

Children of Immigrants: 2008 State Trends Update

Karina Fortuny

This brief updates perspectives brief 9, “Children of Immigrants: National and State Characteristics,” which profiled children of immigrants as of 2005–06 (Fortuny et al. 2009). The current brief presents data highlights from the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys. These and other indicators on children can be obtained on the Urban Institute’s Children of Immigrants Data Tool web site.¹

Immigration Flows and Population Momentum Contribute to Rising Numbers of Children of Immigrants

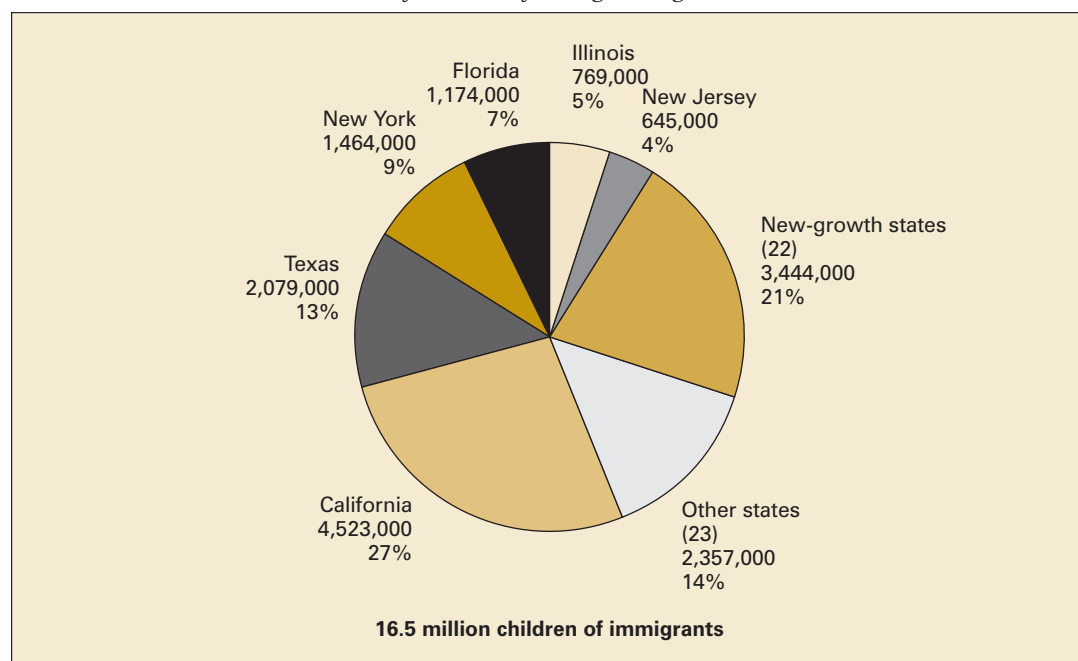
- Growth in immigration during the 1990s and afterward resulted in a larger number of children in immigrant families. Between 1990 and 2008, the share of U.S. children with immigrant parents increased from 13 percent to 23 percent.² In 2008, 16.5 million children age 0 to 17 had at least one immigrant parent, a 5 percent increase from 15.7 million in 2005–06 and a twofold increase from 8.3 million in 1990.³
- Most of the growth in the number of U.S. children age 0 to 17 from 1990 to 2007 comes from children of immigrants. The number of children in native families increased by 2.1 million, while the number of children with at least one immigrant parent grew by 8.1 million, accounting for 77 percent of the increase in children in the United States (Fortuny and Chaudry 2009).

New High-Growth Immigrant States Continue to Experience Growth in Children of Immigrants

- Immigrant populations are still heavily concentrated in the six traditional immigrant destination states. California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey account for 65 percent of children of immigrants in 2008. Their share has fallen, however, from 73 percent in 1990, as immigrants increasingly settle in nontraditional states (figure 1).
- Between 1990 and 2008, the number of children of immigrants increased by 77 percent in the six traditional immigrant states. Many other states experienced growth rates four to five times as high (appendix table 1). These states include North Carolina (an increase of 508 percent), Nevada (454 percent), Georgia (444 percent), Arkansas (400 percent), Nebraska (350 percent), and Tennessee (348 percent).
- Across the 22 new-growth states, the share of children who were children of immigrants tripled from an average of 5 percent to 15 percent (appendix table 1).
- As a result of the rapid growth, many high-growth states rank higher on the size of their populations of children of immigrants in 2008 than in 1990. North Carolina ranked 23rd among all states in 1990 and 11th in 2008. Nevada climbed from 24th to 17th between 1990 and 2008. Similarly, Georgia moved from 16th to 8th and Arkansas from 42nd to



FIGURE 1. Distribution across States of Children of Immigrants Age 0–17, 2007–08



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the IPUMS datasets drawn from the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys.

Note: The new-growth states are Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington (Capps et al. 2007).

32nd. On the other hand, some states with traditionally large immigrant populations, such as Massachusetts, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, slipped down the ranks.

- In 2008, children of immigrants accounted for half of children in California. Across the United States, children of immigrants account for more than 30 percent of children in six states and between 20 and 30 percent of children in 12 states. Their share is between 10 and 20 percent in 13 states and lower in the remaining 20 states (figure 2).

More Than Half of Children of Immigrants Are Hispanic

- Nationally, 56 percent of children of immigrants are Hispanic. The Hispanic share ranges from 3 percent in Vermont to 84 percent in New Mexico. In addition to New Mexico, Hispanics represent more than two-thirds of children of immigrants in Arizona (80 percent), Texas (79 percent), Nevada (72 percent), Arkansas (70 percent), and Kansas and California (67 percent). Nationally, more than half of children of immigrants have parents from Latin American countries—Mexico (42 percent), Central America and Spanish-speaking Caribbean (or “Central America,”

11 percent), and South America (6 percent)—which explains the high Hispanic share (figure 3).

- Beyond Hispanics, children of immigrants have diverse origins. Nationally, 11 percent of them have parents from Europe, Canada, and Australia (“Europe”). Twenty-two percent of children of immigrants have origins in Asia: 10 percent have parents from East Asia and the Pacific (“East Asia”), 8 percent from the Middle East and South Asia (“Middle East”), and 4 percent from Southeast Asia. Children with origins in Africa and the West Indies (“Africa”) account for 8 percent of all children of immigrants.

Nearly a Fifth of Children of Immigrants Are English Language Learners, and More Than Half Have ELL Parents

- Nationally, 18 percent of children of immigrants age 5 and over are English language learners (ELLs).⁴ The ELL share is close to the national average (18–20 percent) in eight states: South Carolina, Nevada, Wisconsin, Indiana, California, Illinois, Kentucky, and New Mexico. The ELL share is above 20 percent in 10 states: Oregon (21 percent),

Washington (21 percent), Nebraska (22 percent), Minnesota (22 percent), Alabama (23 percent), Colorado (23 percent), North Carolina (24 percent), Arkansas (24 percent), Arizona (25 percent), and Texas (27 percent).

- More than half (61 percent) of children of immigrants nationally have one or two ELL parents. The share of children with ELL parents is lowest in Montana (15 percent) and highest in Texas (71 percent). In 12 states besides Texas, the share is above the national average: Arizona and Arkansas (70 percent each), California (68 percent), Oklahoma and Nebraska (67 percent each), Nevada (66 percent), Oregon and New Mexico (65 percent each), Illinois (64 percent), Colorado and North Carolina (63 percent each), and Kansas (62 percent).

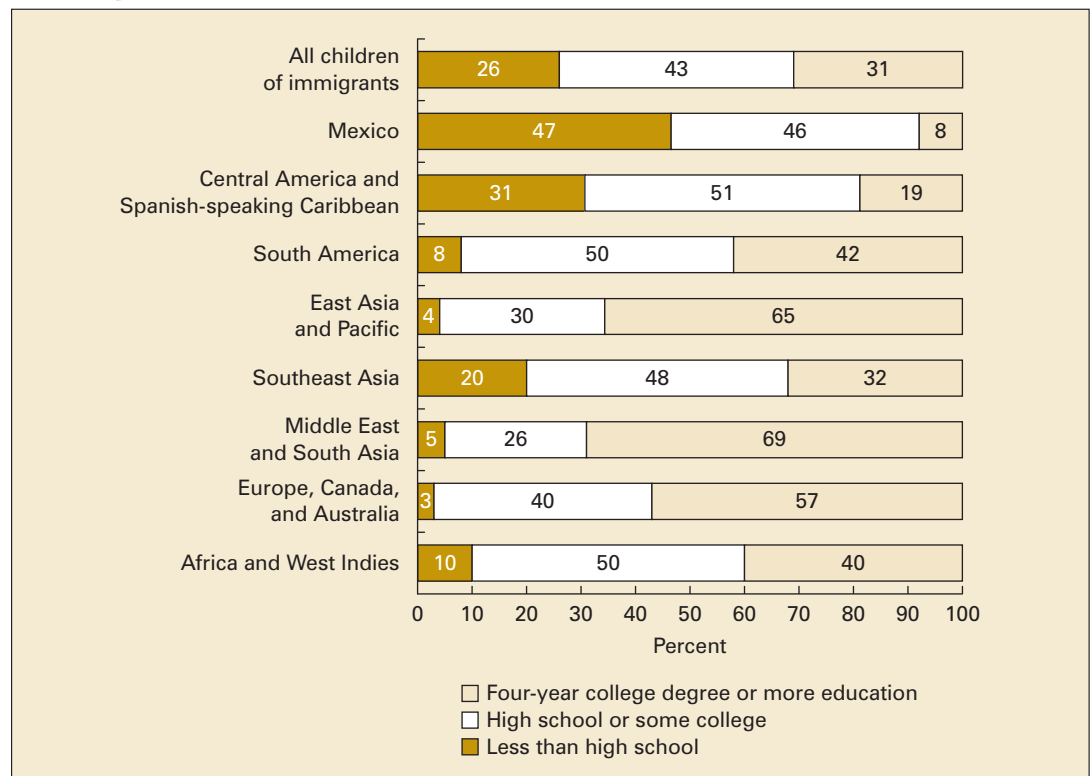
Parental Education Varies Substantially by Region of Origin

- While virtually all young children of native-born parents have parents with at least 9th grade educations, 13 percent of children of

immigrants have parents who have not completed 9th grade.⁵ An additional 13 percent of children of immigrants have parents with some high school education but not a high school degree or the equivalent. Overall, 26 percent of children of immigrants have parents with less than high school degrees, compared with 7 percent of children of native-born parents.

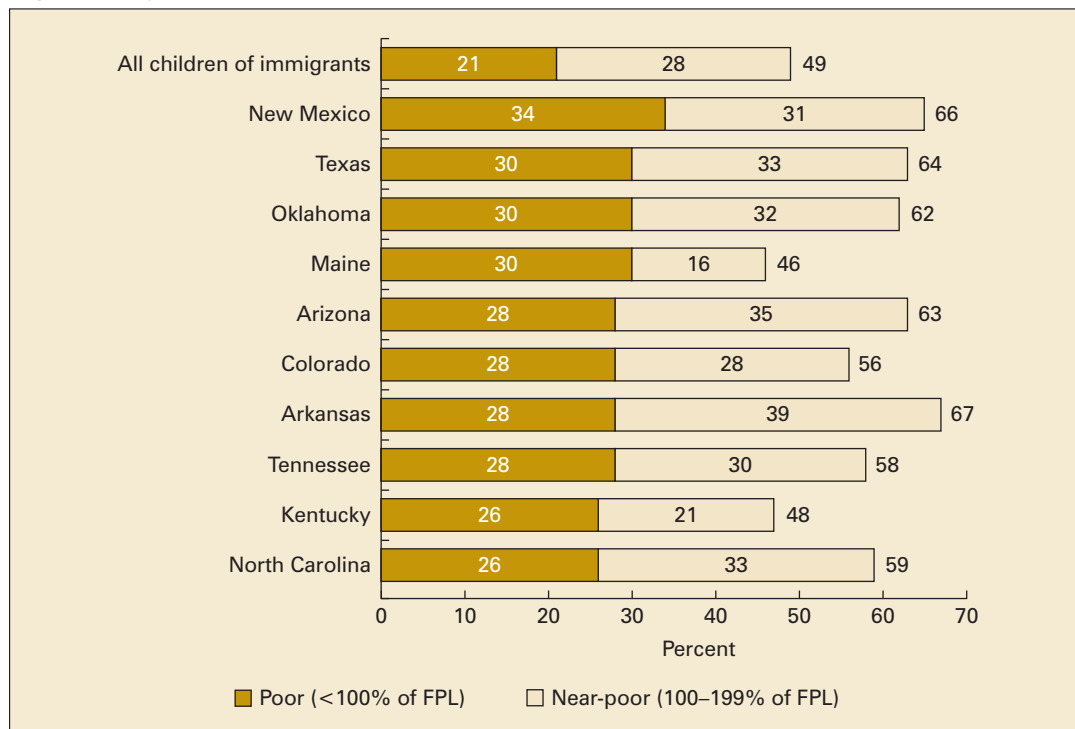
- There is less difference at the higher end of the education distribution. While children of immigrants are somewhat less likely than children of natives to have parents with four-year college degrees (17 versus 21 percent), the share of children with parents who have master's degrees or higher education is the same for children of immigrants and those of native-born parents (14 percent).
- Parental education varies widely by region of origin. Forty-seven percent of children of Mexican origin and 31 percent of children of Central American origin have parents who have not completed high school (figure 4). Children of Middle Eastern and East Asian origin are the most likely to have parents with four-year

FIGURE 4. Parental Education of Children of Immigrants Age 0–17 by Parent's Region of Origin, 2007–08 (percent)



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the IPUMS datasets drawn from the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys.

FIGURE 5. Share of Children of Immigrants Age 0–17 in Poor and Near-Poor Families, 10 States with Highest Poverty Rates, 2007–08



Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the IPUMS datasets drawn from the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys.

college degrees or more education—69 and 65 percent, respectively. The college-educated rate is also above the 36 percent rate for children of natives among children of European (57 percent), South American (42 percent), and African (40 percent) origin.

Young Children of Immigrants Are Disproportionately Poor or Low Income

- Children of immigrants account for 29 percent of poor children and 30 percent of low-income children.⁶ About half of children of immigrants (49 percent) live in low-income families, compared with 35 percent of children of natives. The poverty rate for children of immigrants is also higher than the rate for children of natives (21 versus 15 percent).
- The poverty shares for children of immigrants vary by state. The poverty rates for these children are below 10 percent in eight states: Wyoming (2 percent), New Hampshire (4 percent), Vermont (5 percent), Alaska (6 percent), Maryland (7 percent), District of Columbia (8 percent), Connecticut (9 percent), and

Hawaii (9 percent). The poverty rate is highest in New Mexico (34 percent), followed by Texas, Oklahoma, and Maine (at 30 percent), and Arizona, Colorado, Arkansas, and Tennessee (at 28 percent).

- The low-income shares for children of immigrants also vary widely across states, from 17 percent in New Hampshire to 67 percent in Arkansas. Similar to the poverty rates, New Mexico (66 percent), Texas (64 percent), Arizona (63 percent), and Oklahoma (62 percent) have the highest low-income rates.

Notes

1. The Children of Immigrants Data Tool is an interactive web site that generates charts and tables with statistics on children age 0–17 for the United States and for the 50 states and the District of Columbia using data from the American Community Survey. See <http://datatool.urban.org>.
2. Unless stated otherwise, data in this brief are taken from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets (Ruggles et al. 2008) drawn from the 2007 and 2008 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS). The 2008 estimates are averaged across 2007 and 2008 ACS data.

3. An immigrant or foreign-born person is someone born outside the United States and its territories. People born in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other territories, or born abroad to U.S. citizen parents, are native born. Children with immigrant parents have at least one foreign-born parent.
4. English language learners report that they speak a language other than English at home and speak English well, not well, or not at all. English-fluent persons speak English exclusively or very well. English fluency is not recorded for children under age 5.
5. Parental education is defined as the highest attainment of the mother and/or father.
6. Poor is family income below the federal poverty level, and low income is family income below twice the federal poverty level. Poverty levels are adjusted for family size. In 2007, the federal poverty level was \$21,203 for a family of four, slightly higher for larger families, and lower for smaller families. Twice the federal poverty level in 2007 was \$42,406 for a family of four.

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APPENDIX TABLE 1. Number and Share of Children of Immigrants Age 0–17 by State, 1990–2008

State	1990			2007–08			Percent growth
	Number	Rank (by number)	% of children in state	Number	Rank (by number)	% of children in state	
Alabama	21,000	33	2	60,000	33	6	192
Alaska	13,000	41	8	20,000	43	11	53
Arizona	149,000	8	16	513,000	7	31	245
Arkansas	12,000	42	2	62,000	32	9	400
California	2,845,000	1	38	4,523,000	1	50	59
Colorado	70,000	17	8	247,000	15	21	256
Connecticut	98,000	14	13	167,000	19	21	70
Delaware	9,000	45	6	32,000	40	16	257
District of Columbia	13,000	40	12	22,000	42	20	67
Florida	543,000	4	19	1,174,000	4	30	116
Georgia	76,000	16	5	413,000	8	17	444
Hawaii	67,000	18	25	75,000	31	28	12
Idaho	17,000	37	6	54,000	37	13	222
Illinois	410,000	5	14	769,000	5	25	88
Indiana	42,000	25	3	120,000	24	8	185
Iowa	17,000	36	2	54,000	36	8	226
Kansas	33,000	31	5	87,000	29	13	164
Kentucky	15,000	38	2	45,000	39	5	192
Louisiana	41,000	26	3	52,000	38	5	26
Maine	15,000	39	5	17,000	45	6	17
Maryland	121,000	13	11	279,000	13	21	131
Massachusetts	206,000	7	16	327,000	10	23	59
Michigan	139,000	9	6	245,000	16	10	77

APPENDIX TABLE 1. (continued)

State	1990			2007-08			Percent growth
	Number	Rank (by number)	% of children in state	Number	Rank (by number)	% of children in state	
Minnesota	52,000	21	5	164,000	20	13	213
Mississippi	10,000	44	1	19,000	44	3	87
Missouri	36,000	29	3	88,000	28	6	147
Montana	5,000	48	2	9,000	46	4	71
Nebraska	12,000	43	3	55,000	35	12	350
Nevada	43,000	24	15	241,000	17	37	454
New Hampshire	17,000	35	6	25,000	41	9	45
New Jersey	351,000	6	20	645,000	6	32	84
New Mexico	52,000	22	12	99,000	26	21	91
New York	973,000	2	24	1,464,000	3	34	50
North Carolina	52,000	23	3	316,000	11	15	508
North Dakota	4,000	51	2	5,000	51	4	32
Ohio	92,000	15	3	155,000	21	6	69
Oklahoma	34,000	30	4	92,000	27	11	172
Oregon	56,000	19	8	177,000	18	21	215
Pennsylvania	126,000	12	5	262,000	14	10	108
Rhode Island	40,000	27	18	58,000	34	26	44
South Carolina	21,000	34	2	82,000	30	8	296
South Dakota	4,000	50	2	8,000	47	4	116
Tennessee	27,000	32	2	121,000	23	9	348
Texas	912,000	3	19	2,079,000	2	32	128
Utah	38,000	28	6	132,000	22	16	243
Vermont	6,000	47	4	8,000	49	6	22
Virginia	126,000	11	9	309,000	12	17	145
Washington	137,000	10	11	358,000	9	24	162
West Virginia	7,000	46	2	8,000	48	2	10
Wisconsin	53,000	20	4	114,000	25	9	116
Wyoming	5,000	49	3	6,000	50	4	21
United States	8,263,000		13	16,455,000		23	99
Big six states	6,035,000		25	10,653,000		37	77
New-growth states	943,000		5	3,444,000		15	265
Other	1,285,000		7	2,357,000		12	83

Source: Urban Institute tabulations from the IPUMS datasets drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 5 percent sample, and the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys.

Notes: Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand. Numbers may not sum to totals because of rounding. Percentages are based on unrounded numbers. The new-growth states are Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington (Capps et al. 2007).



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

The Low-Income Working Families project is currently supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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Phone: 202-833-7200

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E-mail: pubs@urban.org

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