

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 4 ♦ Number 10

October 9, 2000

Immigrant Children More Likely To Be At Risk

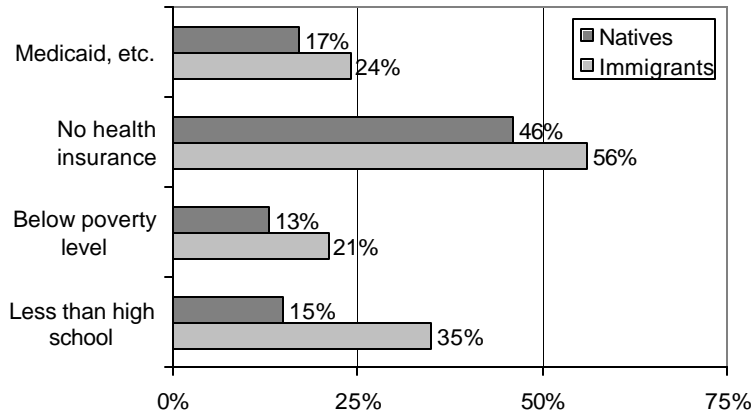
According to December 1999 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Colorado welcomed 65,380 immigrants between 1990 and 1999. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's latest annual report, **Legal Immigration, Fiscal Year 1998**, it may be estimated that 12,814 of these recent immigrants (19.6 percent) were under age 15. That figure approximates or exceeds the elementary and middle school enrollment of the Greeley, Mesa County, Pueblo City, or St. Vrain school districts (i.e., about 12,000 to 13,000).



Highlights

- Over the past decade, Colorado schools have welcomed more than 12,800 additional immigrant children.
- Generally, foreign born residents of the U.S. tend to be less well-educated and, as a result, are more likely to have low incomes, live below poverty level, have no health insurance, and receive public assistance.

Low Educational Attainment & Other At Risk Conditions for Immigrants and Native Born Americans, 1996



According to an August 2000 Census Brief, **Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign Born**, U.S. residents who were not U.S. citizens at birth are more likely to experience several conditions which put their children at risk educationally.

Educational Attainment

Immigrants tend to be less well-educated than the native born. Of the foreign born, more than a third of those age 25 and older (35 percent) failed to complete high school or its equivalent. For adult immigrants from Latin America (i.e., Mexico, Central and South America), this percentage climbs to more than half (53 percent). Of the native population, only one adult out of six (16 percent) did not finish high school.

Poverty Rate

Lower levels of educational attainment contribute to a higher poverty rate for immigrants than natives. In 1996, median household income was \$30,000 for foreign born households and \$36,100 for native households.

Health Insurance Coverage

Lower levels of educational attainment also mean immigrants are more likely to hold part-time jobs that do not provide health insurance coverage. Those without such coverage comprise more than half (56 percent) of the foreign born but less than half (46 percent) of the native population.

Program Participation

Because less well-educated immigrants are less likely to have job-based health insurance coverage, they are more likely to be participating in government programs that pick up the slack. In 1996, almost a quarter (24 percent) of foreign born householders but only one out of six native householders (17 percent) benefited from programs such as Medicaid.

Educational attainment, particularly the level of parental education, is a critical factor in determining the overall success or failure of immigrant families. That includes the achievement levels of immigrant children in public schools as well as their parents' socio-economic status.

Sources

- Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Department of Justice, **Legal Immigration, Fiscal Year 1998** (Office of Policy and Planning, Statistics Branch, Annual Report, number 2, May 1999). Available at: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/publicaffairs/newsrels/98Legal.pdf>
- U.S. Census Bureau, Census Brief: **Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign Born**, August 2000. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/cenbr002.pdf>
- U.S. Census Bureau, State Population Estimates and Demographic Components of Population Change: April 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999/December 1999. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/st-99-2.txt>

Contact Information

For more information about this report or other CLRI projects, contact Keith Curry Lance, Director, Colorado Literacy Research Initiative, Colorado Department of Education, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309, Denver, CO 80203-1799, tel.: 303-866-6737, fax: 303-866-6940, e-mail: klance@sni.net, Web: www.lrs.org/clri.