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CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT **FAMILIES** CHART NEW PATH

BY MARK MATHER

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BY MARK MATHER
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CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

CHART NEW PATH

There are more than 16 million children living in America's immigrant families. The vast majority are U.S. citizens who were born in the United States to foreign-born parents. Children in immigrant families—defined as people under age 18 who are foreign born or who live with at least one foreign-born parent—are the fastest-growing segment of America's youth and are leading a racial/ethnic transformation of the U.S. population.¹ But despite their growing numbers—nearly doubling in population since 1990—the children of immigrants have been largely ignored in the national conversation about immigration.

Since 1980, most news articles on immigration have focused on the legal status or criminal activities of immigrants and government debates about immigration policy.² Over the past few years, the focus shifted somewhat to public sentiment toward immigrants, immigrant activism, and border security issues in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.³ In 2006, during the Congressional debates on immigration policy, newspapers wrote thousands of articles on immigration issues, but fewer than 5 percent of those stories covered issues related to immigrant families and children.

Yet the children of immigrants are at the heart of several key U.S. social and policy issues. Second-generation Latinos—who account for the majority of children in immigrant families—are projected to make up 23 percent of U.S. labor force growth from 2000 to 2020 and could help support aging baby boomers in retirement.⁴ Immigrant families are driving rapid population growth and growing race/ethnic diversity in local communities and school districts across the country. The children of immigrants, especially those living with unauthorized parents, are also deeply affected by national immigration policies aimed at

restricting or regulating the movement of people and families across U.S. borders.

Immigrant families bring many strengths to this country, including stable, healthy families, a strong work ethic, a youthful population, and cohesive communities.⁵ But a subset of children of immigrants, mostly those with parents from Latin America, also present serious challenges for policymakers who are trying to reduce poverty and increase educational attainment among America's youth.

This report looks at children of immigrants through a demographic lens, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census, population estimates, and the American Community Survey (ACS). The first part of the report focuses on the role of immigrant families in transforming the race/ethnic composition of the U.S. population. The second part of the report addresses the key social and economic challenges facing children in immigrant families.

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A NEW DEMOGRAPHIC PATH

The year 1965 was significant for the U.S. population. First, it marked the end of the postwar baby boom. The U.S. baby boom was a period of markedly higher fertility rates that lasted nearly two decades, from 1946 to 1964. During this period, there were 76 million births—mostly to non-Hispanic whites—and fertility increased to a lifetime average of more than three children per woman. The American fertility boom ended in 1965 when the fertility rate dropped below three births per woman for the first time since the mid-1940s. By the early 1970s the fertility rate had sunk to below two births per woman and the annual number of births bottomed out at nearly 1 million below the baby-boom peaks.

Second, it was 1965 when Congress passed the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, which opened the doors to immigrants from all regions of the world. During the early part of the 20th century, Congress barred entry of Chinese immigrants and other groups that were thought to pose a threat to the U.S. economy or culture.⁶ Starting in the 1920s, immigration levels were restricted further, particularly for those coming from southern and eastern Europe. The 1965 amendments represented a major change in immigration policy. They removed per-country quotas and gave priority to families who had relatives living in the United States, opening the borders to new waves of

immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Many of these immigrants have started families since they arrived in the United States, and have had higher fertility rates than the U.S.-born population, creating a surge in the number of immigrant youth.

In combination, these two factors put the United States on a new demographic path, characterized by fewer non-Hispanic white births and a rapid increase in births to Latino, Asian American, and inter-

racial couples—led by the children of immigrants. Although black migration to the United States has increased in recent years (especially from Africa and the Caribbean), the number of black migrants is relatively small compared to those arriving from Latin America. Latinos recently surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States.

Between 1990 and 2007, the number of children in immigrant

CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES EXPANDED THEIR SHARE OF ALL U.S. CHILDREN BETWEEN 1990 AND 2007.

Table 1

Year	Children in immigrant families	
	Number (thousands)	Percent of all U.S. children
1990	8,331	13
2000	13,538	19
2007	16,548	22

Source: PRB analysis of decennial census and American Community Survey data.

DEFINING CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Children in immigrant families include those under age 18 who were born outside of the United States or who reside with at least one foreign-born parent. People are classified as “foreign-born” if they are not U.S. citizens or if they are U.S. citizens by naturalization. The native-born population includes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or the Northern Marianas or born abroad to U.S. citizens. In this report, the terms “immigrant” and “foreign-born” are used interchangeably.

families nearly doubled, from 8.3 million to 16.5 million (see Table 1, page 2), while the number of children in U.S.-born families increased by only 3 percent. Children of immigrants account for 22 percent of all children, and are the fastest-growing segment of the population under age 18. By 2020, one in three children is projected to live in an immigrant family.⁷

A large majority of children in immigrant families have parents born in Latin America and Asia. It is the rapid increase in these families that is driving growth in the number of children in immigrant families nationwide. In 2007, there were 13.9 million immigrant children with Latin American or Asian origins, but there were also large numbers with origins in Europe and Africa (see Figure 1). In 2007, about two-fifths of children in immigrant families were either born in Mexico or had a parent who was born in Mexico.

Because immigrants have characteristics that are different from the

U.S.-born population, they are making the country more racially and ethnically diverse, especially among the population under age 18.⁸ In 2007, eight out of 10 children of immigrants were racial/ethnic minorities: 55 percent were identified as Hispanic/Latino, 18 percent were non-Hispanic white, 16 percent were Asian, 7 percent were black, and the rest were affiliated with some other group.

Immigration has put the United States on a path to become “majority minority,” when less than 50 percent of the population will be non-Hispanic white. Minorities, which currently account for a third of the U.S. population, are projected to reach 50 percent of the population by around 2042. But the population under age 18 is projected to reach this milestone much sooner—by 2023, primarily because of the rapid growth in Latino families.⁹ Between 2007 and 2030, the proportion of non-Hispanic white children is projected to drop by 11 percentage points, while the proportion of

Latino children is projected to increase by 10 percentage points, to 31 percent (see Table 2, page 4). As these Latino children grow older, join the work force, and start families of their own, they will lead a major shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population and labor force.

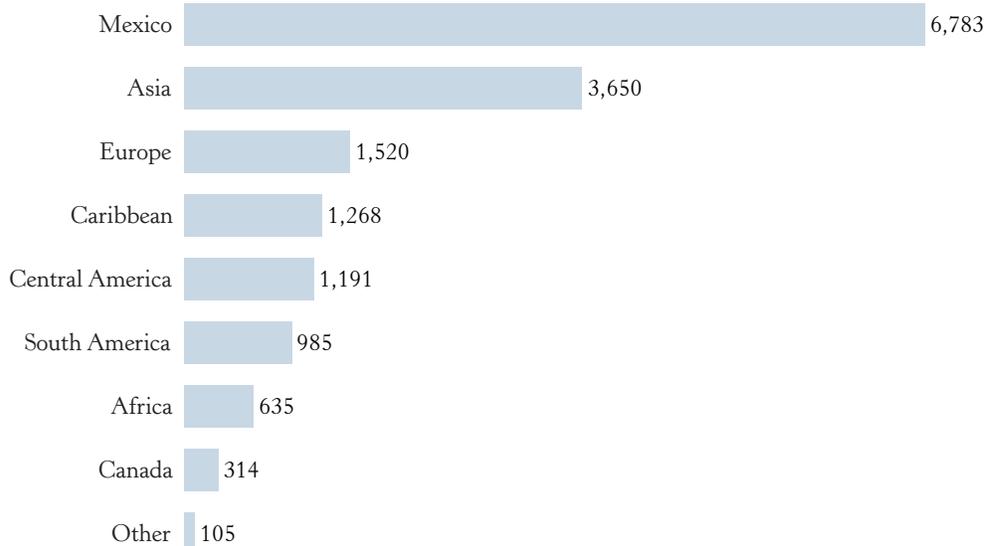
The rapid increase in children of immigrants has also created a demographic rift between generations. During the last several decades, baby boomers, most of whom are non-Hispanic white, have dominated the U.S. population and labor force, but as they reach old age, they are being replaced by a younger cohort that is much more likely to be Hispanic, multiracial, or Asian.¹⁰

In 1980, the racial and ethnic divisions between age groups were fairly small (see Figure 2, page 4). People in their 60s had a racial/ethnic profile similar to those in their 40s and 50s, who in turn looked similar to those in their 20s and 30s. The difference in the share of minorities did not

ABOUT TWO-FIFTHS OF CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES WERE BORN IN MEXICO OR HAD A PARENT WHO WAS BORN IN MEXICO.

Figure 1

Number of children in immigrant families by country of origin, 2007 (thousands)



Source: PRB analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey.

THE HISPANIC SHARE OF U.S. CHILDREN IS PROJECTED TO GROW TO 31 PERCENT BY 2030, AS THE WHITE, NON-HISPANIC SHARE DROPS BELOW 50 PERCENT.

Table 2

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of U.S. children	
	2007	2030
White*	57	46
Black*	14	12
American Indian/Alaska Native*	1	1
Asian and Pacific Islander*	4	5
Two or more races*	3	4
Hispanic/Latino	21	31

*Non-Hispanic. Data for whites, blacks, Asians, and American Indians are for those who identify with only one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau population projections.

exceed 5 percentage points in successive generations.

By 2007, however, these generational differences had increased substantially. Those in their 40s and 50s—members of the baby-boom generation—are stuck between very different generations: that of the nation’s parents and grandparents, most of whom are U.S.-born whites, and that of U.S. children

and grandchildren, who are increasingly Hispanic or Asian. Although African American children are still a sizeable group (14 percent of all children in 2007), their numbers are growing at a much slower pace than the numbers of children in Hispanic and Asian families.

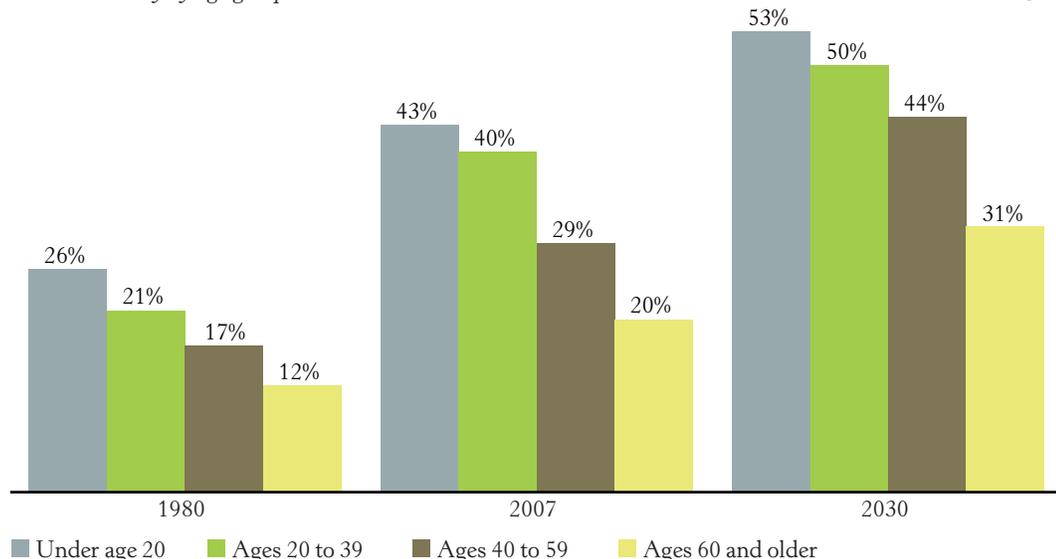
Census projections indicate that this racial/ethnic divergence between generations may be a

temporary phenomenon. Over the next 25 years, the racial/ethnic differences between age cohorts are projected to shrink somewhat as the number of minorities in older age groups increases. However, in 2030, roughly 69 percent of the population ages 60 and older is still projected to be non-Hispanic white, distinguishing that age group from younger generations.

THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC GAP BETWEEN AGE GROUPS GREW BETWEEN 1980 AND 2007, BUT IS PROJECTED TO NARROW BY 2030, EXCEPT FOR THE BABY-BOOM GENERATION.

Percent minority by age group

Figure 2



Note: Minorities include all racial and ethnic groups except non-Hispanic whites.

Source: PRB analysis of census data.

GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSAL ACROSS THE USA

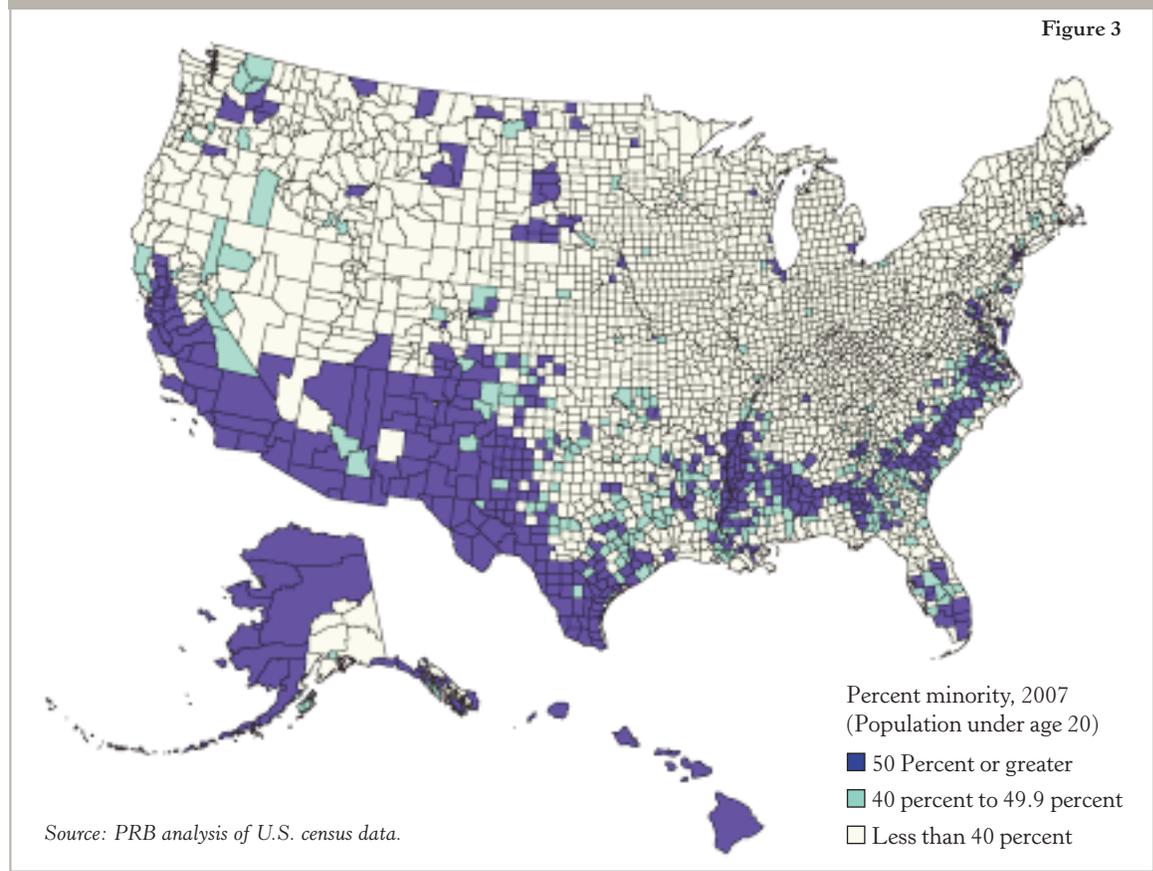
This race/ethnic transformation is taking place across the entire country. Historically, most immigrants settled in a handful of states, mostly located on the East and West coasts.¹¹ But the increasing diversity of the child population is no longer limited to the large cities that served as traditional gateways.

In recent years immigrant families have fanned out across the United States to new destinations. Today, there are growing numbers of new immigrants in the Carolinas, Mountain West, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest regions. At the same time, immigrants are increasingly moving away from cities and into suburban, exurban, and even rural communities.¹²

However, in 2007, more than two-thirds of children in immigrant families still resided in just seven states—Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. These same seven states were home to about two-fifths of all children.

The highest concentrations of children in immigrant families are in the Southwest—particularly

IN 2007, MINORITIES MADE UP AT LEAST ONE-HALF OF YOUTH UNDER AGE 20 IN ONE-SEVENTH OF U.S. COUNTIES.



along the California coast and the Texas-Mexico border. These areas are also home to the largest and longest-standing Latino immigrant communities in the country. There are also high concentrations of children of immigrants in and around Miami in southern Florida, in rural central Washington state, and in the central cities and suburbs of several large metropolitan areas, including Albuquerque, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, New York, Orlando, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

Several southern states without historically high levels of immigration are struggling to adjust to the new immigrant arrivals. Between 2000 and 2007, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee each experienced a 70 percent or greater increase in the number of children in immigrant families. In North Carolina, the number of children in immigrant families has increased fivefold since 1990.

The United States is projected to become majority minority around 2050, but many counties have already passed that mark—302 at last count. Some of these counties—mostly in the Deep

South and the Upper Midwest—are populated by U.S.-born black and American Indian populations, but those in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas are dominated by Hispanic/Latino immigrants and their children.

If we limit our analysis to the population under age 20, the number of majority-minority counties increases considerably, to 489 (see Figure 3, page 5). This represents about one in every seven counties nationwide. There were also 274 “emerging majority-minority” counties—where minorities made up between 40 percent and 50 percent of the youth population.¹³

CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

The social and economic well-being of all children, regardless of immigrant status, is largely determined by their parent's circumstances. Parental income, education, and work status are all key factors that help shape children's opportunities and development. For children in immigrant families, parents' English language ability and the circumstances of their migration to the United States—for example, as refugees, agricultural workers, engineers, or computer scientists—are important factors in children's overall well-being and their chances for success in school and the job market.

POVERTY

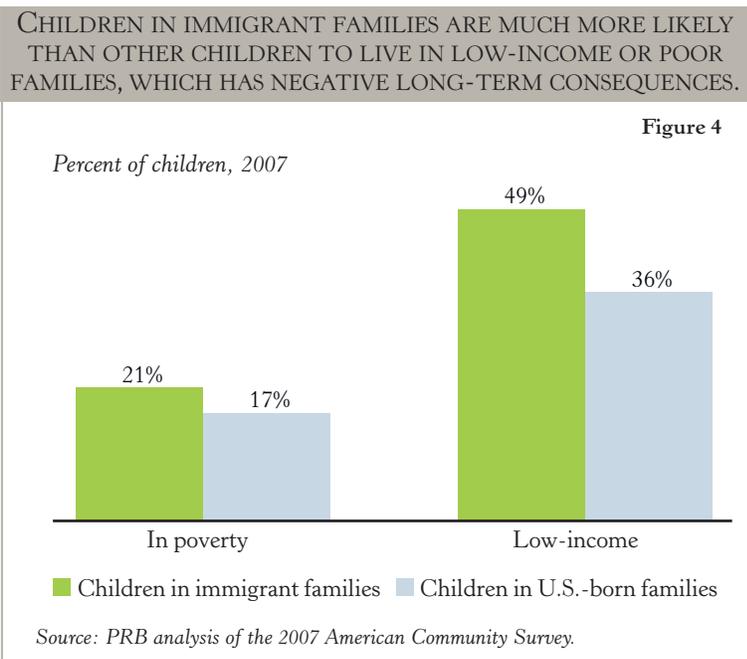
More than one-fifth of children in immigrant families lived in poverty in 2007, and nearly half lived in families with low incomes—below 200 percent of the poverty threshold (see Figure 4). Immigrant families represent one of every five children living in the United States, but they make up over one-fourth of the 13.1 million children living in poverty. This is an important policy issue: Children in poor families have worse health and educational outcomes, are more likely to experience parental divorce and live in single-parent families,

and are more likely to experience violent crime compared to children growing up in more-affluent families.¹⁴ For many children, poverty persists into adolescence and adulthood, and is associated with greater risk of dropping out of school, teen childbearing, and lower earnings as young adults.¹⁵

Poverty in the United States is often associated with single-parent families. But many children of immigrants experience a different kind of poverty. In 2007, over three-fourths (77 percent) of immigrant children were living in married-couple families, compared to two-thirds (65 percent) of children in U.S.-born families. Children of immigrants were also more likely than children in U.S.-born families to have a parent with full-time employment.

The high poverty rate for immigrant families is linked to the low-wage jobs that are often filled by unskilled—mostly Latino—immigrant workers. These include jobs in agriculture, grounds maintenance, housekeeping, construction, and retail sales. None of these jobs require education beyond a high school diploma, and most of the necessary skills can be acquired through short-term on-the-job training.¹⁶

Thus, for many immigrant families, having a regular job is not sufficient to provide for their family's basic needs. In 2007, one in three



children in immigrant families lived in low-income working families, compared with 17 percent of children living in U.S.-born families.¹⁷ Among children living in two-parent families, those in immigrant families are nearly four times more likely to be poor than children in U.S.-born families.¹⁸

High poverty rates among immigrant families reflect the large number of low-skilled immigrants arriving from Latin America each year. However, immigrant families arriving from many other parts of the world are better off than their U.S.-born counterparts (see Figure 5). Black immigrant families—mostly from the Caribbean and West Africa—are a relatively privileged group with child poverty rates that are 18 percentage points lower than child poverty rates for black children in U.S.-born families.¹⁹ Poverty rates are lowest among children of Asian immigrants (especially those from China, Korea, India, and the Philippines), and white immigrants (mostly from Canada and Europe).

Some of the highest poverty rates can be found among children

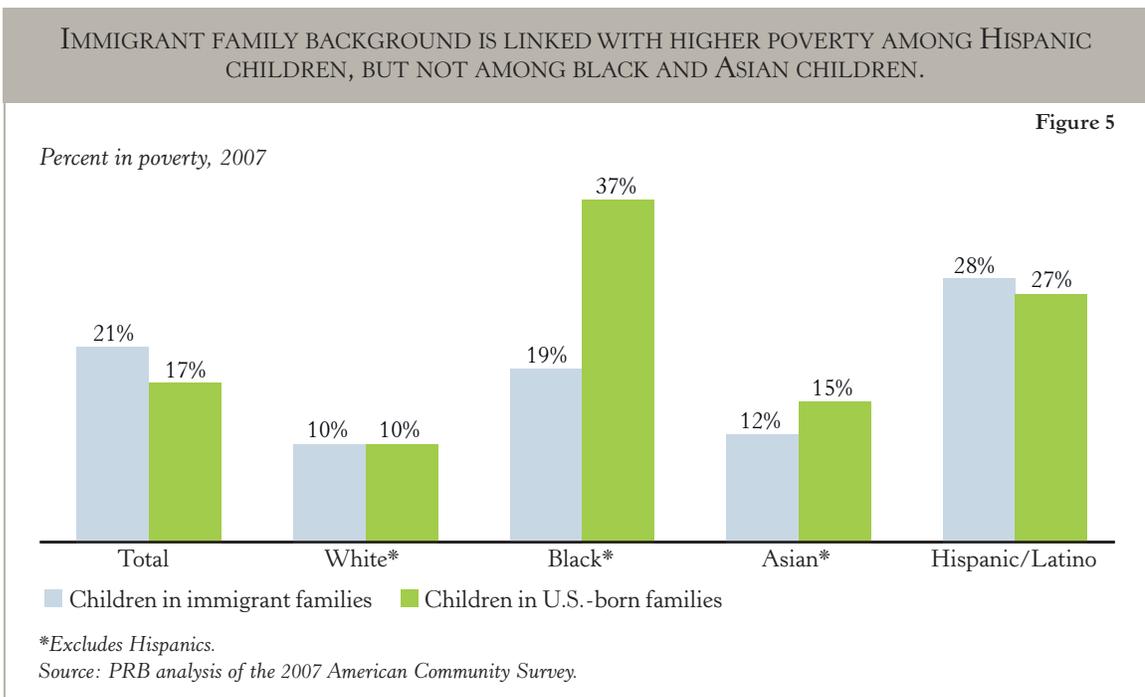
of immigrants from Iraq (37 percent), Somalia (58 percent), Sudan (33 percent), and Yemen (50 percent). Many of the immigrants from these countries were admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees. In contrast, children of immigrants from India, which is a major source of workers for the U.S. science and engineering labor force, had among the lowest poverty rates in 2007, at only 4 percent. These poverty statistics underscore the diversity within the U.S. foreign-born population and how country of origin can play an important role in shaping children’s lives.

EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE ABILITY

Parents’ education is a key factor shaping the overall well-being and development of children in both U.S.-born and immigrant families.²⁰ Parents with less education have jobs that pay lower incomes, on

average, and their children are more likely to have less education when they become adults.²¹ Of the 11.3 million school-age children in immigrant families, nearly all (96 percent) are attending school.²² However, children who are English-language learners have lower math and reading scores compared with their white counterparts,²³ and foreign-born teens—especially from Latin America—are much more likely to drop out of high school than teens born in the United States.²⁴

Although many adults and teens who arrive in the United States from other countries have difficulty learning English, most young children of immigrants will grow up learning English as their primary language. In 2007, nearly half of all children in immigrant families spoke English well but resided in “linguistically isolated” families where parents had difficulty speaking English (see Figure 6, page 9). Children in these families are often called upon to act as translators for parents or older siblings.²⁵ A relatively small share of children in immigrant families—about 16 percent—lived in fami-



lies where both the children and their parents had difficulty speaking English.

Parents' ability to speak English is closely tied to their success in the labor force and their children's success in school. Limited English proficiency can limit job opportunities, earnings, access to health care, and the ability of parents to interact with the school system or help their children with homework.²⁶ Immigrant families from Latin America are the most likely to have difficulty speaking English. In 2007, nearly two-thirds of children with Latin American origins lived with parents who could not speak English well.

Many immigrant families from Latin America are doubly disadvantaged because they arrive in the United States unable to speak English and without much education. In 2007, over one-fourth of children in immigrant families lived with parents who did not have a high school diploma. Researchers have found that premigration education levels of immigrant groups can affect the aspirations of children in immigrant communities,

even after controlling for individual family characteristics.²⁷ Thus, for children growing up in tightly knit immigrant enclaves, the attitudes and behaviors of neighbors and peers could also play an important role in children's development.

RISK FACTORS

Indices of child well-being are increasingly used to monitor trends in child well-being and to help establish and evaluate programs that serve U.S. children and families.²⁸ An index of child well-being can be used to combine multiple indicators of children's social, economic, and physical conditions into a single measure of overall well-being. Indices of child well-being can also be used to quickly determine whether trends for children are moving in a positive direction and how children compare across different geographic areas.

Two well-known indices of child well-being include the 10-item

KIDS COUNT index, reported each year—for each state—in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *KIDS COUNT Data Book*,²⁹ and the national, 28-item Child Well-Being Index developed by Kenneth Land for the Foundation for Child Development.³⁰ Researchers have also developed indices to compare risk factors for children in immigrant and U.S.-born families.³¹

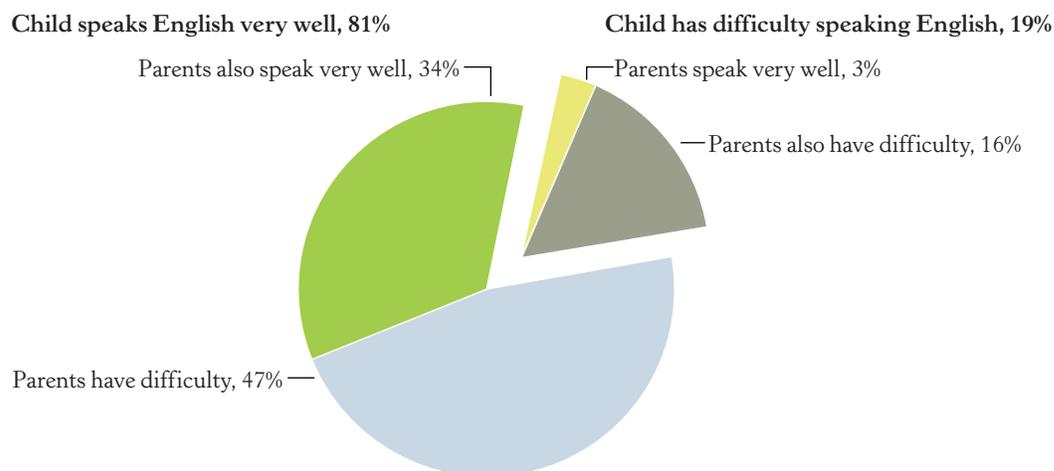
This analysis compares the relative risks facing children of immigrants across states by aggregating several measures of parental characteristics. These measures, selected during a 2006 meeting of immigration experts, are not comprehensive but reflect a range of important characteristics:

- Neither parent is proficient in English.
- Neither parent is a U.S. citizen.
- Neither parent has more than a 9th grade education.
- Neither parent has been in the country more than 10 years.

The number of risk factors is closely associated with child poverty for children in immigrant fami-

IN 2007, 81 PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES SPOKE ENGLISH VERY WELL, WHILE ONLY ABOUT 37 PERCENT OF THEIR PARENTS SPOKE ENGLISH VERY WELL.

Figure 6



Source: PRB analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey.

THE POVERTY RATE FOR CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS.

Table 3

Number of risk factors	Child poverty rate, 2007
0	9
1	14
2	31
3	38
4	48

Note: Risk factors are based on parents' education, citizenship status, year of entry, and language ability.

Source: PRB analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey.

lies. The child poverty rate ranged from only 9 percent for children with no risk factors to 48 percent for children with all four (see Table 3). Children of immigrants are classified as “at risk” if they have at least three of the four parental risk factors. Nationwide, 18 percent of children in immigrant families had at least three of these characteristics, and 2 percent had all four characteristics.

At the state level, children in the Southwest and several new-destination states were the most likely to have three or more risk factors. In five of these states—Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee—at least one-fourth

of children in immigrant families had three or more risk factors (see Table 4, page 11).³² States in the Northeast, with more established immigrant communities, had among the lowest proportions of children with three or more risk factors. Fewer than 15 percent of children in immigrant families in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island had high levels of risk.

Looking at patterns within states, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Areas, children with the highest number of risk factors tend to reside either in central city neigh-

borhoods or in rural counties located far away from city centers. There is also a ring of close-in suburbs where immigrant families seem to be thriving. This bimodal pattern is most obvious in the Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco, and Washington/Baltimore Metropolitan Areas.

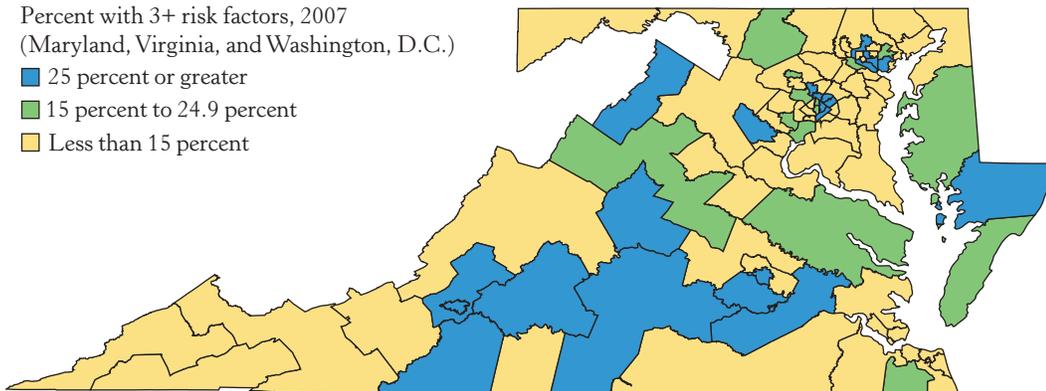
In some areas, such as the Washington, D.C., area, the rise in housing costs since 2000 could be a key factor pushing immigrants farther away from cities and into suburban and rural counties, where homes often are more affordable. Higher-income immigrant families, in contrast, are more likely to be living in wealthier, high-cost suburbs.³³ A map of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., shows a high concentration of children with three or more risk factors in the cities and some close-in suburbs of Baltimore and Washington, but also in rural areas outside the the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (see Figure 7).

IN MANY REGIONS, CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES LIVING IN CITIES AND OUTER SUBURBS HAD THE MOST RISK FACTORS.

Figure 7

Percent with 3+ risk factors, 2007 (Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.)

- 25 percent or greater
- 15 percent to 24.9 percent
- Less than 15 percent



Note: Risk factors are based on parents' education, citizenship status, year of entry, and language ability.

Source: PRB analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey.

IN 2007, CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN THE SOUTHWEST AND SEVERAL NEW DESTINATION STATES HAD THE MOST RISK FACTORS.

Table 4

	Total children (000s)	Children in immigrant families (000s)	Percent in immigrant families	Percent with three or more risk factors*
United States	73,908	16,548	22	18
Alabama	1,125	61	5	28
Alaska	181	20	11	2
Arizona	1,671	511	31	25
Arkansas	701	63	9	27
California	9,384	4,552	49	19
Colorado	1,192	245	21	21
Connecticut	819	166	20	11
Delaware	206	29	14	20
District of Columbia	114	20	18	19
Florida	4,043	1,192	29	14
Georgia	2,527	405	16	23
Hawaii	286	75	26	8
Idaho	408	48	12	25
Illinois	3,198	782	24	16
Indiana	1,586	125	8	19
Iowa	712	57	8	21
Kansas	697	86	12	17
Kentucky	1,005	45	4	23
Louisiana	1,079	54	5	13
Maine	280	18	6	16
Maryland	1,359	279	21	15
Massachusetts	1,432	325	23	11
Michigan	2,450	261	11	15
Minnesota	1,259	177	14	22
Mississippi	766	19	2	17
Missouri	1,427	96	7	15
Montana	220	7	3	5
Nebraska	447	52	12	24
Nevada	664	240	36	19
New Hampshire	299	26	9	11
New Jersey	2,063	657	32	10
New Mexico	497	102	20	24
New York	4,416	1,462	33	12
North Carolina	2,213	309	14	26
North Dakota	143	7	5	14
Ohio	2,755	158	6	11
Oklahoma	901	91	10	23
Oregon	865	182	21	23
Pennsylvania	2,787	261	9	13
Rhode Island	235	62	26	12
South Carolina	1,058	85	8	23
South Dakota	196	7	4	29
Tennessee	1,471	118	8	26
Texas	6,629	2,059	31	23
Utah	818	132	16	18
Vermont	132	8	6	21
Virginia	1,823	315	17	14
Washington	1,537	356	23	22
West Virginia	387	10	3	9
Wisconsin	1,320	123	9	17
Wyoming	125	6	5	12

*Children in immigrant families are classified as having a high risk of negative outcomes if they have at least three of the following characteristics: neither parent is proficient in English; neither parent is a U.S. citizen; neither parent has more than a 9th grade education; neither parent has been in the United States more than 10 years.

Source: PRB analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey.

STATE AND LOCAL REACTIONS TO IMMIGRATION

The rapid growth of immigrant families, particularly in nontraditional destinations, has created challenges for policymakers, service providers, and the public. Many state governments have limited access to certain services or privileges for immigrants and their children, including prohibitions on drivers' licenses, restrictions on in-state college tuition eligibility, sanctions against businesses hiring unauthorized workers, and restricted access to health care services.³⁴ Most of these policies have been aimed at immigrants in southwestern and southeastern states, where there has been rapid growth in unauthorized migration.

However, the majority of children in immigrant families are U.S.-born citizens, including two-thirds of those living with parents who are unauthorized.³⁵

Other states and cities have enacted pro-integration measures such as providing health insurance to all children, regardless of immigrant status (Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington);³⁶ helping to put immigrants on a path to citizenship (California, Illinois,

Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington),³⁷ and providing sanctuary to immigrants by prohibiting the use of local resources to enforce federal immigration laws (80 cities or states nationwide, including Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco).³⁸ Most states and cities with sanctuary laws do not allow local authorities to ask residents about their immigration status, although they will cooperate with federal immigration officials. These pro-immigrant policies are most common in traditional immigrant gateways that have large immigrant populations who have already become citizens and can vote.

Recent newspaper headlines highlight some of the issues facing children of immigrants, many of whom are U.S. citizens but living with parents who are undocumented migrants:

■ Kristin Collins, "Attorney General: Close Colleges to Illegal Immigrants," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), May 8, 2008.

■ Tyche Hendricks, "Bill Grants Residency to Immigrants' Kids: Critics Say It May Lead More to Come Illegally," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 14, 2003.

■ Katherine Leal Unmuth, "Students Withdraw as Deportation Fears Reach Irving Schools: Irving Parents Withdrawing Kids, May Keep Them Out," *The Dallas Morning News*, Oct. 4, 2007.

■ Anna Gorman, "U.S.-Born Children Feel Effect of Raids," *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2008.

These state and local reactions to immigration have consequences for children in immigrant families, and may influence immigrants' decisions about where to live. A recent study found that states with pro-immigrant initiatives are more likely to attract new, legal immigrants from Latin America compared to states without those initiatives. However, restrictive ballot initiatives, such as California's Proposition 187, do not appear to play a major role in reducing the inflow of legal immigrants.³⁹

PROSPECTS

Immigrant families are transforming the racial/ethnic composition of the United States and contributing to a new demographic divide between generations. Over the next several decades, the relatively young age structure of the U.S. population, combined with high levels of immigration, will put the United States on a new demographic path, led by America's children. Demographic change will be rapid and conspicuous, and raises concerns about the potential impact on schools, jobs, health care, and community culture and identity.

These changes also have broader implications for social programs

and education spending for youth. Will America's elderly support initiatives for a youth population that is racially mixed? Researchers at Harvard University found that communities that are more racially/ethnically fragmented devote a smaller share of resources to public goods, including education, compared to more homogeneous areas.⁴⁰ Cross-national research also has shown that racial/ethnic divisions may explain up to half of the gap in social spending between the United States and Europe.⁴¹

As the U.S. population changes, policymakers need to recognize the

complexity and diversity of the growing minority population. Immigrant families face unique challenges that vary considerably depending on their country of origin, education level, immigration status, and how long they have resided in the United States. Some live in highly educated families in America's wealthy suburbs while others are struggling to make ends meet.⁴² Ensuring that all children are thriving as they reach adulthood is critical for building a strong foundation for the next generation of youth.

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THE MORE THAN 16 MILLION CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT families—defined as people under age 18 who are foreign born or who live with at least one foreign-born parent—are the fastest-growing segment of America’s youth and are leading a racial/ethnic transformation of the U.S. population. But despite their growing numbers—nearly doubling in population since 1990—the children of immigrants have been largely ignored in the national conversation about immigration.

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