

# California Counts

POPULATION TRENDS AND PROFILES

Hans P. Johnson, editor

Volume 6 Number 4 • May 2005

## Second-Generation Immigrants in California

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### Summary

Second-generation immigrants—U.S.-born individuals with at least one foreign-born parent—constitute a large and growing segment of the population in California. In 1970, they accounted for 16 percent of the state's population and numbered 3.1 million people; today, they account for 21 percent of California residents and number more than 7 million. The second generation is young; over half (54%) are children. As people in the second generation age, they will contribute to the racial and ethnic diversification of the adult population in California, and their presence in the state's colleges, labor force, and voting population will increase dramatically.

In this edition of *California Counts*, we consider a number of demographic and socio-economic measures of California's second generation. By almost any measure, including education and income, we find that second-generation immigrants have much better outcomes than the first generation. Among second-generation adults, proficiency in English is very high, and civic participation tends to be similar to that in the third and subsequent generations. However, outcomes differ substantially across second-generation groups.

California's second-generation immigrants constitute a diverse population. Their parents come from dozens of countries, although Mexico is the predominant country of origin. Recently, Latinos have surpassed non-Hispanic whites as the largest ethnic group among adult second-generation immigrants. Economic outcomes and educational attainment vary tremendously across groups. Second-generation Asians have very high levels of education and low poverty rates, whereas second-generation Latinos have relatively low levels of education and high poverty rates.

**The second generation is young; over half are children.**

Across the state and within metropolitan areas, second-generation immigrants are less concentrated geographically than the first generation. Because so many of the second generation are children living with their foreign-born parents and because it is the primary destination for immigrants to California, Los Angeles County has the highest proportion of second-generation immigrants among its population. Over half the children in Los Angeles County are second-generation immigrants, and Ventura County, which is adjacent to Los Angeles County, has the greatest concentration of second-generation adults.

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*The authors thank Amanda Bailey for her assistance in compiling the data from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Saeed Ali, Wayne Cornelius, Helen Lee, and Deborah Reed provided thoughtful reviews, and Gary Bjork and Joyce Peterson provided useful editorial comments.*

## Introduction

This edition of *California Counts* provides an overview of the immigrant second generation in California—i.e., those born in the United States with at least one foreign-born parent. To understand California's population and its future, it is important to examine outcomes among the immigrant second generation. There are more than 7 million second-generation immigrants in California today (Table 1). This figure is lower than the number of foreign-born residents (or first-generation immigrants) living in the state, who number over 9 million. The number of second-generation immigrants in California is also less than one-half the size of the population we designate as the third generation and higher (those born in the United States to native-born parents and referred to here as the third+ generation). Nevertheless, the immigrant second generation

accounts for a significant proportion of the overall population in California (slightly more than one in five residents). Its share of the state's overall population is higher than at any time since the early decades of the 20th century (Figure 1), and the share of second-generation children is greater than at any time since 1910. California is home to one of every four second-generation immigrants in the United States, compared to only one of every 12 in the third+ generation.

### Definitions and Data Sources

We define second-generation immigrants as U.S.-born individuals with at least one foreign-born parent. People born abroad are first-generation immigrants, and people born in the United States to U.S.-born parents constitute the third+ generation. People born in U.S. territories and outlying areas are considered U.S.-born. Within

**There are more than 7 million second-generation immigrants in California today.**

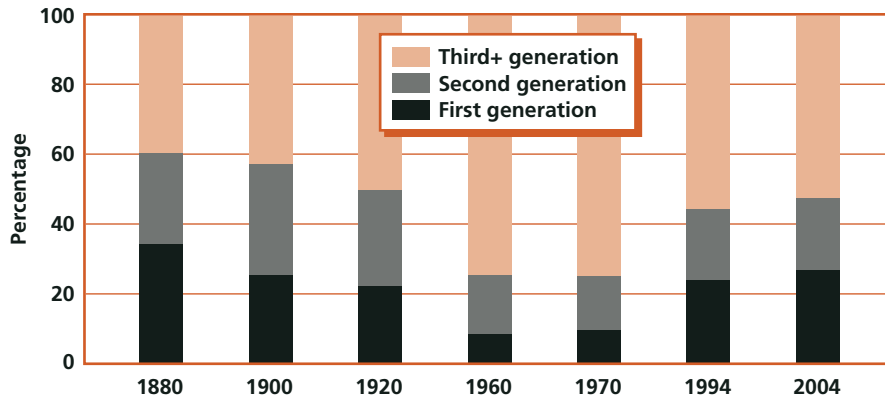
the second generation, we distinguish between children, young adults (ages 18 to 39), and other adults (ages 40 and over). We use the age cutoff of 39 years because it enables us to compare the children of immigrants born before 1965—when the United States enacted amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act that abolished the previous system of national origin quotas and enabled greater immigration from countries outside Europe. We also distinguish between those with two foreign-born parents (the 2.0 generation), and those with one U.S.-born and one foreign-born parent (the 2.5 generation). The 2.5 generation occupies an intermediate status between the 2.0 generation

**Table 1. California's Resident Population, by Immigrant Generation**

	All Residents		Adults		Children	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
First generation	9,541,213	27.0	8,758,054	33.9	783,159	8.2
Second generation	7,363,812	20.8	3,392,859	13.1	3,970,954	41.5
Third+ generation	18,489,037	52.2	13,679,781	53.0	4,809,256	50.3

Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS.

**Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of California's Population, by Immigrant Generation, 1880–2004**



Sources: Authors' tabulations of decennial census data and the March CPS, 1994 and 2004.

and those in the third+ generation who have two native-born parents. The 2.5 generation accounts for a sizable portion of the second generation and can be further distinguished by which parent is born outside the United States (Table 2). Furthermore, there is evidence that the 2.5 generation has socioeconomic outcomes that are distinct from those in the 2.0 generation

(Ramakrishnan, 2004). Although we compare the second generation with the first and third+ generations in many of our tables, these comparisons should not be taken as a measure of intergenerational change. A proper analysis of intergenerational change must in some way link parents of one generation with their children of a subsequent generation.

Most of our data are derived from the March supplements of the CPS. The CPS is a representative sample of the nation's population and includes about 16,000 California residents in each supplement. We rely primarily on the March 2004 CPS but combine previous years of the CPS where we have small subsamples. Since 1994, the March CPS has asked respondents where they were born and where their parents were born. The CPS includes information on numerous socioeconomic and demographic measures but not about the ability to speak English. We are not able to develop tabulations for outcomes across Asian subgroups because of insufficient sample sizes. The number of African American and American Indian second-generation immigrants included in the surveys is too small to allow for reliable tabulations. Similarly, the sample sizes for some national origin groups are too small to provide reliable comparisons across immigrant generations.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 2003, the

**Table 2. Second Generation, by Parents' Nativity**

	Total	Older Adults (ages 40 and over)	Young Adults (ages 18 to 39)	Children
2.0 generation: both parents foreign-born	5,091,655	714,402	1,294,624	3,082,629
2.5 generation total	2,272,157	819,198	564,635	888,324
Father foreign-born, mother U.S.-born	1,121,652	441,793	257,144	422,714
Father U.S.-born, mother foreign-born	1,150,505	377,405	307,491	465,610
Second-generation total	7,363,812	1,533,600	1,859,259	3,970,954

Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS.

CPS allowed individuals to identify as of more than one race. In most of this report, we have excluded multiracial respondents because the number is too small. The question on Latino identity in the CPS is asked separately from the question on race. As other studies have done, we define our racial and ethnic groups as mutually exclusive—thus, for example, Latinos can be of any race whereas whites are defined as non-Hispanic whites. To assess English language proficiency, we use the October 1999 CPS. This is the most recent publicly available survey that provides information on both immigrant generation and ability to speak English. We derive data on civic volunteerism from the September 2002 CPS and data on political participation from the statewide survey by the Public Policy Institute of California in fall 2002. Finally, we use pre-1970 decennial censuses to assess changes in the size of the second generation across long time periods. The last three decennial censuses do not include questions on parents' place of birth.

## Demographic Characteristics

### Age Structure

The significance of the immigrant second generation is most evident among children in California, because they account for

about 4 million of the 9.5 million residents under age 18. Indeed, the share of second-generation immigrants among California children has risen in the past decade, from 37 percent in 1994 to more than 41 percent in 2004. This has resulted primarily from the large number of young adult immigrants in the state and higher levels of fertility among the foreign-born than among the native-born (Hill and Johnson, 2002).

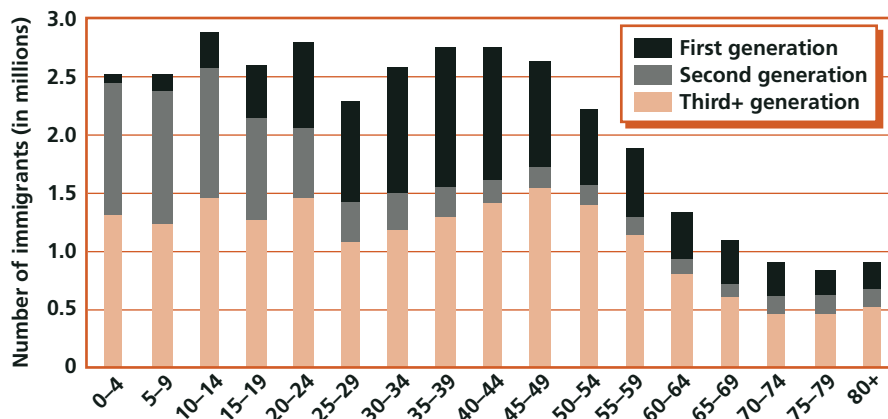
The rising proportion of second-generation immigrant children in the last decade has not coincided with an increase in the share of second-generation adults. Indeed, during the 1994 to 2004 period, the second-generation share of the adult population in California actually declined slightly, from 13.5 percent to 13.1 percent. In the

coming decades, however, second-generation immigrants will account for an increasing share of adult residents in California. As Figure 2 indicates, the share of second-generation immigrants is more concentrated in younger cohorts than either first-generation immigrants or those in the third+ generation. This, in turn, means that the second generation will likely account for a greater proportion of adult residents in California over the next several decades.<sup>2</sup>

### Racial and Ethnic Composition

Second-generation immigrants will not only account for a greater proportion of California's adult residents in the future but will also contribute to the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the state.

Figure 2. Age Distribution, by Immigrant Generation in California



Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS.

Among adults, non-Hispanic whites accounted for a majority of second-generation immigrants in 1994 (Figure 3). Since then, however, the proportion who identify as white has steadily declined, so that by 2004, only 36 percent of second-generation immigrant adults identified themselves as white. During the same period, the share of Latinos among second-generation adults rose from 37 percent to 44 percent, and the proportion of Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs) doubled from 8 percent to 16 percent. These trends will likely continue over the next several years: Latinos and APIs account for nearly 90 percent of the second-generation children who will reach adulthood during the next two decades, and second-generation

whites have higher rates of mortality because of their markedly older age distribution. Indeed, among young adults, Latinos and APIs already account for 76 percent of the second generation.

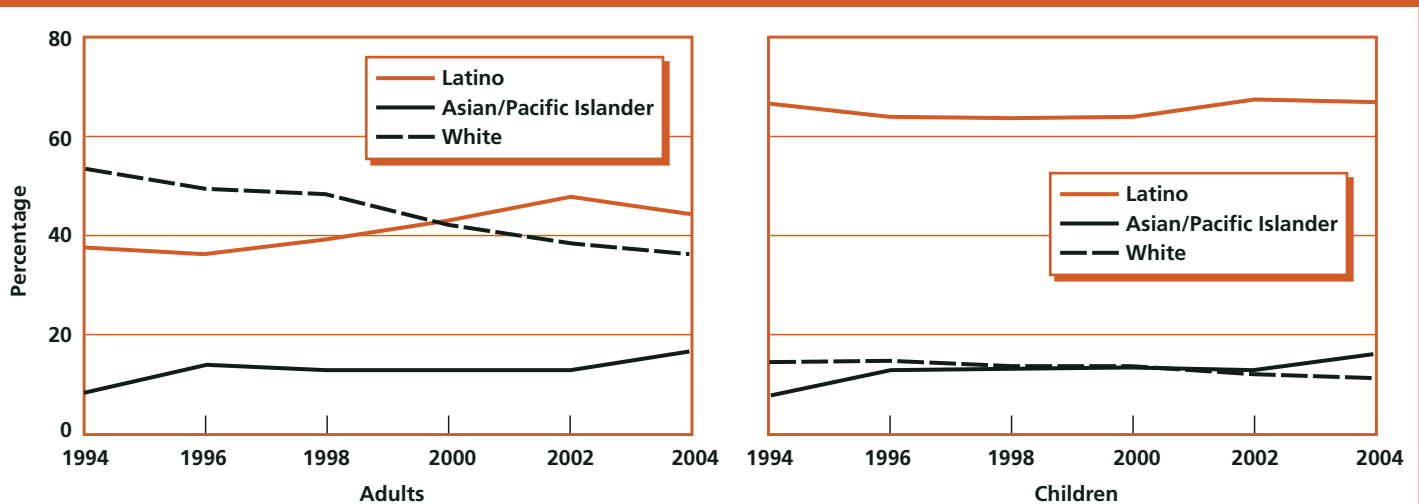
There are also some interesting patterns among those second-generation immigrants who self-identify with more than one race. Beginning in 2003, the CPS allowed respondents to report more than one racial identity for themselves and their children. Among second-generation adults in California, the level of multiracial identification was slightly higher than the statewide average for adults (1.7% versus 1.2%), whereas for children, the level of multiracial identification was lower (2.0% versus 2.8%). How-

ever, the incidence of multiracial self-identification was highest among the 2.5 generation—i.e., those with one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent. For this group, the level of multiracial identification in California was 3.2 percent among adults and 8.7 percent among children in 2004.

### National Origins

National origins of second-generation immigrants are related to but not synonymous with racial and ethnic identifications. For instance, a second-generation immigrant may identify himself or herself as white non-Hispanic despite having parents who were born in South America. In a similar vein, someone with a white native-born father and an Asian

Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of the Racial and Ethnic Composition of Second-Generation Adults and Children



Sources: Authors' tabulations from the March CPS, 1994–2004.

foreign-born mother may identify himself or herself as white, despite having a mother born in Asia.

Mexico is by far the leading nation of origin for California's second generation of immigrants. Nearly three in five children have fathers who were born in Mexico (Table 3). The proportion with mothers born in Mexico is similar. The high share of Mexican-origin children can be attributed to the dominance of Mexicans among recent immigrants to California, higher birth rates among those immigrants, and reduced rates of return among Mexican immigrants following increased border enforcement since the mid-1990s.<sup>3</sup> Among second-generation children with Asian national origins, those with parents from the Philippines and Vietnam are most numerous, followed by those with parents from China, India, South Korea, and Laos. The national origins of young adults in the second generation are similar to those among children—not surprising, given the changes in U.S. immigration law in 1965 that eased immigration to the United States from Asia and Latin America. However, some European countries such as Germany, Italy, and England are among the top 10 nations of origin among young adults. Mexico's dominance is less pronounced among older adults, although it still accounts for about one in four second-generation immigrants ages 40 and over. In

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**Table 3. Top 10 Nations of Origin of the Second Generation: Father's Place of Birth (in percent)**

Children		Young Adults		Older Adults	
Mexico	58.0	Mexico	50.1	Mexico	27.5
Philippines	5.6	Philippines	8.1	Italy	10.0
El Salvador	5.0	China	4.5	Canada	5.9
Vietnam	3.5	Germany	2.6	Russia	5.2
Guatemala	2.6	El Salvador	2.2	Japan	4.5
China	2.6	Canada	1.7	Germany	4.3
India	2.0	Italy	1.5	England	3.9
South Korea	1.5	India	1.5	Poland	3.8
Laos	1.4	Japan	1.4	China	3.6
Iran	1.3	England	1.3	Philippines	3.2
All other	16.5	All other	25.1	All other	28.1

Sources: Authors' tabulations from the March CPS, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004.

Notes: China includes Hong Kong but not Taiwan. Results based on mother's place of birth are similar, with the exception of the young adult figures, which no longer include Italy and India in the top 10 nations of origin and include instead Vietnam and South Korea.

this older age group, Italy, Canada, Russia, and Japan rank among the top five nations of origin, reflecting historic immigration patterns of many decades ago. Finally, among Asian nations of origin, the Philippines and China are the only countries in the top 10 among second-generation adults ages 40 and over.

### Regional Patterns

Although second-generation immigrants account for about 21 percent of the overall resident population in California, their share varies considerably across the state's regions. As Table 4 indicates, the share of second-generation immigrants is largest in Los Angeles County (26%),

**Table 4. Second-Generation Immigrants as a Percentage of the Region's Population**

	All Ages	Adults	Children
Sacramento Metro <i>Mexico, Vietnam, India</i>	15	12	25
Central Coast <i>Mexico, Vietnam, Germany</i>	18	10	36
Inland Empire <i>Mexico, Philippines, El Salvador</i>	19	12	33
Bay Area <i>Mexico, Philippines, China</i>	19	13	39
Orange County <i>Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines</i>	20	12	44
San Diego <i>Mexico, Philippines, Vietnam</i>	20	14	39
San Joaquin Valley <i>Mexico, Philippines, Laos</i>	23	15	38
Ventura County <i>Mexico, Canada, Taiwan</i>	23	18	36
Los Angeles County <i>Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala</i>	26	15	55
Rest of state	13	11	18

Sources: Authors' tabulations from the March CPS, 2000, 2002, and 2004.

Notes: The top three nations of origin of children and young adults are identified in italics.

The counties included in each region are as follows:

Sacramento Metro: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo.

Central Coast: Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz.

Inland Empire: Riverside and San Bernardino.

Bay Area: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma.

San Diego: Imperial and San Diego.

San Joaquin Valley: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

Ventura County (23%), and the San Joaquin Valley region (23%). In contrast, they account for fewer than one in six residents in the Sacramento Metro (15%) and Central Coast (18%) areas. In the rest of California's major regions, including the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, and the Inland Empire, second-generation immi-

grants account for about one in five residents. As a consequence of these differences, the share of second-generation immigrants in California is disproportionately skewed toward the Los Angeles region.

Many second-generation adults move out of the prime regions of immigrant destination. Among adults, the second-generation share

of the resident population is highest not in Los Angeles County (15%) but in Ventura County, accounting for 18 percent of the adult population. Among children, however, the second-generation share of residents is considerably higher in Los Angeles (55%) than in Ventura (36%) or any other region in the state. This discrepancy between adults and children is likely due to the movement of residents from Los Angeles County to outlying areas.<sup>4</sup> Whether Los Angeles overtakes Ventura in terms of the second-generation share of adult residents thus depends on the rate at which second-generation children remain in Los Angeles after attaining adulthood.

One similarity across all regions is that Mexico is the largest nation of origin, although its share is much lower in the Bay Area and in the Sacramento Metro than in Southern California, the Central Coast, and the San Joaquin Valley. No other national origin group ranks consistently in the top three across regions, although Vietnam and the Philippines rank highly in many regions (Table 4). Finally, the proportion of second-generation immigrants with one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent (the 2.5 generation) is highest in Ventura County (52%) and in the Sacramento Metro (48%). Other areas where the 2.5 generation share of the second-generation population exceeds the statewide average (31%)



include San Diego (42%), the Inland Empire (39%), and the Bay Area (34%). The San Joaquin Valley and Orange County are at the statewide average, whereas Los Angeles and the Central Coast are at 25 percent each.

### Urbanization

When considering the settlement patterns of second-generation immigrants, it is also important to consider the extent to which they live in central cities<sup>5</sup> (hereafter referred to as “urbanization”). Studies of immigration from the early 20th century noted that first-generation immigrants were mostly concentrated in central cities, whereas subsequent generations tended to live in the suburbs because of upward socioeconomic mobility.<sup>6</sup> Our analysis of the March 2004 CPS indicates that similar patterns hold true in California today. Among adults, 45 percent of first-generation immigrants in California live in central cities; the corresponding figures for the second and third+ generations are 39 percent and 31 percent, respectively. Thus, in terms of relative urbanization, the second generation in California occupies an intermediate position between first-generation immigrants and those in the third+ generation.

However, there are some important exceptions to this general finding. Those in the 2.5 generation have rates of urbanization

that are nearly identical to those of the third+ generation. Also, immigrants in the various regions of the Central Valley display a slightly different pattern: The proportion living in central cities declines by immigrant generation but so, too, does the proportion living in rural areas.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the proportion living in metropolitan areas increases by immigrant generation, although most of these increases occur in suburbs and not central cities. Such a pattern is mostly a consequence of occupational patterns, with first-generation immigrants more likely than those in subsequent generations to be engaged in farm work. Finally, the proportion of central city residents in the Inland Empire is lower than in other regions, and there are no significant differences between the urbanization of second-generation immigrants and that of other immigrant generations.

There are also some significant differences in settlement patterns across racial and ethnic groups. Among APIs, second-generation adults are nearly as likely as their first-generation counterparts to live in central cities (47% and 50%, respectively), whereas those in the third+ generation are much less likely to live in central cities (30%). For Latinos and whites, by contrast, the second generation displays an intermediate settlement pattern. Whites display the biggest drop in urbanization from the first generation (41%)

**Among adults, 45 percent of first-generation immigrants in California live in central cities.**

to the second generation (33%) and those in subsequent generations (30%). Among Latinos, the proportion of second-generation immigrants living in central cities (38%) is closer to that of the first generation (44%) than to the third+ generation (30%). Given the increasing presence of Latinos and APIs among second-generation adults, it is likely that differences in urbanization between first- and second-generation immigrants will be slightly less pronounced in the future than it was in the past.

## Socioeconomic Characteristics

### Education

**S**econd-generation adults in California tend to be much better educated than the first generation: They are somewhat more likely to have graduated from college and much more likely to have finished high school (Table 5). Within the second generation, educational attainment varies tremendously by ethnicity. Asian and white second-generation immi-

**Immigrants from Mexico are among the least educated in the state, with more than half not completing high school.**

grants tend to be highly educated, with large shares graduating from college and very few not completing high school. In contrast, the Latino second generation is much less educated, with more high school dropouts than college graduates. The 2.5 generation tends to be better educated than the 2.0 generation, especially if the father is U.S.-born. This relationship holds true across all racial and ethnic groups, with the only exception being among Asians and Pacific Islanders, where associate

degrees are more common among the 2.0 generation than among the 2.5 generation.

However, the largest variations are seen not by the nativity of the parent but across national origin groups. This variation reflects the wide disparities in education that exist among first-generation immigrants. Groups from the two largest nations of origin in California—Mexico and the Philippines—provide a case in point. Immigrants from Mexico are among the least educated in the state, with more than half not completing high school; immigrants from the Philippines are among the best educated, with 55 percent having college degrees. Although second-generation Mexicans have much higher levels of education than the first generation, they are on average still much less educated than second-generation Filipinos. Overall, second-generation adults with national origins in Asia and Europe tend to have very high levels of educational attainment—higher even than those of the third+ generation—whereas second-generation adults with national origins in Latin America tend to have lower levels of educational attainment. Because we do not compare the parents of one generation with the children of a subsequent generation, the educational attainment levels shown in Table 5 are not measures of intergenerational progress. However, these higher levels of educational

**Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Educational Attainment, by Immigrant Generation**

	Less Than High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate
<b>All Californians</b>	19	24	28	28
First generation	39	21	16	24
Second generation	14	26	31	29
Third+ generation	8	26	35	31
<b>Asian/Pacific Islanders</b>	14	19	22	45
First generation	16	20	20	44
Second generation	4	15	29	52
Third+ generation	7	15	33	45
<b>Latinos</b>	53	22	18	8
First generation	67	16	10	7
Second generation	35	30	26	10
Third+ generation	22	31	36	11
<b>Whites</b>	7	24	33	35
First generation	13	22	23	42
Second generation	9	25	32	35
Third+ generation	6	25	35	35

Sources: Authors' tabulations from the March CPS, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004, for adults ages 25 and over.

Note: Because of rounding, row percentages do not always add up to 100 percent.

attainment in the second generation compared to the first are consistent with strong intergenerational progress in education noted by other researchers (Reed et al., forthcoming; Fry and Lowell, 2002).

Among second-generation adults, we observe that young adults are better educated than older adults for each of the largest ethnic groups (Table 6). Young Asian adults stand out, with three of every five graduating from college. Differences in educational attainment between the largest ethnic groups are pronounced for both younger and older adults. Young second-generation Latinos are much more likely than older second-generation Latinos to have completed high school and college, but overall educational attainment remains far below that of other second-generation groups.

... we find that English proficiency increases significantly between first-generation immigrants and those in the second generation.

### English Proficiency

As others have done, we find that English proficiency increases significantly between first-generation immigrants and those in the second generation (López, 1999).<sup>8</sup> Among first-generation immigrants ages 5 to 24, about one-half speak English exclusively or “very well” in addition to another language. Another 23 percent speak English well and 27 percent have low levels of English proficiency. By the second generation, only 6 percent of second-generation youth have low levels of English

proficiency, and the proportion with high levels of proficiency rises from 49 percent in the first generation to 79 percent among second-generation immigrants. The proportion speaking English exclusively rises, too, from 10 percent in the first generation to 29 percent in the second generation. By the third+ generation, that proportion rises to 94 percent.

Second-generation children are less proficient in English than second-generation adults. About 93 percent of second-generation adults ages 18 to 24 speak English

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Educational Attainment for the Second Generation

	Less Than High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Total
Young adults	10	24	34	33	100
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	12	28	60	100
Latino	16	32	35	17	100
White	3	17	35	44	100
Older adults	17	27	29	27	100
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	19	31	43	100
Latino	35	30	26	10	100
White	10	27	30	33	100

Sources: Authors' tabulations from the March CPS, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004.

Notes: Because of rounding, row percentages do not always add up to 100 percent. Young adults are those ages 25 to 39 in this table.

**... second-generation immigrants have high levels of English proficiency by the time they reach adulthood, regardless of their racial or ethnic group.**

proficiently (i.e., “exclusively” or “very well”), compared to 82 percent of second-generation children. The relatively rapid acquisition of English among second-generation children can be observed in age differences among second-generation children. The youngest children, those ages 5 to 9, are least likely to speak English proficiently (29% do not speak English exclusively or very well); however, only 11 percent of children ages 13 to 17 are not proficient in English. Second-generation young Latino children are less proficient in English than others, with 44 percent of children ages 5 to 9 not proficient in English. However, by the time they reach early adulthood, only 16 percent of second-generation Latinos lack English proficiency.

As Table 7 indicates, the general pattern of higher English proficiency among second-generation immigrants holds across racial and ethnic groups in California, although the proportion not speaking English well is higher

**Table 7. Percentage Distribution of English Proficiency, by Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrant Generation (Ages 5 to 24)**

	Not At All	Not Well	Well	Very Well	Only English
First generation	7	20	23	38	11
Second generation	1	5	15	50	29
Third+ generation	0	0	2	4	94
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander<sup>a</sup></b>					
First generation	4	8	13	47	28
Second generation	0	<1	11	41	48
<b>Latino</b>					
First generation	7	27	24	36	5
Second generation	1	8	20	61	10
Third+ generation	0	2	8	15	75
<b>White<sup>a</sup></b>					
Second generation		1	1	28	71
Third+ generation		0	0	2	98

Source: Authors' tabulations from the October 1999 CPS.

Notes: Estimates are age-standardized. The standard used is the age distribution of all 5- to 24-year-old second-generation immigrants.

<sup>a</sup>There is insufficient sample size to report third+ generation for Asian/Pacific Islanders and first generation for whites.

among Latinos (9%) than among Asian/Pacific Islanders (less than 1%) and whites (1%).<sup>9</sup> There are also some important distinctions based on exclusive use of English. For whites, the shift to exclusive use of English occurs primarily in the second generation, whereas for Latinos, this shift occurs primarily in the third+ generation, with only 10 percent of second-generation Latinos speaking exclusively in English. APIs display an intermediate pattern, with about one-half of second-generation APIs speaking English exclusively by the time they reach adulthood. Still, despite

these differences in exclusive English language use across immigrant generations, the consistent finding is that second-generation immigrants have high levels of English proficiency by the time they reach adulthood, regardless of their racial or ethnic group.

### Poverty Rates

Poverty rates are very high for second-generation immigrants, higher even than for the first generation. However, this statistic is somewhat deceptive. Because children are more likely to live in poverty than adults, and because a

majority of the second generation are children, overall poverty rates are high for the second generation (Table 8). A more accurate picture of second-generation poverty emerges when we examine rates separately for adults and children. Among second-generation adults, poverty rates are close to those of the third+ generation and much lower than among the first generation. Indeed, the overall distribution of family income for second-generation adults is similar to that of third+ generation adults except that the latter are more likely to be in the highest income category (Figure 4). For some age groups, poverty rates are actually lower for the second generation than the third+ generation. Indeed, among young adults ages 25 to 39, poverty rates are actually lower for the second generation than the third+ generation.

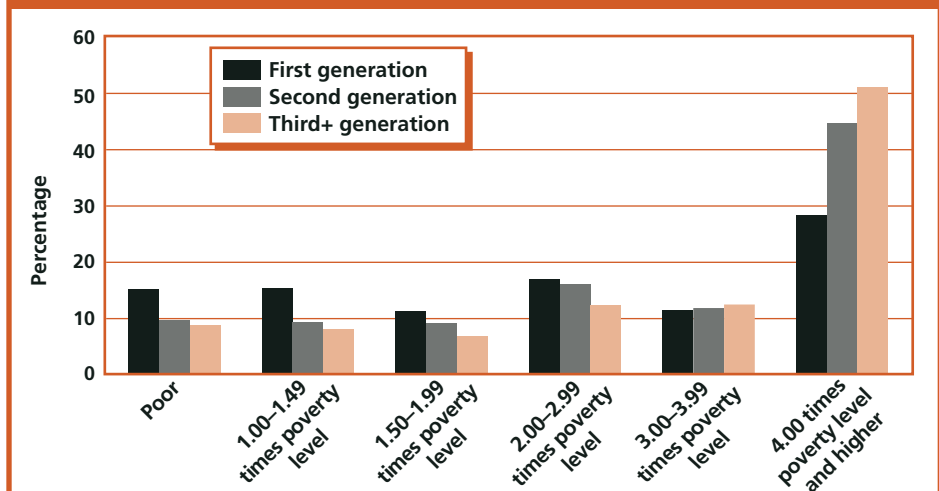
Family incomes and poverty rates of immigrants differ by national origin and ethnicity and are consistent with educational attainment differences. Among adults, second-generation whites have the lowest levels of poverty, lower even than among third+ generation whites (6% versus 7%). Latinos have the most dramatic difference in poverty rates between generations, with poverty rates of 21 percent for first-generation adults and 12 percent for the second generation. Poverty rates for second-generation Asians and Pacific Islanders are 9 percent,

**Table 8. Poverty Rates, by Immigrant Generation**

	All Ages	Adults	Young Adults	Children
First generation	16.7	15.6	17.4	28.7
Second generation	17.8	9.4	8.8	24.8
Third+ generation	9.8	8.6	9.7	13.2
Total	13.3	11.1	12.8	19.3

Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS.  
 Notes: Poverty levels depend on the size of the family. In 2004, the federal poverty level for a family of four was \$18,850.

**Figure 4. Family Income of Adults Relative to Poverty Levels**



Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS for adults ages 18 and over.  
 Notes: Poverty levels depend on the size of the family. In 2004, the federal poverty level for a family of four was \$18,850.

compared to 11 percent for the first generation.

Among children, poverty rates are substantially higher for second-generation Latinos than other second-generation groups. One of every three second-generation Latino children lives in poverty,

a rate more than double that of Asian and white second-generation children.

**Public Assistance**

Among all adults, the proportion receiving public assistance is greatest among first-generation

immigrants and is lowest among second-generation immigrants (Table 9, right column).<sup>10</sup> However, these differences are due primarily to the decline in adult poverty rates from the first generation to subsequent immigrant generations. Indeed, among adults living in poverty, second-generation immigrants in California are slightly more likely than first-generation immigrants to receive public assistance (Table 9, left column). Finally, data from the CPS indicate that public assistance rates have fallen dramatically in the past 10 years following welfare reform and with the strong economy of the late 1990s. Among impoverished second-generation adults, public assistance rates in 2004 were about half the rates of 1994.

### Citizenship of Parents

All second-generation immigrants are citizens of the United States because they were born in the United States or its territories.

However, many of California's second generation are citizen children who live with parents who are not citizens: 47 percent of second-generation children do not live with a naturalized or U.S.-born parent (Table 10, bold figures). The proportion of Latino second-generation children who do not live with at least one citizen parent is even higher, at 56 percent. Because some social welfare programs place restrictions on the eligibility of noncitizens, many of California's children live with parents who themselves are not eligible for social programs. There are political implications to these mixed-citizenship households as well, with parents not being able to vote in elections, including those related to school boards and local expenditures.

### Political Participation and Volunteerism

Group differences in political participation are important because

they often signify the relative influence of each group in electoral outcomes and subsequent policy decisions. This is especially so in California, where ballot initiatives give citizens the ability to craft policy directly through the ballot box. Group differences in volunteerism also shape the extent to which different communities can continue to provide social services in the face of budget cuts at the state and local levels.

In our examination of political participation, we consider first-generation naturalized citizens rather than all first-generation immigrants. Noncitizens are a large share of the first generation but, of course, are not eligible to vote. For most political and civic activities, we find that second-generation immigrants have a higher rate of participation than first-generation citizens (Table 11). However, there are some important exceptions by race and ethnicity. Among APIs, the rates of regular voting are lower among second-generation immigrants than among the first generation. Among Latinos, volunteering and signing petitions are the only activities where there is a significant increase from the first generation to the second. Indeed, for such activities as attending local meetings and contributing to campaigns, participation among second-generation immigrants is actually lower. However, these apparent decreases are due largely

**Table 9. Percentage of Adults Receiving Public Assistance, by Immigrant Generation**

	Among Adults in Poverty	Among All Adults
First generation	12.0	3.6
Second generation	13.0	2.1
Third+ generation	13.3	2.3
Total	12.6	2.7

Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS for adults ages 18 and over.  
Notes: If any member of a family receives public assistance, all family members are coded as receiving assistance. All adults includes those in poverty.

**For most political and civic activities, we find that second-generation immigrants have a higher rate of participation than first-generation citizens.**

**Table 10. Percentage Distribution of Second-Generation Children, by Parents' Citizenship Status**

	Father U.S.-Born	Father Naturalized	Father Not a Citizen	Father Not Present	Total, by Mother's Citizenship
Mother U.S.-born	0	3	4	3	11
Mother naturalized	4	14	5	5	28
Mother not a citizen	4	9	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	54
Mother not present	1	0	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	7
Total, by father's citizenship	10	26	41	23	100

Source: Authors' tabulations from the March 2004 CPS for residents under age 18.  
Note: Figures in bold indicate those not living with parents who are U.S. citizens.

**Table 11. Percentage Distribution of Political Participation and Volunteerism, by Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrant Generation**

	Vote Regularly	Sign Petitions	Attend Local Meetings	Write to Elected Officials	Contribute to Political Campaigns	Volunteer
<b>Asian/Pacific Islanders</b>						
First generation	39	33	31	22	16	11
Second generation	32	47	38	28	19	30
Third+ generation	48	37	39	20	20	35
<b>Latino</b>						
First generation	38	23	45	15	9	13
Second generation	35	30	37	14	7	24
Third+ generation	41	35	47	23	15	22
<b>White</b>						
First generation	54	40	39	30	22	17
Second generation	66	43	35	37	35	28
Third+ generation	59	45	38	35	25	33
<b>African American</b>	53	39	44	20	18	25

Sources: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and the September 2002 CPS for volunteerism (see Ramakrishnan and Baldassare, 2004; and Ramakrishnan, 2005).  
Note: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

**... the continued diversification of the adult resident population will also mean greater racial and ethnic diversity among those eligible to participate in California politics.**

to the younger age structure of second-generation Latino and API adults.<sup>11</sup> With the continued aging of the Latino and Asian second-generation population, we can expect these generational differences to subside.

Another important finding is that racial and ethnic differences in civic engagement remain significant in the second generation. Among second-generation adults, Latinos lag behind whites in almost every activity. The only exception is attendance at local meetings, which in the case of Latinos primarily involves attendance at school board meetings. The gap between APIs and whites in the second generation is not as strong as between Latinos and whites. Still, significant disparities exist for such activities as voting, writing to elected officials, and contributing to political campaigns.

## Policy Implications

Second-generation immigrants are relevant to policymaking in California for several reasons. Perhaps most obviously, the aging of the second generation will mean greater racial and ethnic diversity among adult residents and citizens of voting age in California. Latinos and APIs make up the vast majority of second-generation children in California, and their entry into adulthood has already prompted a change in the racial and ethnic composition of the state's adult population over the past 10 years. Since second-generation immigrants are citizens of the United States by birth, the continued diversification of the adult resident population will also mean greater racial and ethnic diversity among those eligible to participate in California politics. However, if participation among second-generation immigrants remains low, whites will continue to make up the majority of voters in California (Citrin and Highton, 2002; Ramakrishnan, 2005).

Successful educational outcomes for the second generation are of great importance because of the large size of the group. Educational attainment levels are much higher in the second generation than in the first. However, sizable racial and ethnic gaps in attainment still remain; second-generation Latinos lag behind whites and APIs in high school completion

and postsecondary education. Given the large wave of second-generation Latinos transitioning from childhood to adulthood in the coming decade, the challenge for education policy will be to reduce these gaps in attainment.

Another issue worth considering is the greater level of suburbanization among second-generation immigrants when compared to the first generation. Our findings suggest that metropolitan areas outside central cities will continue to grow, and the suburbanization of the second generation will be a principal component of such growth. In planning for this new growth, policymakers in suburban areas will need to consider the needs of second-generation immigrants, including minimizing the incidence of hate crimes, enabling the growth of culture-specific institutions, and providing greater access to mainstream civic and political institutions.

Other socioeconomic outcomes in our report point to the need for ongoing monitoring. For instance, even though there is a sizable decline in adult poverty from the first generation to the second generation among all racial and ethnic groups, second-generation children still experience high rates of poverty. Racial disparities in adult poverty also remain, and the growing presence of Latinos among second-generation adults points to the possibility of increasing rates of



poverty among second-generation adults overall. Likewise, English proficiency is high for most second-generation adults, but there are significant gaps in proficiency between teenage Latinos on the one hand and whites and APIs on the other.<sup>12</sup> Whether these racial and ethnic gaps in English proficiency will continue to disappear between the teenage years and early adulthood remains to be seen.

Finally, even though second-generation immigrants are able to participate in the political process once they reach adulthood, many children live in households where their parents lack political voice because they are not eligible to vote. Alternative ways to participate, such as by attending local meetings and writing letters to elected officials, may help address gaps in political representation on education-related matters between those parents who are citizens of the United States and those who are not. ♦

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Some studies (Gans, 1992; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Zhou, 2001) note the possibility of stagnation or decline in outcomes between first- and second-generation immigrants for some groups.

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of residents by immigrant generation in the future will depend on a host of factors, including migration flows, the age structure of new immigrants and those leaving the country, and patterns in fertility and mortality across immigrant generations. Absent any large-scale changes in these factors, the proportion of second-generation immigrants in the population will increase over the next few decades.

<sup>3</sup> Increased border enforcement has played a role in this increase in second-generation children of Mexican descent. Rather than migrating cyclically across the border, undocumented immigrants are more likely to settle permanently and establish families in the United States as a consequence of increased enforcement (Reyes, Johnson, and Van Swearingen, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Migration from Los Angeles County has been an important source of population growth for Ventura County for decades. Census data do not allow us to distinguish between adults in the second generation and those in subsequent immigrant generations, so we can rely only on suggestive evidence on residential mobility among the native-born in the Los Angeles region.

<sup>5</sup> Central cities are defined by the Census Bureau as the largest places in a metropolitan area (defined as having one city of at least 50,000 or a total area population of at least 100,000). We define suburbs as any place within metropolitan areas that are outside the central city or cities.

<sup>6</sup> The early literature on immigrant settlement patterns also noted that the foreign-born moved from ethnic ghettos or enclaves to mixed neighborhoods within cities (Warner and Srole, 1945). Existing data on California do not allow us to determine these patterns for the second generation today: The 2000 Census does not include information on parents' nativity among adult

respondents, and the CPS does not include information on census tracts or individual municipalities beyond the central city.

<sup>7</sup> This pattern may also hold in other regions, such as the Bay Area—what we define as “suburb” is based on the CPS classification and includes parts of Marin, Sonoma, and Napa Counties, which others may define as rural.

<sup>8</sup> The October 1999 CPS enables us to examine the issue of English proficiency among those ages 5 to 24. We have age-standardized the estimates of proficiency, using the single year of age distribution of 5- to 24-year-old second-generation immigrants as the standard.

<sup>9</sup> Among second-generation Latinos ages 18 to 24, 6 percent report not speaking English at all or not speaking English well.

<sup>10</sup> Public assistance is defined as cash aid and includes welfare payments and general assistance. It does not include cash in kind programs such as Food Stamps or Medi-Cal.

<sup>11</sup> Rates of political participation are considerably lower among young adults than among the middle-aged and the elderly. Controlling for age and the presence of children under age 18 in the household eliminates most of these differences between first-generation and second-generation immigrants (Ramakrishnan and Baldassare, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> See Jepsen and de Alth (2005) for an analysis of English language acquisition among K–12 students in California.

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ISSN #1554-401X

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# California Counts

## Second-Generation Immigrants in California

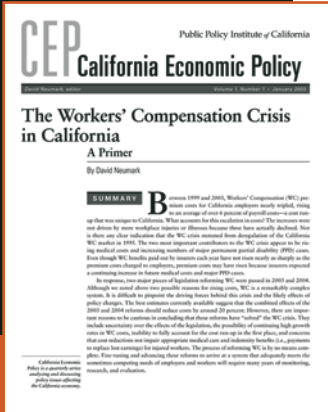
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