

A Child is a Child

2024 **SNAPSHOT:**
California Children's Health



Children in Immigrant Families

We know that when children are healthy, they are more likely to succeed in school and in life. We work to address the underlying causes of health inequities by improving the conditions in which children live, learn, grow and play so that young people from historically marginalized communities

have the resources and opportunities they need to achieve their dreams and reach their full potential. This infographic provides an overview of key child health facts in California and nationally to inform the work we must do together to make California the best state to raise healthy, thriving children.

DEFINITIONS

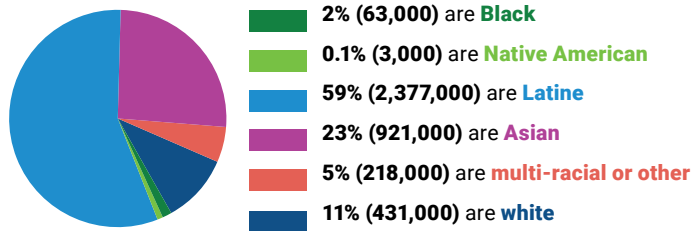


- **Children in immigrant families** are children who have at least one parent who was born outside of the United States, regardless of their own citizenship or place of birth.
- **Mixed-status families** are families whose members have different citizenship or immigration status. For example, a child who is a U.S. citizen but whose parents are undocumented is considered part of a mixed-status family.
- **Non-U.S. citizen** means people who were born outside the United States and who are not U.S. citizens.
- **Foreign-born or immigrant** refers to anyone born outside of the United States.
- **Undocumented immigrants** are foreign-born people who are living in the United States without legal documentation.
- **DACA recipients** are people who came to the U.S. as children, meet certain program requirements, and have been granted administrative protection from deportation, a social security number, and a work permit for a period of two years.
- **Dual language learners** are children who are learning two or more languages at the same time.
- **Green card holders**, also known as Legal Permanent Residents (LPR), are non-U.S. citizens who have been lawfully authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agency (USCIS) to live and work in the U.S. permanently.

POPULATION

4,013,000 or nearly half (46%) of California's 9 million children are part of immigrant families, almost all are U.S. citizens. **1 in 5 (20%)** California children live in mixed-status families.

Children in immigrant families come from diverse backgrounds and identify with various races and ethnicities:

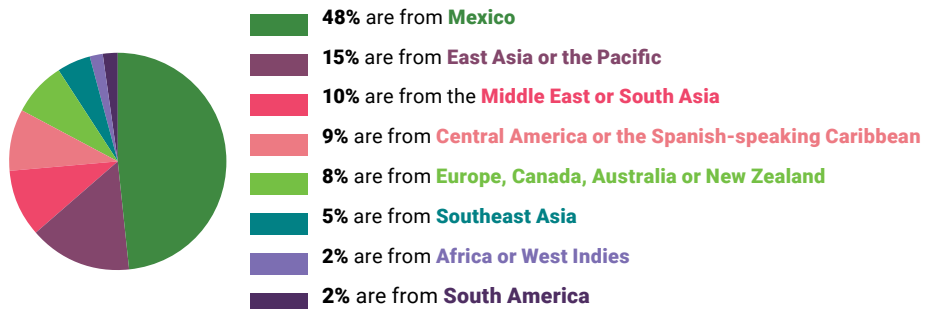


Nearly **1 in 3 (27%)** children in immigrant families are 5 or under. **Immigrants are 40%** of all parents of children ages 4 and below and **45% of all parents** of children ages 5 to 10.



Nearly **1 in 10** or **1,073,993** children in California have an undocumented parent.

Immigrant parents bring a wealth of cultural and linguistic diversity to our state:



399,000 children in California were born outside of the United States and **296,000** are non-U.S. citizens.



Our state is home to **165,090 DACA recipients**.

Across the nation, **1 in 4 DACA recipients** are parents to nearly 256,000 U.S. citizen children. Nearly every DACA recipient is part of a mixed-status family.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Protective factors – conditions or attributes that help mitigate or eliminate risks to health – can help support the lifelong success of children by guiding the development of community-centered interventions that address the unique needs of children from different backgrounds. Unique factors that support the health and development of children in immigrant families include:



Multilingualism: Children who develop their native language and speak multiple languages have enhanced attention, working memory, planning, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. Speaking and having access to curriculum in multiple languages can help prevent and close learning gaps for children in immigrant families.



Family cohesion: The emotional bonding that family members have toward one another, particularly those from Latine communities, protects against external stressors experienced by children in immigrant families, including bullying.



Connection to heritage/culture: The transfer of cultural values from parents to their children has been shown to support children in immigrant families. For example, a strong sense of family obligation as a cultural value that exists within immigrant families facilitates stronger family cohesion, youth ethnic identity, and improved youth mental health.

HEALTH COVERAGE AND ACCESS



Nationally, U.S. citizen children with at least one non-U.S. citizen parent are **twice as likely** to lack health coverage compared to children with citizen parents (**8% vs. 4%**).



In May 2024, the Biden Administration [finalized a rule](#) extending federal healthcare programs to DACA recipients (including Medicaid and CHIP). More than 100,000 DACA recipients are expected to benefit from the rule.

For CA's non-U.S. citizen children without a green card:



- ▶ At least **5% (8,774)** do not have health coverage.
- ▶ **50% (86,452)** have Medi-Cal.
- ▶ **40% (68,822)** have employment-based insurance.



In 2016, CA expanded full-scope Medi-Cal to include all income-eligible children, regardless of immigration status through the passage of SB 75. Today, all income eligible Californians, regardless of immigration status, have access to Medi-Cal. Currently, **3% (177,845)** of Medi-Cal's 5.5 million children are enrolled through SB 75.

Only **28% of foreign-born children** with special health care needs (CSHCNs) and **37% of CSHCNs with a foreign-born parent** have a medical home, compared with **49%** among CSHCNs who have U.S.-born parents. Only **37%** of foreign-born CSHCNs have care coordination compared to 56% for CSHCNs who have U.S.-born parents.

FOOD ACCESS



Immigrants feed California and the nation, making up **63%** of workers in our state's agricultural industry. Yet, children of immigrants struggle to access the food they need to develop and grow healthy.

Most non-U.S. citizen children without a green card remain shut out of CA's food benefits programs despite facing some of the highest rates of **FOOD INSECURITY**. **64% (48,727)** of **non-U.S. citizen children** without a green card in our state face limited access to the food necessary for a healthy life.



FOOD INSECURITY among children in immigrant families has been worsened by anti-immigrant policies.

- ▶ Even though the 2019 Trump public charge rule was reversed in March 2021, more than **3 in 4** immigrant families across the U.S. are unaware the policy has been reversed and are wary of using critical safety net programs for which they qualify, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). **As of December 2022, the Biden Administration implemented a new public charge rule clarifying long standing guidance that does not penalize the use of CalFresh.**
- ▶ **44%** of non-U.S. citizen parents without a green card with children at home avoided government benefits due to concern over self or family member's disqualification from a green card.
- ▶ **276,000** U.S. citizen children with non-U.S. citizen parents in California lost access to critical food benefits between 2016 and 2019, a period of heightened anti-immigrant policies and enforcement under the Trump Administration.

LANGUAGE ACCESS



Over **2 in 3 (68%)** children with non-U.S. citizen parents and over **1 in 2 (54%)** children with at least one foreign-born parent are **BILINGUAL** compared to 12% of children with U.S.-born parents.



Of all people enrolled in Medi-Cal, **43%** speak only **Spanish** and **30%** speak only **Chinese**.

ORAL HEALTH



Slightly over **1 in 5 (21%)** children in immigrant families have experienced oral health problems such as toothaches, bleeding gums or decayed teeth.



Approximately **12,000 (24%) non-U.S. citizen children** stated that they did not visit a dentist because they could not afford it or lacked health insurance coverage compared to 8% of U.S.-born children.

DIGITAL EQUITY



20% and **36%** of children in immigrant families with low-incomes **do not have access to the internet or to a computer** or laptop, respectively, compared to **12%** and **28%** of children whose parents were born in the United States.

Although they account for about **one-sixth** of U.S. workers, immigrants make up more than **one-third** of the workforce without digital skills.

SCHOOL SUCCESS & SAFETY



Across CA's pre-K-12 public schools, there are an estimated **300,000** students who are undocumented as well as about **1 million** students who live with a parent or guardian who is undocumented.

1.8 million children **UNDER FIVE** are **DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS**. Over **60%**

of children age 5 and below live in households where a language other than English is spoken.

There are **1,112, 535** students in California who are English learners, making up **19%** of all students in our state's K-12 public schools.

2 in 5 (40% or 2,310,311) students enrolled in California public K-12 schools speak a language other than English at home.

Children in California's K-12 public schools speak **108** languages, with the top 10 spoken being:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▶ Spanish (81.90%) | ▶ Arabic (1.43%) | ▶ Filipino (Tagalog) (.90%) |
| ▶ Vietnamese (1.92%) | ▶ Cantonese (1.18%) | ▶ Punjabi (.84%) |
| ▶ Mandarin (Putonghua) (1.83%) | ▶ Russian (0.97%) | ▶ Korean (.67%) |
| | ▶ Farsi (Persian) (0.93%) | |



12% (114,698) of non-U.S. citizen parents without a green card have reported being asked to provide a Social Security Number when enrolling their child in school even though a SSN is not required. Since 2017 [AB 2097](#) has prohibited the collection or solicitation of social security numbers even voluntarily, from students or their parents or guardians unless otherwise required to do so by state or federal law.



118 school districts and local county offices of education in California have declared themselves Safe Havens, meaning they are protected from immigration enforcement actions.

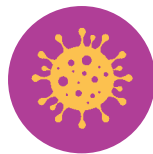


The likelihood of a student repeating a grade increases by **6%** when there is an increase in interior immigration enforcement and their likelihood of leaving school early increases by **25%**.



27,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year.

COVID-19



Immigrants make up **1 in 3** of California's essential workers (**4.6 million** immigrants), including growing, making and distributing food, producing pharmaceuticals, and caring for the sick, and face a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Immigrants have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 cases and deaths in California. Between March - April 2020, immigrants accounted for nearly **60%** of COVID-19 related deaths in the ten most affected industries, including agriculture, landscaping, and food processing. Between February - July 2020, COVID-19 deaths were **11% higher** for foreign-born Latines between the ages of 20 and 64 than for U.S.-born non-Latines. Foreign-born Latines born in Mexico and Central American countries faced a markedly higher risk of death from COVID-19 compared to U.S.-born Latines and non-Latine white people: foreign-born Latines comprise **37%** of California's Latine population, but an estimated **71%** of Latine excess deaths between March 1, 2020 and October 3, 2020.

MENTAL HEALTH



Children in immigrant families face unique health risks and stressors that are shaped by immigration policies and enforcement activity. Family separation and the threat of it have a detrimental impact on the mental health and well-being of children:

▶ Children whose parents or family members have been detained or deported are at greater risk of experiencing **DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, SUICIDE, and PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA.**

▶ For families and communities, living in constant fear of separation often leads to mental health conditions, including separation anxiety, insomnia and post-traumatic stress disorder. Children as young as 3 show signs of behavioral distress related to national anti-immigrant sentiment and the possibility of losing a parent.

Continued uncertainty around the DACA program has an impact on the mental health of DACA recipients. A 2022 survey of DACA recipients showed that more than **60%** of DACA parents are concerned about being deported and separated from their children in the future.



In California, **13%** of non-citizen children said they needed help for emotional or mental health issues. Yet **91%** never received any psychological or emotional counseling.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING



Immigrants make up **27%** of the state's workers ages 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree, and an even higher share of those workers (**36%**) have a graduate degree. Highly educated immigrants in California work in a range of industries and are especially concentrated in the technology and health care sector.



Despite the fact that undocumented workers play a key role in California's economy, contributing an estimated **\$3.7 billion** in annual state and local tax revenues, they remain shut out of most safety net programs, including unemployment benefits.



20% (11,157) non-U.S. citizen children without a green card live in poverty.



55% of non-citizen children with only non-U.S. citizen parents live in a household that is burdened by housing and utility costs. **77%** of non-U.S. citizen children with only non-citizen parents live in families that do not own their home.



▶ www.allinforhealth.org
▶ www.childrenspartnership.org

▶ childrenthrivethenetwork.org

▶ protectingimmigrantfamilies.org

Data Note: All data is from California unless otherwise noted as national data. We collected data on this fact sheet from the Urban Institute's Children of Immigrants Data tool, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey Estimates, the 2017-2021 California Health Interview Survey, the 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health, the California Department of Education, and a few other discrete sources. Full citations can be found at: bit.ly/ACHildsACHild.
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