



Immigrant Children

Publication Date: Dec 28, 2018

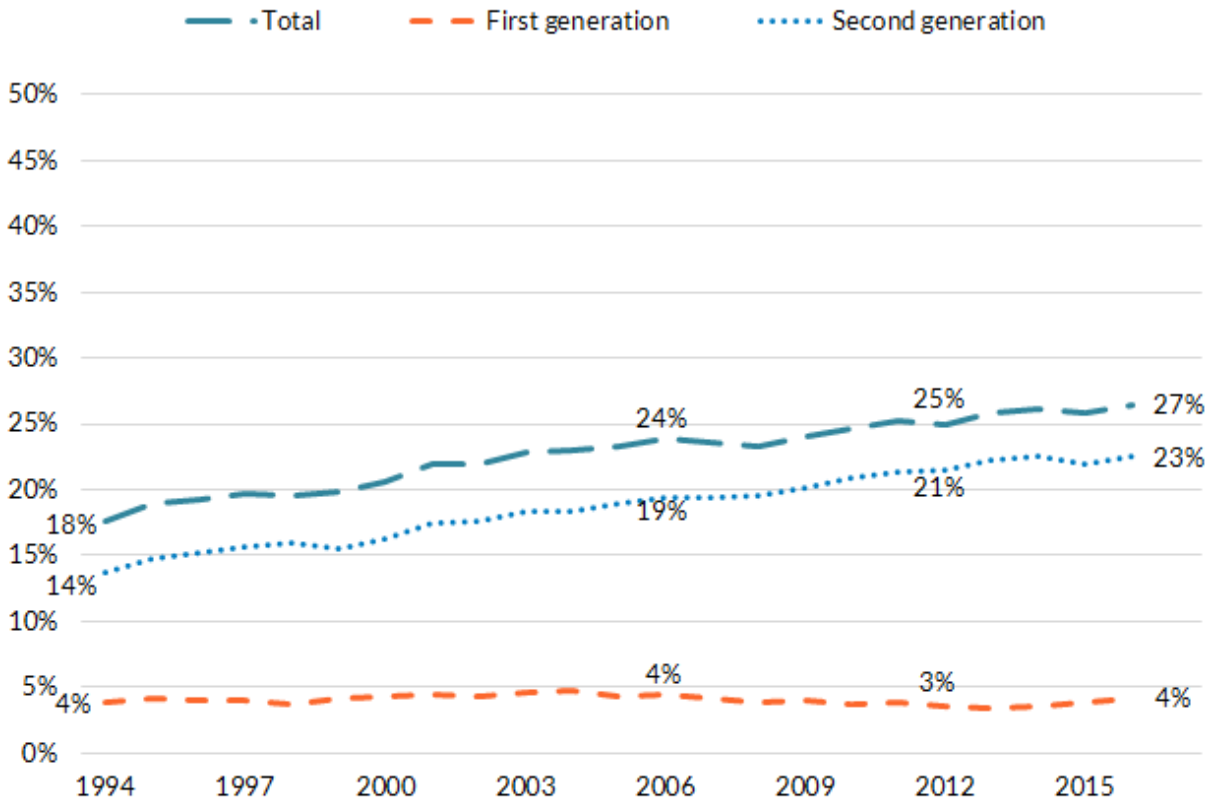
Related Indicators: • Dual Language Learners
• Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Child Population

Key facts about immigrant children

- **From 1994 to 2017, the population of immigrant children in the United States grew by 51 percent, to 19.6 million, or one-quarter of all U.S. children. The majority of immigrant children are second generation, while first-generation immigrants make up a smaller population (16.7 million and 2.9 million, respectively).**
 - **In 2017, a higher percentage of first-generation immigrant children (those born outside the United States) lived below the federal poverty line (25 percent) than second-generation children (those born inside the United States) and non-immigrant children (those who are not first- or second-generation immigrants) (22 and 17 percent, respectively).**
 - **The proportion of first-generation immigrant children born in Mexico decreased from 37 percent in 2006 to 18 percent in 2017, a record low; in 2017, the next three most common birthplaces for first-generation immigrant children were India (8 percent), China (5 percent), and the Philippines (3 percent).**
-

Trends in immigrant children

Percentage of U. S. Children Younger than 18 Who Are Immigrants,* by Generation: 1994-2017



* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. First-generation immigrant children were born outside of the United States and second-generation immigrant children were born inside of the United States or its territories.

Source: Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1994-2017.

childtrends.org

Immigrant children are defined here as those who have at least one foreign-born parent. First-generation immigrant children are those who were born outside the United States, and second-generation immigrants are those who were born within the United States or its territories.

From 1994 to 2017, the percentage of children who are immigrant children, either first- or second- generation, increased by 51 percent, from 18 to 27 percent. In 1994, 12.2 million children were immigrants: 2.7 million first-generation and 9.5

million second-generation immigrants. By 2017, this population had grown to 19.6 million, including 2.9 million first-generation and 16.7 million second-generation immigrants (appendices 1 and 2).

Although the proportion of U.S. children who are immigrants has grown, this increase has come from the proportion of second-generation immigrants, which increased from 14 to 23 percent from 1994 to 2017. First-generation immigrant children, in contrast, have remained at 3 to 5 percent of all children. The proportion of first-generation immigrant children peaked at 4.7 percent in 2005 and has since been decreasing slightly, reaching 4.0 percent in 2017 (Appendix 2).

Differences by generation

In 1994, there were three-and-a-half times as many second-generation as first-generation immigrant children. By 2017, this difference had grown: Second-generation children outnumbered first-generation children by nearly six to one (Appendix 2).

In 1994, 41 percent of second-generation immigrant children had at least one parent who was born in the United States. By 2017, this proportion was 32 percent (Appendix 2). Overall, the percent of immigrant children who had at least one parent born in the United States has remained consistent from 2007 to 2017, fluctuating between 27 and 29 percent. (Appendix 1).

Differences by country of origin

The proportion of first-generation immigrant children who were born in Mexico increased from 36 percent in 1994 to peak at 38 percent in 2002; the proportion then remained steady until 2006. From 2006 to 2017, the proportion of first-generation immigrant children who were Mexican-born decreased from 37 to 18 percent, a record low. In 2017, the three next most common birthplaces for first-generation children for countries included in this report were India (8 percent), China (5 percent), and the Philippines (4 percent) (Appendix 2).

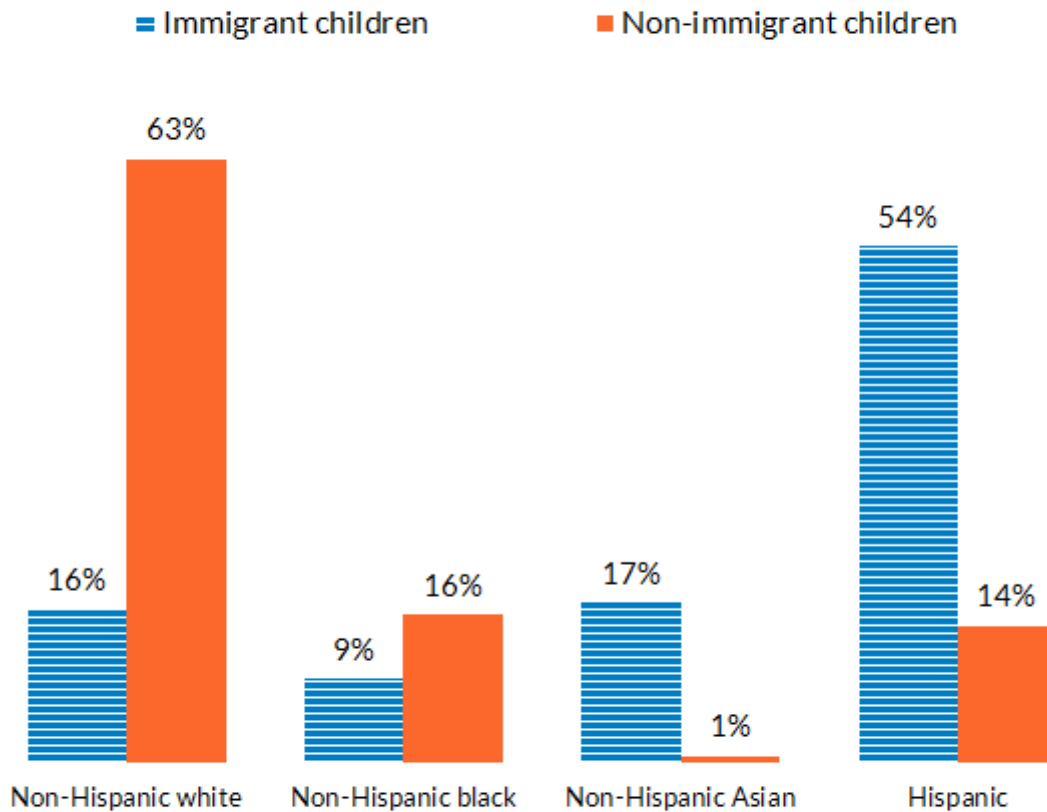
In 1996, 38 percent of second-generation immigrant children had at least one parent who was born in Mexico. By 2010, this proportion was 46 percent, although it has since decreased to 42 percent in 2017. Of the countries included in this report, the three next most common countries of origin for the parents of second-generation immigrant children were El Salvador (5 percent), India (5 percent), and the Philippines (3 percent) (Appendix 2).

Differences by race and Hispanic origin*

More than half (54 percent) of all immigrant children were of Hispanic origin in 2017, compared with 14 percent of non-immigrant children. Non-Hispanic Asian children made up 17 percent of all first- and second-generation immigrant children in 2017, but represented less than 1 percent of non-immigrant children. In the same year, 16 percent of all immigrant children were non-Hispanic white and 9 percent were non-Hispanic black, compared with 64 and 16 percent, respectively, among non-immigrant children (Appendix 2).

In 2017, first-generation immigrant children were more likely than second-generation children to be non-Hispanic Asian, non-Hispanic white, or non-Hispanic black (27, 19, and 12 percent, respectively, among first-generation immigrant

Percent of Immigrant* and Non-Immigrant Children Under Age 18, by Race/Hispanic Origin: 2017



* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. Non-immigrant children are children with both parents born in the United States or its territories.

Note: Hispanic youth may be of any race.

Source: Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2017.

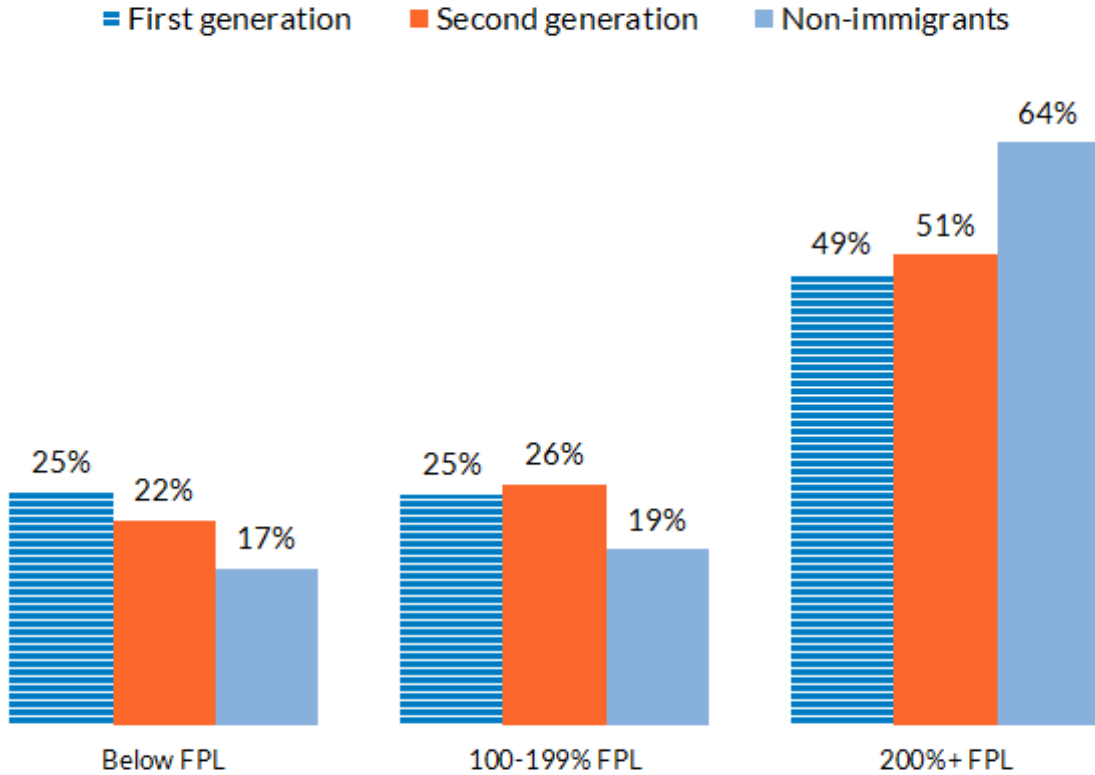
childtrends.org

children, compared with 15, 16, and 8 percent of second-generation children). Higher proportions of second-generation immigrant children were Hispanic than first-generation children (57 and 39 percent, respectively) (Appendix 2).

*Hispanic youth may be of any race.

Differences by poverty status

Percent of Immigrant* and Non-Immigrant Children Under Age 18 Living Below the Federal Poverty Level: 2017



* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. First-generation immigrant children were born outside of the United States and second-generation immigrant children were born inside of the United States or its territories.

Note: FPL stands for federal poverty level.

Source: Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2017.

childtrends.org

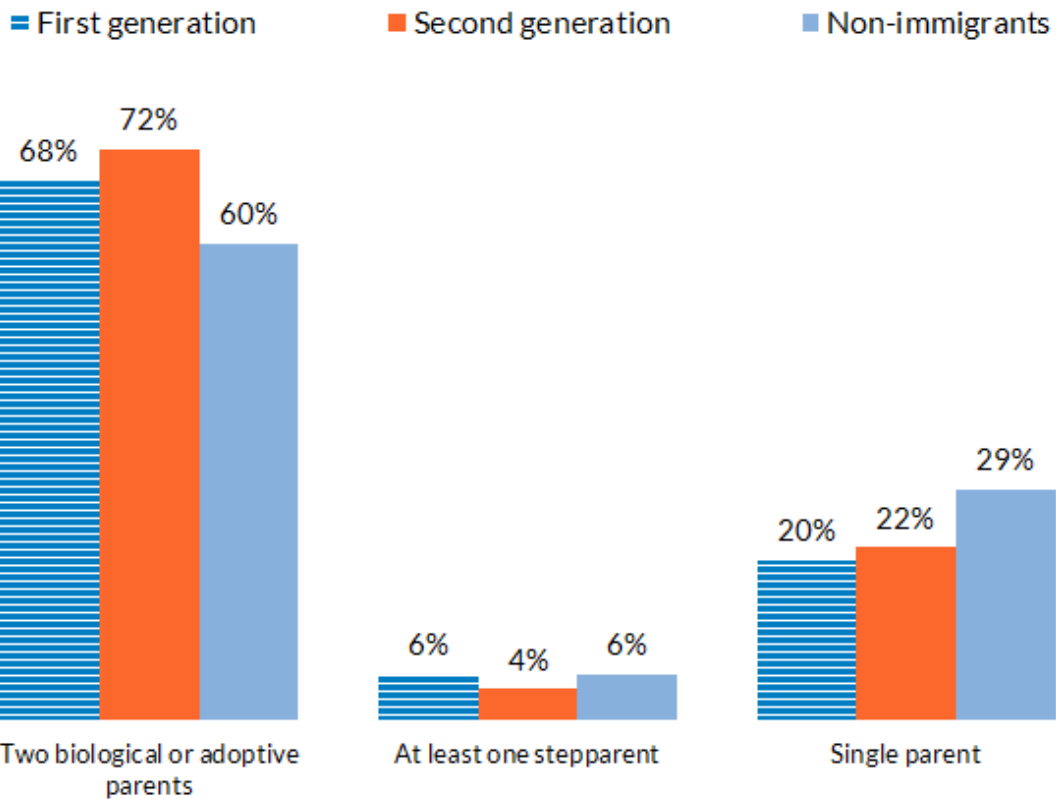
A higher proportion of first-generation immigrant children live in poverty (households with incomes below the federal poverty level) than either second-generation immigrant children or non-immigrant children. In 2017, one-quarter (25 percent) of first-generation and 22 percent of second-generation immigrant children lived in poverty, compared with 17 percent of non-immigrant children.

As with non-immigrant children, the proportion of immigrant children who lived in poverty decreased from 1994 to 2000, from 31 to 23 percent. From 2000 to 2007, the proportion remained steady for both groups of children. From 2007 to 2011, the proportion of immigrant children living in poverty increased by 42 percent, from 22 to 31 percent, reaching levels observed in the mid-1990s; among non-immigrant children, the proportion increased by 19 percent, from 17 to 20 percent. Since then, the proportion living in poverty has decreased for both groups, to 23 percent for immigrants and 17 percent for non-immigrants; however, decreases have been greater among children in immigrant families (Appendix 1).

Differences by family structure

Immigrant children are more likely to live in two-parent families and less likely to live in single-parent families, relative to non-immigrant children. Around 68 percent of first-generation and 72 percent of second-generation immigrant children lived in two-parent families in 2017, compared with 60 percent of non-immigrant children. Twenty percent of first-generation and 22 percent of second-generation immigrant children lived with a single parent, compared with 29 percent of non-immigrant children. A lower proportion of second-generation immigrant children live with a step-parent (4 percent) than first-generation or non-immigrant children (each at 6 percent) (appendixes 1 and 2).

Percent of Immigrant* and Non-Immigrant Children Under Age 18 Living in Two-Parent Families, Step-Families, and with Single Parents: 2017



* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. First-generation immigrant children were born outside of the United States and second-generation immigrant children were born inside of the United States or its territories.
 Source: Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2017.

childtrends.org

State and local estimates

The KIDS COUNT Data Center has state-level data on immigrant children and their parents' region of origin (indicators by family nativity) at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/2/2/4>.

The Urban Institute has information on immigrant children, by state and metropolitan area, from the American Community Survey through 2015 at <http://datatool.urban.org/charts/datatool/pages.cfm>.

Data and appendices

Data source

Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1994–2017.

Raw data source

U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplement.

<http://www.census.gov/cps/>

Appendices

Appendix 1. Of Children Younger than 18, the Number and Percentage Who Are Immigrants, and Percentage of Immigrants and Non-Immigrants by Selected Characteristics: 1994–2017

Appendix 2. Of Children Younger than 18, the Number and Percentage Who Are First- or Second-Generation Immigrants, and Percentage of First- or Second-Generation Immigrants by Selected Characteristics: 1994–2017

Background

Definition

Immigrant children are all children who have at least one foreign-born parent. First-generation immigrants are those whose parents were born outside the United States, and second-generation immigrants are those whose parents were born in the United States or its territories. Non-immigrant children are all children, regardless of where they were born, who have two U.S.-born parents. This classification includes all parents, regardless of whether they live with their child.

Suggested Citation

Child Trends. (2018). *Immigrant children*. Available at:
<https://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=immigrant-children>