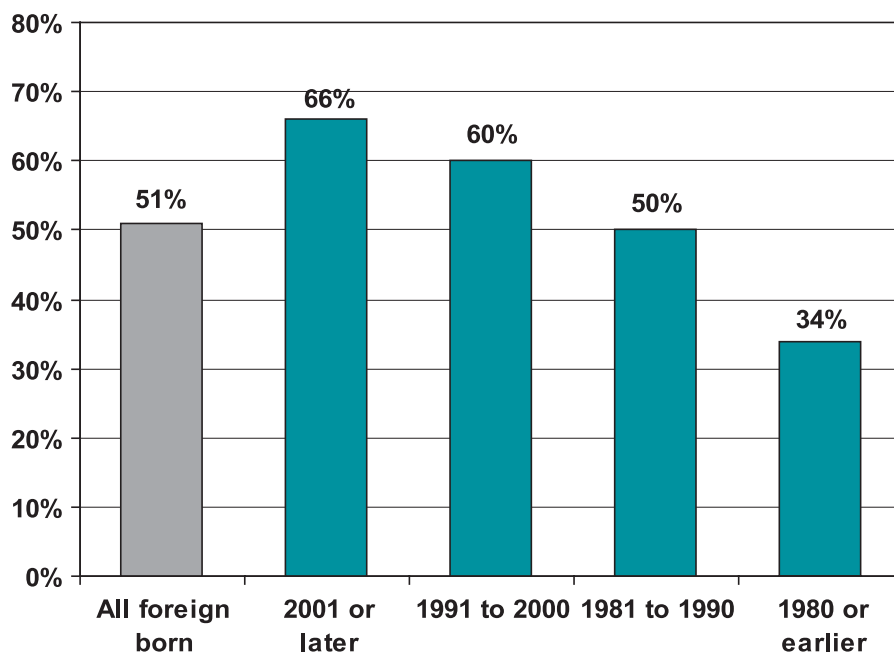
31. According to the 2005 Current Population Survey.

32. Neeraj Kaushal and Michael Fix, *The Contributions of High-Skilled Immigrants* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2006), [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/ITFIAF/TF16\\_Kaushal.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/ITFIAF/TF16_Kaushal.pdf).

33. This analysis includes both legal and unauthorized immigrants.

34. Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, *Employment Trajectories of Foreign-Educated Legal Immigrants in the United States: Evidence from the 2003 New Immigrant Survey* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, forthcoming 2008).

**Figure 9. Percent LEP Among Full-Time Immigrant Workers Age 25 and Older, by Period of Arrival, 2006**



*Note:* Refers to full-time workers age 25 and older.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2006 American Community Survey data.

these criteria are significantly less likely to be found in unskilled work. Much talent, then, is going untapped, underscoring the fact that credential recognition, as well as language learning, may represent barriers to higher-skilled immigrants' mobility.

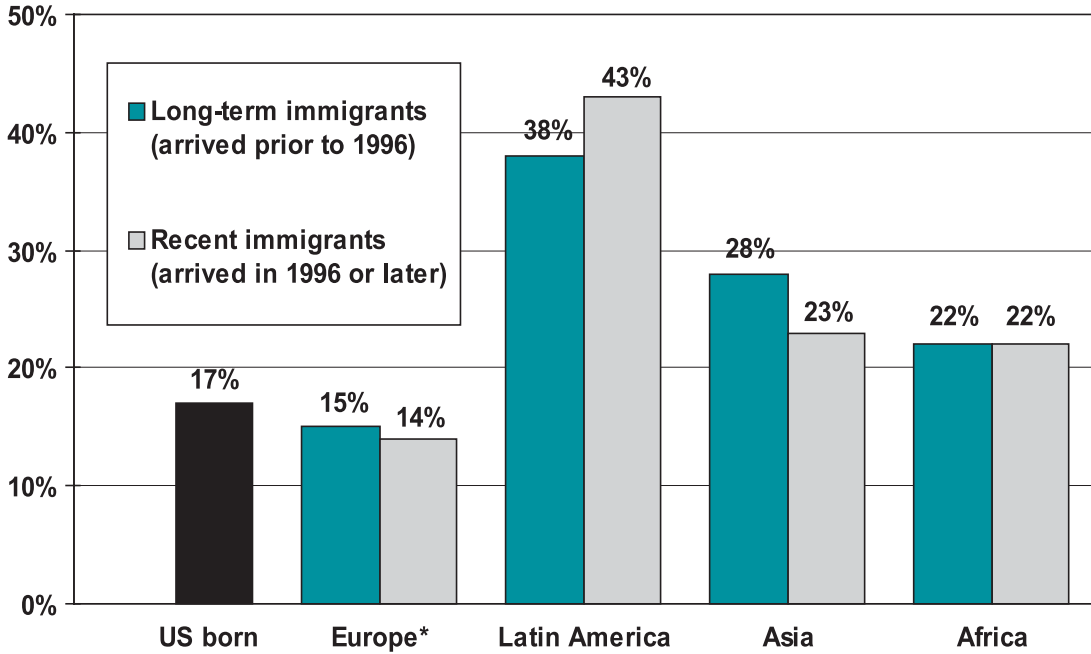
The economic impact of this underutilization of skills is likely significant. It has been estimated that Australia has incurred an estimated loss of approximately A\$100 million to A\$350 million since 1990 due to the underrecognition of foreign degrees. Similarly, estimates in Canada suggest that the economic impact of immigrant skill underutilization amounts to C\$2 billion annually.<sup>35</sup> No similar estimates exist for the United States.

## **Immigrants in the California and Los Angeles Labor Markets**

Immigrant workers are a much larger share of the Los Angeles economy than the US economy. Almost half of the Los Angeles County workforce (46 percent) is foreign born, a level three times that of the nation (15 percent). At the same time, over 40 percent of immigrant

35. Andrew Brouwer, *Immigrants Need Not Apply* (Toronto: Caldeon Institute of Social Policy, 1999), [http://maytree.com/PDF\\_Files/INNA.pdf](http://maytree.com/PDF_Files/INNA.pdf); Jeffrey Reitz, "Tapping Immigrants' Skills: New Directions for Canadian Immigration Policy in the Knowledge Economy," *IRPP Choices* 11, no. 1 (February 2005).

**Figure 10. Percent of College-Educated Workers in Unskilled Occupations in California, 2006†**



Note: †Includes employed workers 25 and older. \*Refers to persons from Europe, Canada, and Oceania.

adults in Los Angeles County had less than a high school education in 2006, and a third of the county’s adults were LEP. LEP adults in the county grew by over one-third between 1990 and 2006, from 1.7 million to 2.3 million people.

Particularly in certain sectors, immigrants are vital to the state and regional economy. As indicated below, immigrants were highly overrepresented in occupations ranging from health care and transportation to construction and farming, fishing, and forestry in 2006 (see Figure 11).

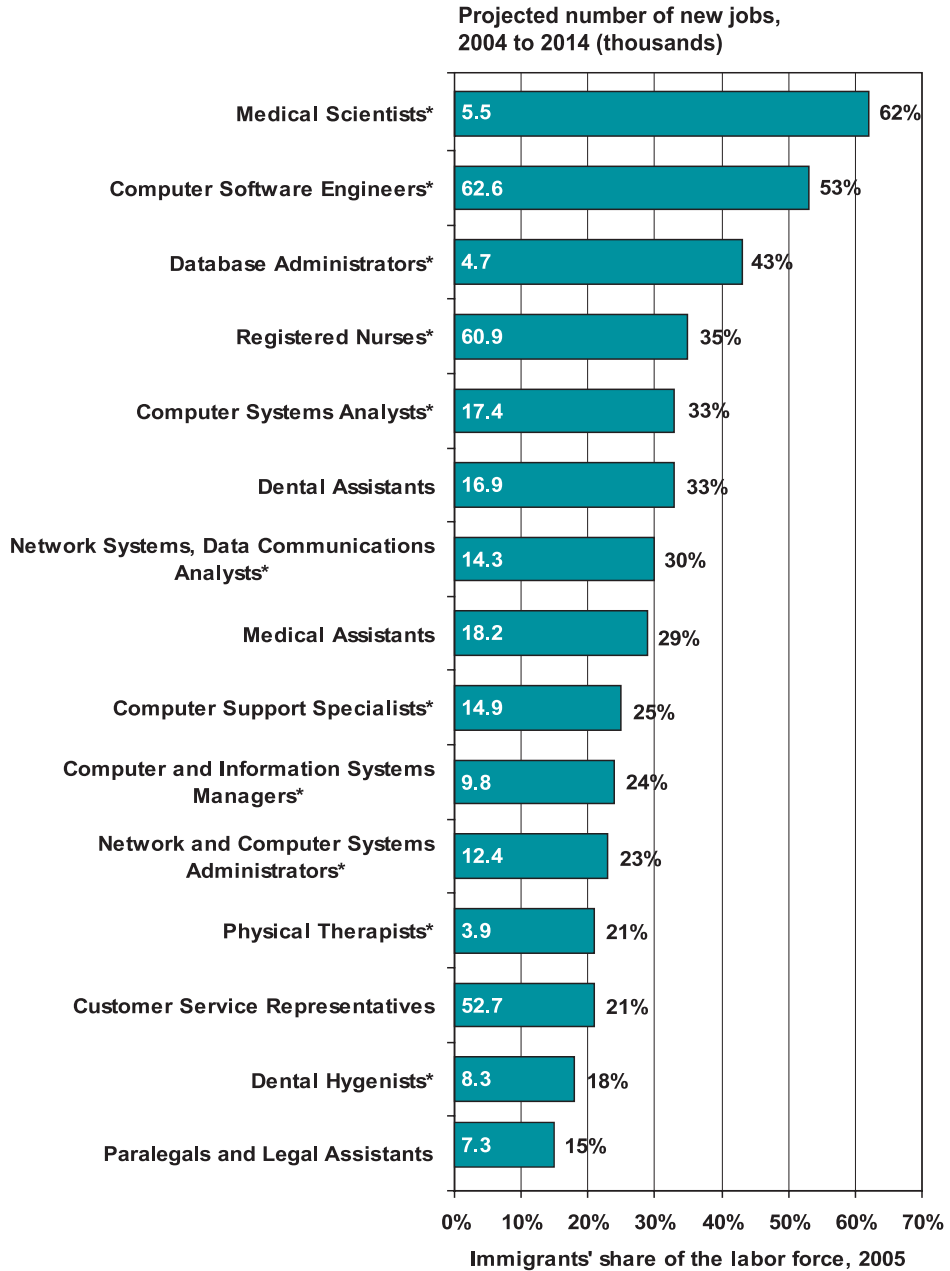
Immigrants are also overrepresented in many of the occupations that are projected to grow significantly over the next decade (see Figure 12). Nearly all of these occupations require an associate’s degree or higher, which raises important issues about employment and training options, career-ladder opportunities in the labor market, and access among first- and second-generation immigrants to postsecondary education.

**Figure 11. Occupational Groups with a Large Foreign-Born Workforce, Los Angeles County, 2006**

	Share Foreign Born
Production	75.9
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	75.4
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	70.8
Construction Trades	63.3
Food Preparation and Serving	63.3
Transportation and Material Moving	52.4
Personal Care and Service	52.4
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	49.1
Health-care Practitioners and Technical Occupations	49.1
Health-care Support	48.6
Architecture and Engineering	41.2
Financial Specialist	40.7
Sales	41.2
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	34.4

*Source:* 2005 and 2006 American Community Survey, Program for Environment and Regional Equity, University of Southern California Center for Sustainable Cities.

**Figure 12. Immigrants' Share of California Labor Force in 2005 in the 15 Occupations Projected to Grow Fastest between 2004 and 2014**



*Notes:*\*Requires an associate's degree or higher.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2005 American Community Survey data and California Projections of Employment by Industry and Occupation, Employment Development Division.

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## Summary: Immigrants in the Labor Force

Immigrants are overrepresented in the US labor force, in Los Angeles more so than elsewhere. Generally, immigrant integration into the US labor force occurs in a bimodal pattern; that is, immigrants tend to concentrate in both high-skilled and low-skilled sectors.

Nationally, immigrants are 21 percent of low-wage workers (i.e., those with incomes below 200 percent of the minimum wage) and 45 percent of all low-skilled workers (those who have not graduated from high school). But they also represent one in five doctors and one in five computer specialists.

In Los Angeles, immigrants are

- nearly half (46 percent) of the Los Angeles County workforce, a level more than three times that of the nation as a whole;
- often categorized as low skilled: 40 percent of immigrant adults in Los Angeles do not have a high school degree;
- not always proficient in English, a building block for economic mobility. One-third of Los Angeles adults are LEP; a number that has risen from 1.7 to 2.3 million between 1990 and 2006.

The challenge of economic integration affects *all* immigrants in the United States. High educational attainment does not guarantee smooth integration into the labor market. Fully 43 percent of recent Latin American immigrants in California who entered the United States after they were 25 and who hold at least a bachelor's degree were working in unskilled jobs. Thirty-eight percent of those in California for ten or more years were still working in unskilled jobs.

### ***Policy and Investment Implications:***

Investments to ensure that immigrants meet US labor market needs and realize their skill and earning potential must be sensitive to the bimodal skill distribution of immigrant workers.

- For highly skilled workers, finding ways to translating foreign degrees and work experience to qualifications that US employers understand could play an important role in an immigrant integration agenda.
- For these same workers, determining the specific gaps that may exist between their training and US licensing standards, and then providing targeted instructional programs to meet those needs, could provide a cost-effective way to leverage the prior training of these workers.
- The large number of LEP workers in Los Angeles argues for a coordinated approach to meeting their language and skills training needs. Currently, most funds for English instruction needs flow through the adult school system, which only rarely provides English instruction simultaneously with workforce-skills training. Funds available for workforce-training programs are similarly “siloeed,”

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providing support almost exclusively for work-skills training, not for English language instruction.

- Many high-growth jobs require at least a two-year technical degree, heightening the importance of first- and second-generation immigrants' access to community colleges and the availability of affordable, contextualized English literacy and workforce-skill instruction at such institutions.
- Information about growth industries and the levels of training or education required to obtain positions in them should be widely disseminated to immigrant youth and their parents, many of whom may be unaware of job opportunities in occupations in which they or their family members have not previously been employed.





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## CHAPTER 4

### ADULT IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS

The recent congressional debates on immigration reform raised questions about the number of immigrants who are LEP, the demand for English language instruction, and the available supply. The information these debates rested upon was generally impressionistic and not particularly useful for planning or budgetary purposes at the national, state, and local levels. In July 2007, the Migration Policy Institute released nationwide and state-level estimates for the number, educational attainment, and English skills of immigrant adults (both LPRs and unauthorized immigrants) currently residing in the United States.<sup>36</sup> By indexing the English proficiency of immigrant adults to the US Department of Education's National Report System (NRS) accountability standards (see sidebar), the report translates these numbers into estimates of the hours of instruction these immigrants will need to achieve the English skills necessary for full integration into US society. The study assumes that a higher level of English attainment will be necessary for youth ages 17 to 24.<sup>37</sup>

According to the report, California accounted for 34 percent of all English instruction hours required for LPRs and unauthorized immigrants nationwide. In light of this finding, MPI prepared an additional report developing parallel estimates for California's major counties.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the California report estimated the English language instruction needs of LEP native, naturalized citizen, and refugee adults. This analysis allowed MPI to estimate the adult English instruction deficit in the state.

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36. Margie McHugh, Julia Gelatt, and Michael Fix, *Adult English Language Instruction in the United States: Determining Need and Investing Wisely* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/NCIIP\\_English\\_Instruction07.31.07pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/NCIIP_English_Instruction07.31.07pdf).

37. We assume that young adults should be expected to attain an even higher level of English language proficiency given that they will likely spend their entire adulthood in the United States. A higher level of English proficiency for youth facilitates postsecondary study without the need for remedial classes and promotes their full participation in the country's community, economic, and political life.

38. National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, Migration Policy Institute, "An Assessment of the English Language Instruction Need and Supply in California's Counties" (final report to Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, March 2008).

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## The National Reporting System

US congressional demands for data on the outcomes of adult education students, along with similar pressures within the states, spurred the state adult education directors and the Department of Education to create a reporting system to provide data on federally funded adult education programs.

Known as the National Reporting System (NRS), the data include measurements of student success in

- improving literacy skills;
- obtaining and retaining employment;
- obtaining a GED or secondary credential;
- entering postsecondary education.

NRS classifies adult English learners into six levels:

- Level 1: beginning ESL Literacy
- Level 2: low beginning ESL Literacy
- Level 3: high beginning ESL Literacy
- Level 4: low intermediate ESL
- Level 5: high intermediate ESL
- Level 6: advanced ESL

For purposes of this analysis, the Migration Policy Institute’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (NCIIP) uses level “0” to denote adults who appear unlikely to be literate in their native language and may require special attention or basic literacy instruction in their native language before they are ready for mainstream adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

*Source:* National Reporting System for Adult Education, US Department of Education. Available at [www.nrsweb.org](http://www.nrsweb.org).

## National Results

We found that approximately 5.8 million LPRs and 6.4 million unauthorized immigrants age 24 and older would need English instruction in order to pass the citizenship test and to have the necessary skills to fully participate in the country’s civic and political life. For young adults ages 17 to 24, we assume a somewhat higher target level of English proficiency—sufficient to engage in postsecondary education without the need for remediation services.

In Figures 13 through 15, we report the number of LEP adults nationwide by their English language proficiency level and age. Level “0” is the lowest, level “5” proficiency is sufficient to fully participate in the country’s civic and political life, and level “6” is sufficient to

**Figure 13. Number of Legal Immigrants by Age and English Ability, Indexed to National Reporting System Levels: United States, 2005**

	Number	Percent
<b>Age 56+</b>	<b>1,109,696</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	162,159	15
Level 1	399,799	36
Level 2	162,759	15
Level 3	269,219	24
Level 4	115,760	10
<b>Ages 50 to 55</b>	<b>385,272</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	39,025	10
Level 1	98,357	26
Level 2	67,389	17
Level 3	121,980	32
Level 4	58,521	15
<b>Ages 25 to 49</b>	<b>3,302,876</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	178,394	5
Level 1	689,961	21
Level 2	587,413	18
Level 3	1,204,737	36
Level 4	642,371	19
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	<b>1,002,710</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	17,800	2
Level 1	67,010	7
Level 2	70,352	7
Level 3	112,380	11
Level 4	203,475	20
Level 5	531,693	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,800,554</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of tabulations of 2000 census data and 2005 Current Population Survey with imputations of legal status by the Urban Institute.

engage in postsecondary education without remediation.<sup>39</sup> Based on an assumption that it requires 110 hours of instruction to rise one level of English language ability, at a cost of \$10 per hour of instruction, we estimate the number of hours necessary to achieve these proficiency levels at approximately 1.6 billion hours for the country’s LPR population and 1.9 billion hours for the unauthorized population.

39. In response to calls to make the citizenship process and exam “more meaningful,” the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plans to introduce a revised version of the naturalization exam. The new exam will include fewer fact-based questions and more questions about democratic principles, such as the meaning of “self-government.” The revised exam will also test English speaking, reading, and listening skills. Some experts have argued that an NRS level “3” should be sufficient to pass the exam; however, that argument appears to be inconsistent with the intent of the revised exam. Regardless of the level at which the exam will be set, we gear our estimates to an NRS level “5” English proficiency

**Figure 14. Number of Unauthorized Immigrants by Age and English Ability, Indexed to National Reporting System Levels: United States, 2005**

	Number	Percent
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	<b>4,951,995</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	311,069	6
Level 1	1,358,856	27
Level 2	939,982	19
Level 3	1,638,555	33
Level 4	703,533	14
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	<b>1,440,458</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	39,304	3
Level 1	192,500	13
Level 2	169,198	12
Level 3	194,126	13
Level 4	301,259	21
Level 5	544,071	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,392,453</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of tabulations of 2000 census data and 2005 Current Population Survey with imputations of legal status by the Urban Institute.

After taking into account several factors that might influence demand for instruction and savings, such as increased use of instructional technology, we estimate additional costs of \$200 million per year nationwide over the next six years to meet instructional demand from LPRs (on top of the roughly \$1 billion states and the federal government currently spend on these services), and a need for \$2.9 billion per year for six years to meet demand from unauthorized immigrants should a legalization program of the type envisioned by the most recent version of comprehensive immigration reform be enacted. Plainly, these numbers point to enormous needs that dwarf the scale and capacity of the current adult ESL and literacy systems.

## Adult English Language Needs for Los Angeles

We replicated our national analysis using 2000 census data for Los Angeles.<sup>40</sup> Given the quite modest growth in the noncitizen population generally, and the unauthorized population in particular in recent years, we believe these estimates are still valid today.

(for adults age 25 and older), since, according to the US Department of Education, students achieving this level of English proficiency can “communicate basic survival needs with some help; can participate in conversation in limited social situations and use new phrases with hesitation; . . .; read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); . . .; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; and can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures.” For this reason, we believe that it is also an appropriate objectives for LEP natives, naturalized citizens, and refugees.

40. This analysis is based on the 2000 census since they are the only data currently available that can support valid county-level results for the characteristics of the immigrant populations necessary to estimate English language instruction need.

**Figure 15. Hours of Instruction Required to Reach English Proficiency by Age and Legal Status: United States, 2005**

	Hours
<b>LPR</b>	<b>1,662,165,884</b>
Age 56+	390,770,981
Ages 50 to 55	120,251,927
Ages 25 to 49	931,249,052
Ages 17 to 24	219,893,924
<b>Unauthorized</b>	<b>1,913,498,299</b>
Age 25 and older	1,517,049,416
Ages 17 to 24	396,448,883

*Note:* We assume a goal of bringing all immigrants (LPRs and the unauthorized) to a level “5” English proficiency for those age 25 and older, and to a level “6” English proficiency for those ages 17 to 24.  
*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of tabulations of 2000 census data and 2005 Current Population Survey with imputations of legal status by the Urban Institute.

We estimate that 913,000 LPRs, 689,000 unauthorized immigrants, 1,022,000 naturalized citizens and natives, and 63,000 refugees in Los Angeles County would require English language instruction to have the necessary skills to meaningfully participate in the country’s civic life and to pass the revised version of the naturalization exam (see Figure 16). Meaningful participation might include reading a ballot, understanding what is said in presidential debates, or reading an editorial in English in a newspaper for example.<sup>41</sup>

Based on an average of 110 hours of instruction to rise one level of English ability, it would require about 278 million hours of ESL instruction to bring all current adult LPRs in Los Angeles County to a desired level of English ability.<sup>42</sup> In addition, it would require about 289 million hours of ESL instruction to bring all current adult unauthorized immigrants in Los Angeles County to a desired level of English ability (see Figure 17).

## The Supply of Adult English Instruction

In California, state-funded adult schools and community colleges provide the bulk of publicly funded adult English language education. Adult schools, administered by local school districts, are the largest providers of free ESL classes in the state, teaching approximately three-quarters of California’s ESL students.<sup>43</sup> Other traditional providers of adult English instruction include libraries and community organizations. More recently, nontraditional providers,

41. These tasks would require level “5” English ability.
42. Estimates of the hours required to achieve one level of English proficiency range from about 85 to 150 hours for most adults, or as high as 200 hours for those with learning disabilities or other impediments to learning.
43. Arturo Gonzales, *California’s Commitment to Adult English Learners: Caught between Funding and Need* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2007).

**Figure 16. English Instruction Need by Legal Status, Age and English Ability, Indexed to National Reporting System Levels, Los Angeles County, 2000**

	Legal Permanent Residents		Unauthorized Immigrants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	<b>805,389</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>544,629</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	80,591	10	38,024	7
Level 1	216,858	27	143,164	26
Level 2	138,665	17	105,480	19
Level 3	249,893	31	179,665	33
Level 4	119,383	15	78,296	14
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	<b>107,775</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>144,255</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	2,338	2	3,234	2
Level 1	8,109	8	14,927	10
Level 2	8,956	8	15,327	311
Level 3	12,614	12	18,525	13
Level 4	20,445	19	27,672	19
Level 5	55,292	51	64,569	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>913,144</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>688,884</b>	<b>--</b>

	Naturalized Citizens and Natives		Refugees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	<b>664,564</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>49,378</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	28,738	4	4,102	8
Level 1	59,522	9	10,914	22
Level 2	98,157	15	9,271	19
Level 3	274,387	41	17,078	35
Level 4	203,759	31	8,012	16
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	<b>357,040</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13,949</b>	<b>100</b>
Level 0	19	0	68	0
Level 1	84	0	160	1
Level 2	2,293	1	123	1
Level 3	12,409	3	430	3
Level 4	22,747	6	2,291	16
Level 5	319,487	89	10,877	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,021,604</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>63,327</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of tabulations of 2000 census data with imputations of legal status by the Urban Institute.

notably educational centers administered by the Mexican consulate, have also begun to offer adult English language courses.

The fundamentals of the current funding system for adult literacy education were set out in state legislation passed in 1979. Total state funding for adult schools is calculated according to the average daily attendance, and funding growth is limited to 2.5 percent per year. In addition to state funding, adult schools and community colleges that teach ESL can apply for federal funding under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In 2005–2006, Los Angeles County adult schools received \$310 million from the state and over \$27 million from

**Figure 17. Hours of Instruction Required to Reach English Proficiency by Age and Legal Status, Los Angeles County, 2000**

	Hours
<b>Legal Permanent Residents</b>	<b>278,297,290</b>
<b>Ages 25 to 49</b>	253,610,435
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	24,686,855
<b>Unauthorized Immigrants</b>	<b>288,665,268</b>
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	166,852,932
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	121,812,335
<b>Naturalized Citizens and Natives</b>	<b>202,477,308</b>
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	157,166,328
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	45,310,980
<b>Refugees</b>	<b>16,786,076</b>
<b>Age 25 and older</b>	14,756,648
<b>Ages 17 to 24</b>	2,029,428

*Note:* We assume a goal of bringing all adults to a level “5” English proficiency for those ages 25 and older, and to a level “6” English proficiency for those ages 17 to 24.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of tabulations of 2000 census data with imputations of legal status by the Urban Institute.

WIA.<sup>44</sup> Community college districts receive funding from the state’s general fund, and each district allocates adult education funding depending on community interest, need, and the level of priority assigned to noncredit programs by administrators.

Between 2000 and 2006, Los Angeles County adult schools and community colleges provided approximately 207 million hours of adult ESL instruction; this represented about 40 percent of all adult ESL instructional hours provided during this period in the state. Disaggregated by provider, the system provided 41 million hours through community colleges and 166 million hours through adult schools. Nevertheless, when compared to the estimated 659 million hours of adult English instruction that is needed, *it appears that Los Angeles is currently providing roughly one-third of the estimated adult English instruction that its residents need.*

The issue of the sufficiency of adult English and literacy instruction in Los Angeles goes beyond simple shortfalls in the supply of instruction.

First, while Los Angeles is the largest recipient of state adult education funds, observers of the system report that Los Angeles and several other large districts in the state face difficulties

44. State funding data are from recertified first principal apportionment (P-1) fiscal year 2005–2006, and are available at <http://165.74.253.241/ias.Exhibits/pasummary2005p1recert.xls>. Workforce Investment Act funding data are from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r17/documents/ae05awards.xls>.



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in filling available classroom seats. Given the large number of individuals who need English instruction, it appears existing program services are underused. This could be due to a variety of factors, including lack of awareness on the part of immigrants of the instructional resources available; conflicts between class schedules and work or family obligations; transportation or child care issues; and, for intermediate and advanced courses, slow student progress and discouragement due to underlying deficits in their native language literacy.

A second issue is the historic competition for preeminence and funding between adult schools and community colleges that results in a haphazard services-delivery system in many areas.<sup>45</sup> The lack of state-level coordination across the two systems complicates local efforts to move toward configuring services at the county or city level that would more rationally operate as an adult education “system.”

Third, much of the authority to improve the scale, quality, relevance, or accessibility of adult education services rests with the state. This means that achieving many significant potential district- or school-level reforms will require coordinated state-level political action by stakeholders.

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45. Julie Strawn, *Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, September 2007).

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## **Summary: Adult English Language Acquisition Needs**

- According to research conducted for this report, approximately 910,000 LPRs and 690,000 unauthorized adults in Los Angeles County would require English language instruction to pass the naturalization exam and to have the necessary skills to participate in the country’s civic life.
- Based on an average of 110 hours of instruction to rise one level of English ability, it would require about 278 million instructional hours to bring all current adult LPRs and about 289 million instructional hours to bring all current adult unauthorized immigrants in Los Angeles County to a desired level of English ability.
- Much of the demand for language instruction is among LEP adults with some English language proficiency, while many ESL courses focus on providing basic instruction. As a result, there is often a misalignment between student needs and available classes.

### ***Policy and Investment Implications:***

- A systematic effort that engages media outlets, community organizations, and others to publicize the availability of adult English classes, enrollment procedures, and how to find appropriate services to meet one’s needs and goals, could address concerns about potential underutilization of existing resources. Training staff at community organizations to counsel adult learners about the options available to them via adult education providers—and enlisting them to facilitate enrollment and support students in meeting their educational goals—could also result in expanded use of services, persistence in study, and achievement by adult learners.
- Given the multiple demands on adult learners’ time, an emphasis on instruction and self-study supports that can be accessed “anytime-anywhere” by adult learners will be essential to meeting the high levels of need demonstrated in this report.
- Attempts to address issues of awareness, accessibility, quality, or scale of English instruction could begin now for the LPR population. These efforts would have the added effect of preparing the system for the enormous new demand for classes that would likely be triggered should a legalization program be enacted in the future.
- The levels of language instruction or self-study opportunities provided must be balanced so they meet the needs of LEP adults with low, intermediate, and higher levels of proficiency.

- 
- Approaches to systemic reforms will likely need to include stakeholders throughout the state, given that much of the policy and budget authority for the current system rests with state officials. As the largest area of need in the state, and as its largest provider of services, stakeholders in Los Angeles are uniquely positioned to inform and lead reform efforts.

Similarly, as the California county with the largest English instructional need, municipal officials and other Los Angeles stakeholders should play a leadership role in analyzing relevant policy, program, and budget issues, and play an active role in guiding federal and state actions in this area. This will be of particular importance should an immigrant legalization program eventually be negotiated at the federal level.

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## CHAPTER 5

### PREK–12 EDUCATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Elementary and secondary schools are perhaps the most important public institution for integrating immigrant families into the fabric of the larger society, and they constitute the largest single state and local expenditure on immigrants. Nearly half (49.8 percent) of California’s 9.5 million children age 17 and under are the children of immigrants—and approximately 6 percent are immigrants themselves.

One of the US education system’s biggest challenges is responding to rapid growth of the (ELL)<sup>46</sup> population while meeting the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act’s controversial academic assessment and progress standards. In this regard, NCLB requirements that schools identify, teach, and disaggregate ELL scores can be seen as representing a revolution not just in *education* but in *immigrant integration* policy as well.

Nationwide, ELL enrollment over the past decade increased 56 percent while overall growth in the student population rose only 5 percent (see Figure 18). Today, one in 10 students in US schools is LEP.

Looking at California, we see a substantial (nearly 30 percent) rise in the ELL population, despite a small increase in overall enrollment (see Figure 19). Over a quarter of the state’s students are ELLs, and California accounts for almost one-third of all ELLs in US schools. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, 32 percent of students enrolled in Los Angeles County schools are ELLs; the share rises to 43 percent for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).<sup>47</sup> The number of ELLs in LAUSD is almost three times higher than any other school district in the nation.<sup>48</sup>

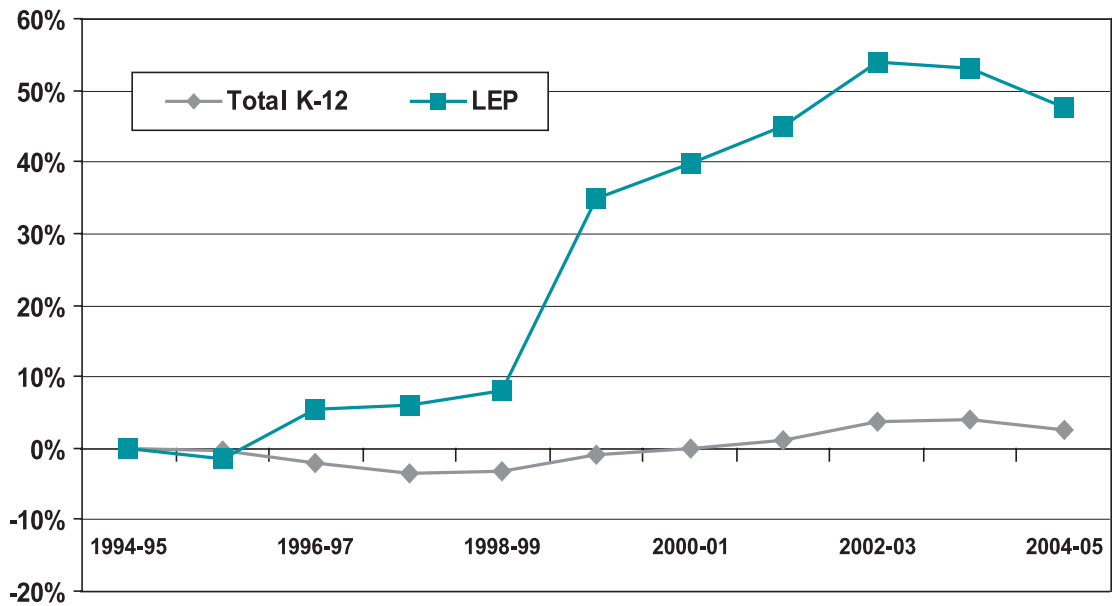
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46. The designations English Language Learner (ELL) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) are used interchangeably in this report.

47. Data are for the 2005–2006 academic year.

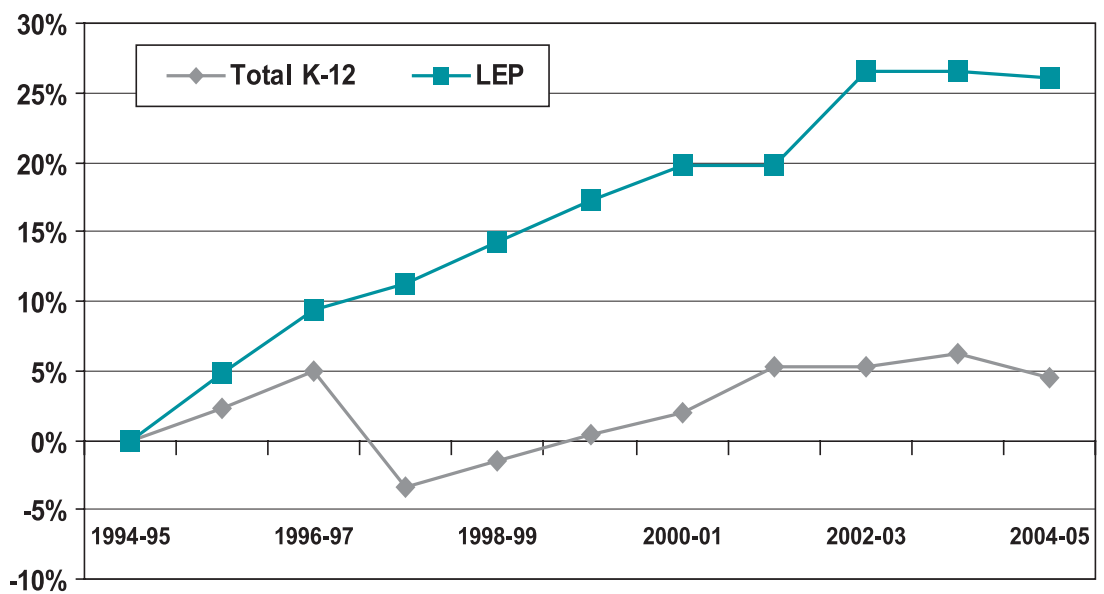
48. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction (NCELA). During the 2004–2005 academic year, 328,684 ELLs were enrolled in the Los Angeles Unified School District compared to 122,840 ELLs enrolled in New York City schools, the next largest district for ELLs.

**Figure 18. Rate of Total and LEP Student Enrollment Growth in the United States, 1995 to 2005**



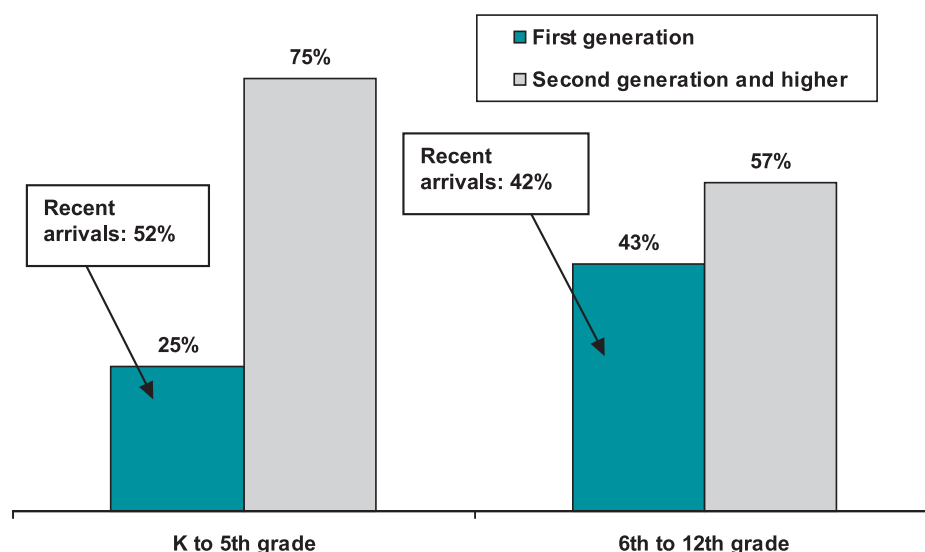
Source: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) 2006.

**Figure 19. Rate of Total and LEP Student Enrollment Growth in California, 1995 to 2005**



Source: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) 2006.

**Figure 20. LEP Children in the United States by Generation, 2000**



*Note:* The figure refers to LEP students, ages 5 to 18, currently enrolled in school. “Recent arrivals” have been in the United States for three years or less.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2000 US census data.

## Most Children Who Lack English Proficiency Are US Born

The conventional wisdom is that most ELLs are foreign-born children who enter US schools at some point in their educational careers. As Figure 19 indicates, nationwide, over three-quarters of LEP children in elementary schools and over half in secondary schools are second- or third-generation children. Born in the United States, these children were presumably educated in US schools, but the schools do not appear to have served them well.

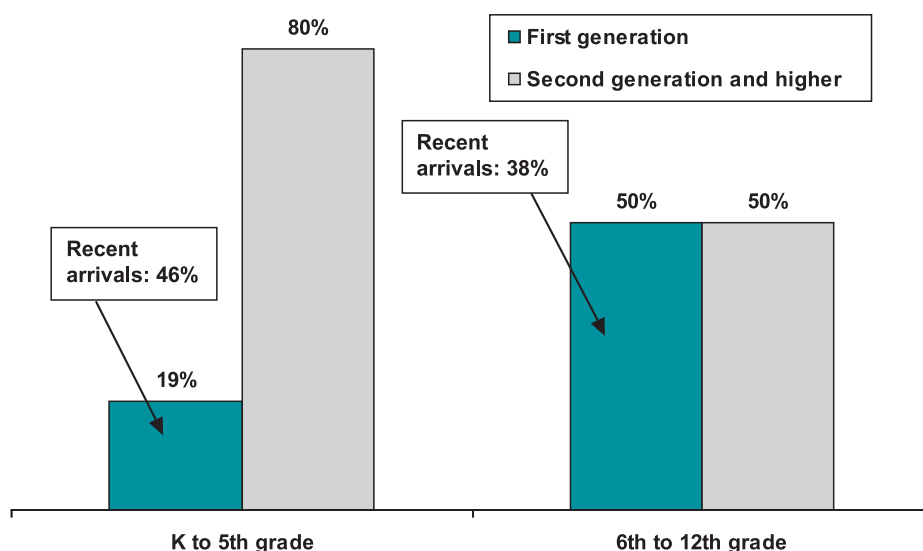
At the same time, 52 percent of ELLs in elementary schools and 42 percent of ELLs in secondary schools arrived within the past three years. The ELL population is dominated, then, by two subpopulations that pose difficult and quite distinct challenges for schools: recently arrived and long-term LEP students.

Consistent with a decline in the number of recent entrants overall, we see that recently arrived immigrants are a smaller share of ELLs in Los Angeles schools than nationwide (see Figure 21). In Los Angeles schools more so than elsewhere, native-born ELLs dominate the ELL elementary school population while foreign-born students dominate the middle and secondary school ELL populations.

## Rising Concentration of English Language Learners

A second worrying trend concerning integration is the growing spatial concentration of ELLs in US schools. Research using analysis of the 1999 Schools and Staffing Survey has revealed a growing concentration of LEP students in the nation’s schools. Nationwide, over half of LEP

**Figure 21. LEP Children in Los Angeles by Generation, 2000**



*Note:* The figure refers to LEP students, ages 5 to 18, currently enrolled in school. Los Angeles refers to the Los Angeles-Long Beach metro area, which is contained entirely within Los Angeles County. “Recent arrivals” have been in the United States for three years or less.

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2000 US census data.

students attend schools where 30 percent or more of their schoolmates are also LEP—a share that has risen since 1995 (see Figure 22). Stated differently, 70 percent of ELL elementary and secondary school students nationwide go to 10 percent of US schools.<sup>49</sup> This phenomenon means that children are not just attending schools that are economically and ethnically segregated, but linguistically isolated as well. Early implementation studies suggest that these high ELL schools are disproportionately likely to need improvement and to eventually be subject to sanctions under NCLB’s accountability mechanisms.

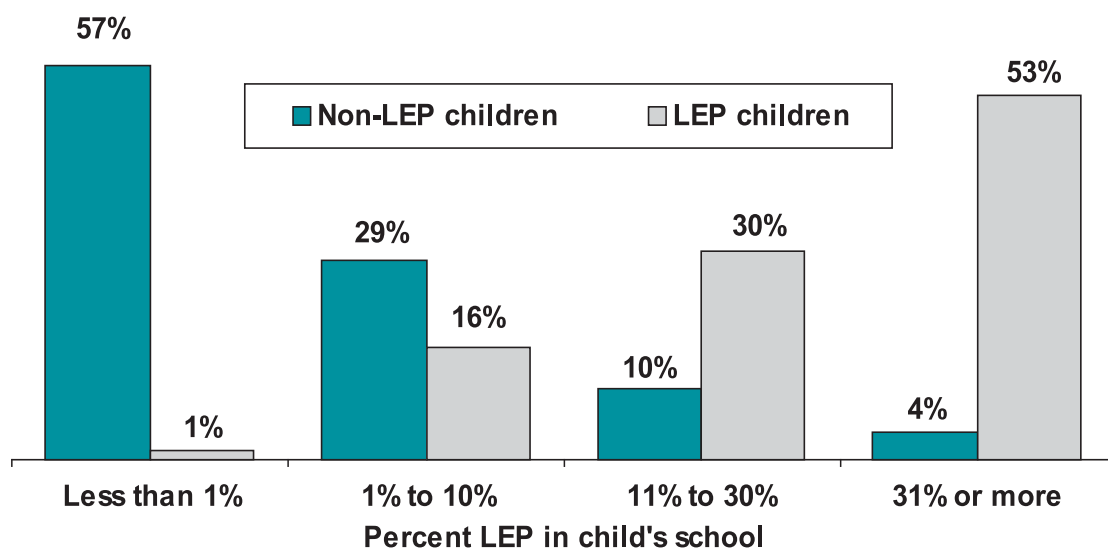
## English Language Learner Student Performance

It is particularly difficult to assess the academic progress of ELL students, but scholars have begun to offer partial answers. In a recent report, we compare 4th and 8th grade LEP and non-LEP students’ results on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) exam.<sup>50</sup>

49. Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Julie Murray, Jason Ost, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Shinta Herwantoro, *The New Demography of America’s Schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2005); Michael Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Jorge Ruiz De Velasco, “School Reform: The Demographic Imperative and Challenge” (paper presented at the IZA/Urban Institute Workshop on Migration, Washington, DC, May 2004).

50. Jeanne Batalova, Michael Fix, and Julie Murray, *Measures of Change: The Demography and Literacy of Adolescent English Learners* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007).

**Figure 22. LEP Students and Linguistic Segregation in the United States**



Source: Schools and Staffing Survey 1999 in Fix, Passel, and Ruiz de Velasco 2004.

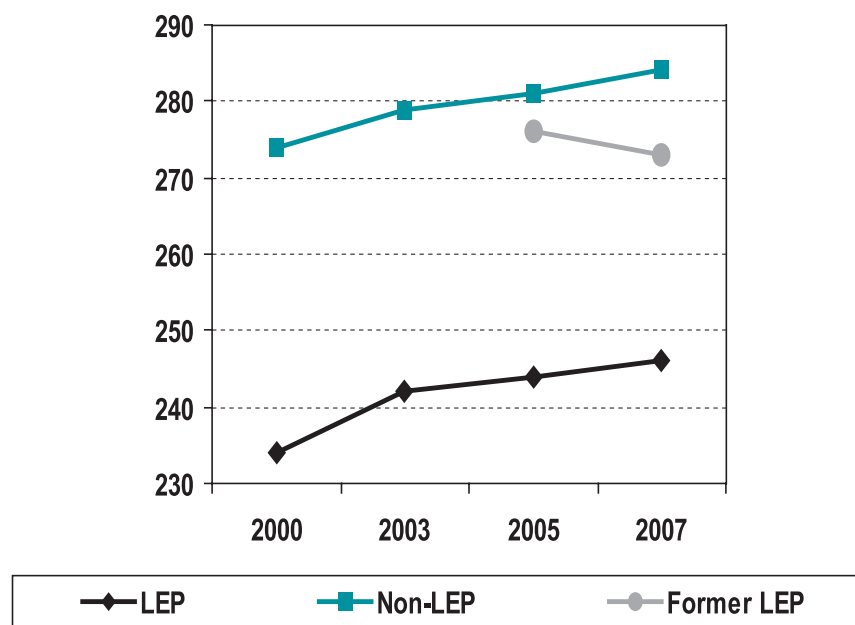
Because 8th grade is such a critical year, we focus here on 8th grade students' progress on the math NAEP from 2000 to 2007. Furthermore, we focus on math rather than literacy outcomes. The NAEP math test measures more than just a student's ability to manipulate numbers; it also relies heavily on communication, the ability to make connections, and reasoning capacity. As Figure 23 indicates, LEP students' scores substantially lag those of non-LEP 8th graders, a finding that throws into sharp relief the NCLB goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014.

A performance lag for LEPs is also apparent on California statewide tests, particularly for LEP students in Los Angeles. Overall in California, 41 percent of 8th grade students scored at or above the proficient level on the CST English/language arts assessment while in Los Angeles the share was 35 percent. ELLs scored much lower than their fluent English peers both in the state and in the district (see Figure 24). Further, only 3 percent of ELL 8th graders in Los Angeles public schools who had been in California schools less than 12 months were proficient in reading and language arts—behind the statewide average of 5 percent.

More interestingly—and perhaps more promisingly—the percentage of Los Angeles 8th graders in the “Reclassified Fluent English Proficient” who scored above proficient on the reading/language arts portion of California's STAR assessment is quite close to that of their English Only peers. Similarly, the 2007 NAEP math scores of former LEPs are much closer to non-ELLs than to ELLs (see Figure 23). These outcomes show that successful transitions from ELL to mainstream instruction are occurring, but they also beg the question of what accounts for the academic success of particular ELLs students or programs and how that success can be replicated.



**Figure 23. Average Scores of 8th Graders in Math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the United States, 2000 to 2007**



Source: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2007 Math Assessments.

**Figure 24. Percentage of 8th Graders Scoring at or above *Proficient* Achievement Level on the Reading/English Language Arts Portion of the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Assessment by Reported ELL/LEP Status in California and in Los Angeles County, 2007**

	California	Los Angeles
All students	41	35
English Only	51	45
Reclassified Fluent English proficient	45	40
English Language Learner	6	5
Enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months	5	3
Enrolled in California public schools 12 months or more	6	5

Source: Migration Policy Institute tabulations of 2007 California Department of Education, California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) data.

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## Summary: PreK–12 Education

- Schools are perhaps the most important integrating institution in US society. NCLB’s focus on accountability for ELL students can be considered not just a revolution in education but in immigrant integration policy.
- Nearly half of the children in California are the children of immigrants: foreign-born children comprise 6 percent of the child population and second-generation children are 41 percent.
- The number of ELLs in Los Angeles Unified School District schools (328,684) is three times higher than that of the next highest school district in the nation; 43 percent of all students in Los Angeles are ELLs.
- The ELL population is dominated by two subpopulations: recently arrived and long-term ELLs. Native-born ELLs dominate the elementary school population (80 percent) while foreign-born ELLs are roughly half of middle and high school students.
- Only 5 percent of 8th grade ELLs in Los Angeles scored at or above proficient on the state’s reading/language arts assessment in 2007 compared to 45 percent of their English Only peers. Yet, 50 percent of students who were former ELLs scored at or above proficient on the same test, indicating the need to understand and replicate practices that result in attaining English proficiency.

### ***Policy and Investment Implications:***

- Improving the performance of ELL students is a top integration priority. The experience of other successful schools and districts shows that achieving meaningful gains requires reform measures that address teacher quality, quality and relevance of instructional programs and curricular resources, use of appropriate placement and assessment measures, and parent engagement. Achieving significant reform of ELL instructional services in a district as large and complex as LAUSD not surprisingly provokes debate about whether broader reforms in governing and managing the system must be made in order for ELL program reform and accountability measures to proceed and succeed.
- The extraordinarily large concentration of ELLs in Los Angeles public schools makes ELL testing and accountability under NCLB and potential conflicts with the interpretation and implementation of California’s Proposition 227 particularly salient.
- Longitudinal data on student performance that analyzes key factors relevant to the performance of the two main ELL subpopulations—recently arrived and long-term ELLs—should be used to help guide policy and program interventions.
- Parent-engagement programs that explain the US education system to immigrant parents and assist them in playing an active role in supporting their children’s educational success are essential. Schools and the complex and contro-

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versial issues surrounding ELL instruction also offer opportunities for developing immigrants' engagement in school policy and funding issues, and can provide a pathway to their engagement in the broader civic life of their communities.

- The public debate over the implementation of NCLB is extremely relevant to the challenge of improving the performance of ELLs in Los Angeles schools. Proponents of the law argue that its tough reporting and accountability measures are forcing schools to acknowledge their failings in providing quality instruction to ELL students, and to improve and tailor services to ELL and other underperforming students' needs. Opponents argue that those very same measures hurt student progress by setting unrealistic goals, not providing sufficient funding to achieve them, and distorting classroom instruction because of pressures to "teach to the test." As the nation's leading edge of these issues, thoughtful attempts by Los Angeles municipal, education, and community leaders to explore and reconcile these issues could have a significant impact on the national NCLB debate.

Finally, the extreme concentration of immigrant and ELL students in underperforming schools raises civil rights concerns that should be monitored and explored.

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## CHAPTER 6

### POVERTY AND THE COSTS OF THE UNINSURED

The portrait of immigrants and poverty in the United States and in Los Angeles suggests both peril and promise. While the share of immigrants living in poverty has declined over the past two decades, immigrants are still more likely to live in poverty than the native born.

#### **Immigrants and Poverty in the United States**

In 2005, 16.9 percent of immigrants in the United States lived below the federally designated poverty threshold.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, just 12.8 percent of the native born lived in poverty. Contrary to popular wisdom, the share of immigrants in poverty in 2005 (16.9 percent) was lower than the share in 1990 (17.9 percent), owing in part to an expanding economy through the 1990s. Although the share of immigrants who are poor may have fallen between 1990 and 2005, the number of immigrants in poverty rose by 75.5 percent over the same period, reflecting net immigration. Moreover, the share that immigrants represent of the total population in poverty rose from 10.9 to 15.7 percent between 1990 and 2005.

While the portrait of immigrants living in poverty yields a somewhat ambiguous picture, when immigrants are disaggregated by citizenship status, a much more detailed story emerges. Naturalized immigrants had a much lower incidence of poverty (10.4 percent) than noncitizens (21.6 percent). Indeed, the share of naturalized citizens living in poverty in the United States was lower than the share of US natives living in poverty (12.4 percent) in 2005.

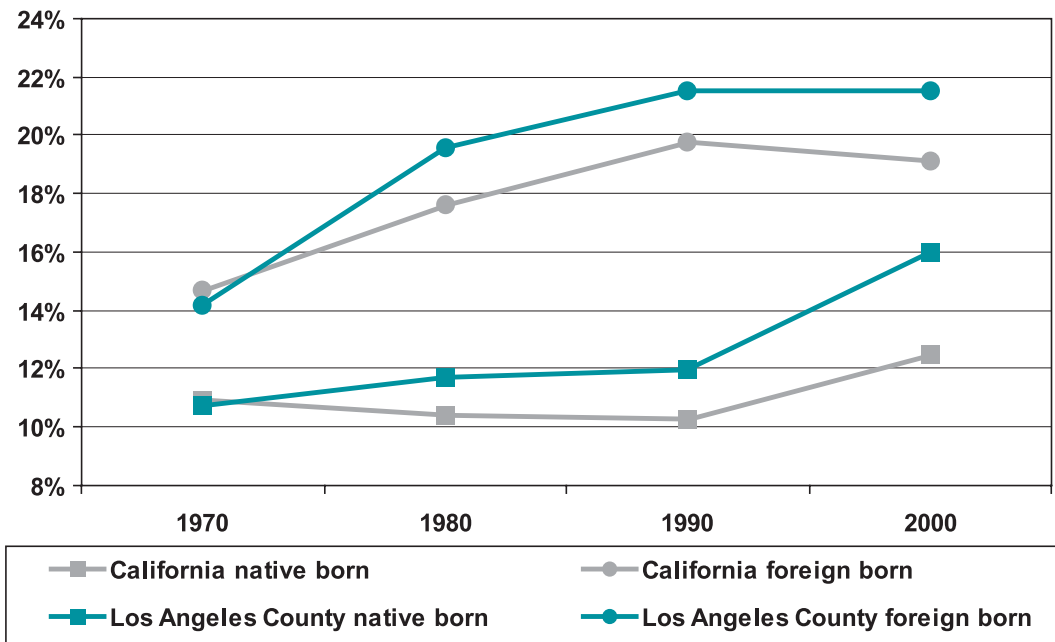
#### **Immigrant Poverty Rates in Los Angeles**

According to the 2006 American Community Survey, the share of immigrants living in poverty in Los Angeles County (16.9 percent) was identical to the share at the national level.

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51. The federal government uses two different poverty measures: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines. Poverty guidelines are used by the Department of Health and Human Services for administrative purposes. Poverty thresholds are calculated by the Census Bureau and are used mainly for statistical purposes; they vary by sex of the family head, family size, number of children, and farm-nonfarm status. In 2005, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four was an annual household income of \$19,971.

**Figure 25. Poverty Rates in California and Los Angeles County, 1970 to 2000**



Source: US census 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 in Golier, Park, and Myers 2004.

While poverty rates among the foreign born in both Los Angeles and California increased from 1970 to 1990, they have since leveled off. By contrast, poverty rates among natives were generally stable between 1970 and 1990 but have since increased. With such a large second-generation population in Los Angeles, increased poverty in the native population possibly reflects a worrying trend in the second generation's economic mobility (see Figure 25).

## Immigrants and Public Benefits Use

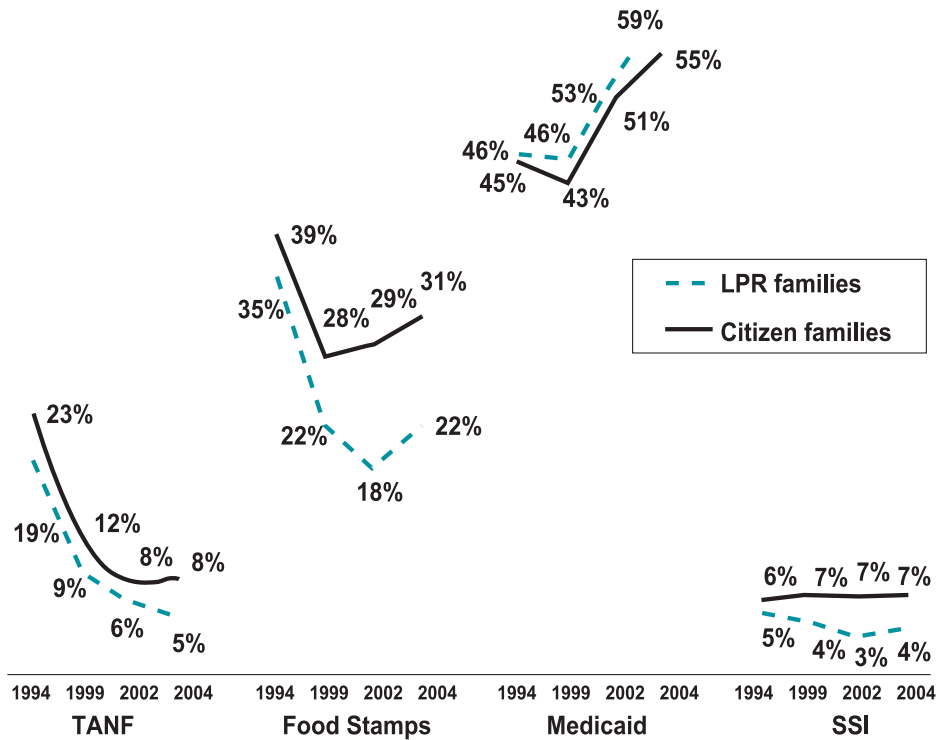
Another critical, if controversial, indicator of integration is immigrants' use of public benefits. One set of concerns raised by comprehensive immigration reform's opponents was that it would be expensive because of high new welfare costs. The national data suggest that these concerns have been overstated.

As Figure 26 indicates, when we examine benefit use rates *comparing low-income legal immigrant families with children to their low-income citizen counterparts*, we find the following:<sup>52</sup>

- Contrary to popular notions, low-income legal immigrants' use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps (FS), and Supplemental Secu-

52. Michael Fix, ed., *A Decade Later: Welfare Reform and Immigrant Children and Families* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, forthcoming).

**Figure 26. Share of Families with Children under 200 Percent of Poverty Participating in Public Benefit Programs, 1994 to 2004**



Source: Current Population Survey March 1995, 2000, 2003, and 2005 in Fix (forthcoming).

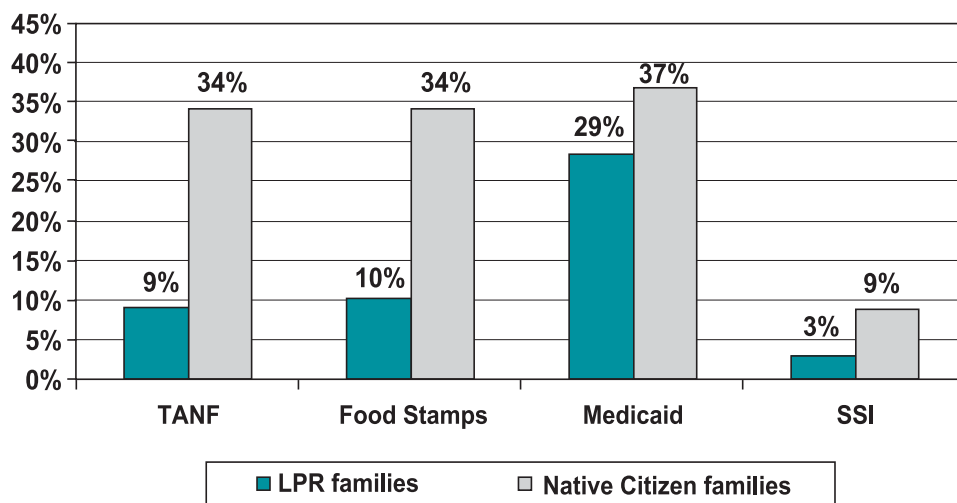
rity Income (SSI) was lower than natives' use before welfare reform, and their rates remained below citizens' rates through 2004.

- TANF use continued to decline through 2004.
- Food Stamps use rebounds slightly beginning in 2002, a likely result of congressional restorations and other reforms that made the Food Stamp program generally more accessible to immigrants.

It is debatable if these declines are a policy success. Recent research by sociologists Frank Bean and Jennifer Van Hook suggests that immigrants use welfare as a form of settlement assistance that does not lead to dependence over time but, rather, to higher wages and longer employment spells.<sup>53</sup> Specifically, they find that Latino immigrants leaving welfare in more generous states are more likely to be employed and that their tendency to be employed increases with the length of time in the country. California provides the nation's most

53. Jennifer Van Hook, Susan K. Brown, and Frank D. Bean, "For Love or Money? Welfare Reform and Immigrant Naturalization" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, August 14–17, 2004), [http://www.cri.uci.edu/pdf/ForLoveOrMoney\\_July1806.pdf](http://www.cri.uci.edu/pdf/ForLoveOrMoney_July1806.pdf).

**Figure 27. Share of Low-Income Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) and Native Citizen Families with at Least One Member Using Public Benefit Programs, Los Angeles County, 1999 to 2000**



*Note:* Includes families with an annual income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and which have no members age 65 and over.

*Source:* Los Angeles-New York City Immigrant Survey (LANYCIS) and the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF II) in Capps, Ku, and Fix et al. (2002).

extensive benefits to immigrants in the areas of health, cash assistance, and nutrition,<sup>54</sup> and these findings appear to reinforce the merits of California's past policies of instituting state substitutes for lost federal benefits.

### **Public Benefits Use by Low-Income Immigrant Families in Los Angeles**

Similar patterns of public benefits use can be seen among low-income LPR families in Los Angeles. Low-income LPR families in Los Angeles are less likely to receive TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and SSI (see Figure 27),<sup>55</sup> though their Medicaid usage rates approach those of natives.

### **Immigrant Health and Public Insurance Coverage**

As Figure 26 indicates, nationwide, legal noncitizens had higher Medicaid use levels before reform, and their rates continue to exceed citizens' rates in 2004. Although the rate of Medicaid

54. Amanda Levinson, "Immigrants and Welfare Use," *Migration Information Source*, August 2002, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=45>.

55. Randy Capps, Leighton Ku, and Michael Fix et al, *How are Immigrants Faring After Welfare Reform? Preliminary Evidence from Los Angeles and New York City* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2002).

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use among immigrant families in Los Angeles is lower than for native citizen families, it is far closer to native rates than is the case for TANF and Food Stamps. These are likely the intended results of several policy and program initiatives, including

- the State Children’s Health Insurance Program’s (SCHIP) introduction;
- extensive—often foundation-funded—outreach;
- broader institutional reforms in Medicaid that expand access.

Also important are declines in private insurance coverage among immigrant families, many of whom work in low-wage industries.

Despite these trends and some states’ efforts to provide health insurance to immigrant children (including those in California), low-income legal immigrant children and low-income refugee children remain almost twice as likely to be uninsured as their native counterparts. Moreover, low-income legal immigrant children remain barred for five years from Medicaid and SCHIP, so their public insurance costs are wholly shifted to state and local governments. Further, studies indicate that the health outcomes of low-income children of immigrants appear to lag those of low-income children of natives.<sup>56</sup>

Because such a large share of recent entrants to the United States and to California is unauthorized, it is important to broaden the scope of this inquiry to all low-income noncitizens, not just those who are legally present. Using data from the Current Population Survey, health policy scholar Leighton Ku finds that, over the decade 1995 to 2005, noncitizen children lost publicly funded coverage and became uninsured more often as a result.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, by 2005, low-income noncitizen children in noncitizen families were more than three times as likely to be uninsured than low-income citizen children with native-born parents (47.7 versus 14.9 percent).<sup>58</sup>

Ku also examines trends among noncitizen parents, again finding that uninsurance rates rose and Medicaid participation declined over the decade. In 2005, 57 percent of low-income noncitizen parents were uninsured—a rate almost double that of their US-born counterparts (29.3 percent). During the 1995–2005 decade, rates of employer or other forms of private insurance fell for noncitizens, explaining rising uninsurance rates and making it clear that congressional hopes that private sponsors would substitute private for public insurance were unrealistic.

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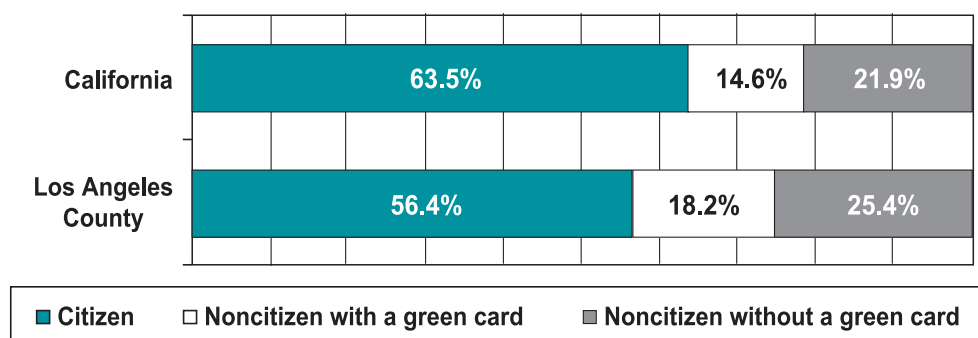
56. Jane Reardon-Anderson, Randy Capps, and Michael Fix, *The Health and Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2002).

57. Leighton Ku, “Changes in Immigrants’ Use of Medicaid and Food Stamps: The Role of Eligibility and Other Factors,” in *A Decade Later: Welfare Reform and Immigrant Children and Families*, ed. Michael Fix (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, forthcoming).

58. The broad pattern of declining public insurance coverage among noncitizens seems, at first glance, to be at odds with those reported in the Capps, Fix, and Henderson paper summarized above (which finds rising Medicaid use rates and declining levels of uninsurance). We suspect that the results can be reconciled by the fact that the Ku analysis does not differentiate noncitizens by legal status. Thus, the rapid growth in the size of the unauthorized population and of the share it constituted of the noncitizen population between 1995 and 2005 may account at least in part for the results.



**Figure 28. Citizenship and Immigration Status of the Uninsured, 2005**



Note: “Noncitizen without a green card” includes residents who have another immigration status as well as unauthorized persons.

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of 2005 California Health Interview Survey data.

### ***The Uninsured in Los Angeles***

Although noncitizens accounted for 20.8 percent of the total Los Angeles County population in 2005, they were 43.6 percent of the uninsured. The share of noncitizens among the uninsured was much higher in Los Angeles County than in the state of California overall, where noncitizens were 36.5 percent of the uninsured (see Figure 28).<sup>59</sup>

### ***The Costs of the Uninsured***

In California, emergency Medicaid spending for uninsured immigrants for fiscal year 2007 is predicted to exceed \$941 million according to the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency. The California Hospital Association reports that unauthorized immigrants may account for as much as \$750 million annually of the cost of uncompensated care in California hospitals—about 10 percent of the annual total—since they represent about 10 percent of the state’s emergency department patients. About 1 million of California’s 4.8 million uninsured residents are unauthorized adults, and about 136,000 are unauthorized children.<sup>60</sup>

As part of a recent proposal for comprehensive health-care reform, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger sought to provide health insurance coverage through Medicaid and SCHIP to all children with family incomes at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, regardless of immigration status. In addition, the governor’s plan proposed to cover ap-

59. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, “2005 California Health Interview Survey” (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2007).

60. Susan Okie, “Immigrants and Health Care—At the Intersection of Two Broken Systems,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 357 no. 6 (2007): 525–29.

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proximately 4.1 million uninsured LPR adults in the state.<sup>61</sup> However, the California State Senate rejected Schwarzenegger’s plan in early 2008. Following the defeat, Schwarzenegger vowed to revive the plan but not before 2009, leaving the issue unaddressed in the short to medium term.<sup>62</sup>

### **Health Safety-Net Providers**

For the uninsured, the key safety-net provider in Los Angeles is the county’s Department of Health Services, which administers public hospitals, public clinics, and the public health system, including the Los Angeles County/University of Southern California Medical Center, one of the largest public hospitals in the nation. The department provides about 95 percent of inpatient care for the uninsured and 30 percent of all Medicaid services. In addition, the county has developed a public-private partnership system in which private clinics receive county funds to provide outpatient services for uninsured low-income people, even if they are not eligible for Medicaid.

California uses state-only funds for nonemergency services, while emergency services are federally matched under Medicaid. In Los Angeles County, uninsured children under age 19, with family incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty line and who are ineligible for Medicaid or the SCHIP, the are covered under Los Angeles’s Healthy Kids insurance expansion, regardless of immigration status.

#### **Summary: Poverty, Public Benefits, and Health Care**

- Poverty rates for both immigrants and natives are higher in Los Angeles than in California and the United States, and immigrants in Los Angeles County have a higher poverty rate than natives.
- While poverty rates among immigrants in Los Angeles have remained flat since 1990, natives’ poverty rates rose, perhaps reflecting worrying trends within the second generation.
- Noncitizens have higher poverty rates than US citizens, but they are not necessarily more prone to public benefits use. Nationwide, legal immigrant families used less TANF and Food Stamps benefits than their native counterparts.

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61. Office of the Governor of the State of California, “Governor’s Health Care Proposal” (Sacramento: Office of the Governor of the State of California, 2007), [http://gov.ca.gov/pdf/press/Governors\\_HC\\_Proposal.pdf](http://gov.ca.gov/pdf/press/Governors_HC_Proposal.pdf).

62. Laura Kurtzman, “Key committee rejects Schwarzenegger’s health reform effort,” Associated Press Business News, January 29, 2008.

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- Patterns of public benefits use among low-income immigrant families in Los Angeles County are similar to nationwide trends, with low-income immigrant families much less likely to receive TANF and Food Stamps but almost as likely to receive Medicaid.
  - Many Los Angeles immigrants are not receiving public assistance and are vulnerable, particularly with respect to health care and health insurance. Although noncitizens were 21 percent of the total Los Angeles population in 2005, they made up 29 percent of Los Angeles's poor and 44 percent of the county's uninsured.
  - The share of noncitizens among the uninsured was much higher in Los Angeles County (43.6 percent) than in California overall (36.5 percent).

***Policy and Investment Implications:***

- In both the social services and health-care contexts, taking steps to address linguistic and cultural competence issues will help ensure that eligible individuals can access services to which they are entitled. Similarly, ensuring appropriate training of frontline eligibility workers in immigration status restrictions is essential given the large number of mixed-status families in the Los Angeles area.
- The high uninsurance rates of immigrants in Los Angeles indicate that strategies to address access to affordable and high quality health care must understand and focus on the range of issues affecting coverage for this diverse population. Key considerations in viewing major reform efforts are (1) whether they would restrict participation in coverage based on an individual's immigration status and (2) in the case of employer-based expansions, whether industries or businesses that are likely to employ a large number of immigrant workers are exempted from participation or are permitted to limit their participation to certain workers.
- System-reform initiatives must work at the local, state, and national levels given the complex set of governance and budgetary issues in this area. Past immigration reform measures have focused on local impact assistance needs in the health-care area, indicating that future immigration reform legislation should not be overlooked as a possible vehicle for policy or budget action to address local concerns.

Many immigrants do not understand how the health-care system in the United States and Los Angeles works, where to find services appropriate to their needs, their options for paying for care, or whether there will be immigration consequences if they use particular services. Initiatives that provide accurate information on health-care access issues to immigrants and/or facilitate enrollment in available programs could help reduce disparities in care and assist immigrants in accessing appropriate services.

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## CONCLUSION

Many of the major trends in Los Angeles documented in this report—the decline in the number of noncitizens, the rise in the naturalized population, and the growth of the second generation—all point to significant new opportunities to promote the involvement of immigrants in civic and political life. A strategy that builds on demography and catalyzes informed engagement by immigrants and other stakeholders could create the energy and focus needed to address the challenges and opportunities posed by integration issues, and, at the same time, build a more vibrant and cohesive Los Angeles community.

Focusing on language and civics instruction, for example, would give immigrants the skills and confidence to engage more fully in the social and civic life of Los Angeles. Promoting naturalization, registration, and voting would lead to greater political participation on issues important to immigrant communities and the broader California and US electorates. And efforts to welcome and support the year-round engagement of all immigrants and their family members on key issues, such as quality schools, access to affordable health care, and job training opportunities, could revitalize civic life in many neighborhoods and across Los Angeles while also furthering integration goals.

But, even in the absence of such efforts, decisions are made every minute of every day in Los Angeles by key government administrators, elected officials, foundation officers, employers, and many other stakeholders that could be harnessed to achieve integration goals. Of course, this report is not an exhaustive discussion of all the relevant issues and policy and investment options. However, it identifies many of the most important policy and program levers that local leaders and stakeholders can push in order to achieve integration gains that will benefit not just immigrants and their families, but the broader communities and local economies of which they are a part.

As this report makes clear, the particular demographic trends that have shaped the population of Los Angeles over the past 30–40 years place it on the leading edge nationally of issues related to the integration of immigrants and their families. Los Angeles is unique in the size of its immigrant population, the large presence of unauthorized and mixed-status families, and the growing size of the second generation and its concerns. As it engages and responds to the opportunities and challenges these trends present, Los Angeles is illuminating the path for other localities and policymakers at all levels of government who are beginning to grapple with the imperative for immigrant integration and the ad hoc nature of most responses thus far.



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Michael Fix is Vice President and Director of Studies at the Migration Policy Institute where he co-directs the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. MPI is the nation's only stand-alone, independent think tank on national and international migration issues. Prior to joining MPI, Mr. Fix was Director of Immigration Studies at the Urban Institute in Washington, DC. His research has focused on immigration and immigrant integration policy; race and the measurement of discrimination; federalism; and regulatory reform. In the area of immigration and immigrant policy, Mr. Fix's recent work has centered on immigrant education, social rights and citizenship, and the impact of immigrants on the US labor force.

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## MPI'S NATIONAL CENTER ON IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY

In 2007, the Migration Policy Institute established the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. The Center's goal is to inform policymaking at all levels of government in the often overlooked area of integration policy. The Center is also intended to serve as a hub connecting government administrators, researchers, community leaders, service providers, the media, and others who are seeking to understand and respond to the challenges of high sustained levels of immigration.

The Center's core functions include policy research and design, leadership development, convening stakeholders, technical assistance, and an electronic resource center with a special focus on state and local policies. The Center offers the most pertinent data, available at the click of a mouse, on immigrants and their integration, as well as demographic trends, state-by-state information on immigrant populations, and a wealth of other facts and figures.

These online resources can be found on MPI's Web site at [www.migrationpolicy.org/integration](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/integration)



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