



# LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

## We The People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians

### Fact Sheet

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*“To its peril, California has not come to terms with the extraordinary challenges of a large population of immigrants.”*

*“California has not aligned existing public and community efforts in ways that effectively integrates immigrants – and it must do so to accelerate the transition from newcomer to responsible community member.”*

*“The Commission recommends that policies affecting immigrants be linked to community priorities. The Commission begins with basic principles: All persons deserve respect and dignity. All residents are obligated to be responsible community members. And new Californians need the same opportunities as their native-born neighbors to become self-reliant.”*

– From the Commission’s letter to the Governor and Members of the Legislature on immigrant policy.

### Demographics

- Number of first-generation immigrants living in California:<sup>1</sup> ..... 8.6 million.
- Number of people living in California:<sup>2</sup> ..... 33 million.
- Number of years California has been primary destination for legal immigrants coming to live in the United States:<sup>3</sup> ..... 30 years.
- Number of languages spoken in California:<sup>4</sup> ..... 250.
- Percent of population growth in 1990 attributed to the foreign-born:<sup>5</sup> ..... 41 percent.

### Education

- Percent of Mexican immigrants in California who have difficulty with English:<sup>6</sup> ... 50 percent.
- Percent of Hispanic immigrants who graduated from high school by age 20: ..... 45 percent.
- Percent of natives who graduated from high school by age 20:<sup>7</sup> ..... 88 percent.

### Undocumented/Documented Immigrants

- Estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the country: ..... 8.7 million.
- Estimated number of undocumented immigrants in California:<sup>8</sup> ..... 2 million.
- Percent of undocumented immigrants who entered country illegally:<sup>9</sup> .. less than 50 percent.

- Percent of immigrant families that are a mix of documented and undocumented adults and children:<sup>10</sup> ..... 85 percent.
- Proportion of immigrants in California, regardless of their legal status, who live with U.S. citizens:<sup>11</sup> ..... two-thirds.

## Naturalization

- Estimated percent of immigrants in 2001 who had been in the country legally for six years or more that had become naturalized citizens:<sup>12</sup> ..... 47.5 percent.
- Estimated number of residents over the age of 18 who are not eligible to vote because they are not citizens:<sup>13</sup> ..... 3 million.

## Immigrant Work Force

- Estimated proportion of immigrants in California's labor force:<sup>14</sup> ..... one-third.
- Percent of agricultural jobs held by immigrants: ..... 72 percent.
- Percent of manufacturing jobs held by immigrants: ..... 44 percent.
- Percent of trade jobs held by immigrants: ..... 34 percent.
- Percent of construction jobs held by immigrants:<sup>15</sup> ..... 30 percent.

## Costs/Benefits of Immigrants

- Estimated amount immigrants paid in taxes in 1997:<sup>16</sup> ..... \$133 billion.
- Estimated contribution of undocumented immigrants to California's economy:<sup>17</sup> ..... \$77 billion.
- Percent of immigrant households receiving government benefits:<sup>18</sup> ..... 23.2 percent.
- Net lifetime cost to public coffers by immigrants with less than a high school education: ..... \$13,000.
- Net lifetime benefit to public coffers of immigrants with more than a high school education:<sup>19</sup> ..... \$198,000.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Profile, California. Table 2, Profile of Selected Social Characteristics. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, California.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Statistics Division. *Legal Immigration, Fiscal year 2000*. Annual Report, Number 6, January 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Sheri Graves. December 9, 2001. "Global village demands translators." *The Press Democrat*.

[http://classifieds.pressdemocrat.com/employment/news/09languages\\_j1spbroad1j.html](http://classifieds.pressdemocrat.com/employment/news/09languages_j1spbroad1j.html)

<sup>5</sup> Dowell Myers and John Pitkin. 2001. "Demographic Futures of California." Los Angeles, CA: Populations Dynamics Group. School of Policy, Planning and Development, University of Southern California. Page 5.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Johnson. March 22, 2001. Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California. Slides 34 and 35.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin McCarthy and Georges Vernez. 1997. *Immigration in a Changing Economy, California's Experience*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Page 16.

<sup>8</sup> D'Vera Cohn. *Illegal Residents Exceed Estimate*. *Washington Post*. March 18, 2001; Page A01. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A20409-2001Mar17>

Valeria Godines. January 24, 2002. "Illegal Migration Doubled in '90s." *Orange County Register*. On file. Editorial. March 20, 2001. "Good Fences." *Christian Science Monitor*. Robert S. Leiken. 2001. "Enchilada Lite: A Post-9/11 Mexican Migration Agreement." Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel. 1994. Urban Institute. As reported by the Cato Institute and National Immigration Forum. 2001. "Immigration: The Demographic and Economic Facts." [www.cato.org/pubs/policy\\_report/pr-imsun.html](http://www.cato.org/pubs/policy_report/pr-imsun.html).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Fix, Wendy Zimmerman and Jeffrey Passel. 2001. "The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute. Page 15.

<sup>11</sup> Hans P. Johnson. PPIC. Testimony. Slide 27.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Johnson. Public Policy Institute of California. Based on PPIC tabulations of CPS data for immigrants 18 and over in the United States 6 years or more.

<sup>13</sup> The California Department of Finance reported in March 2001 that California was home to 24,977,000 adults. The California Secretary of State reported that on February 19, 2002 there were 21,507,390 adults eligible to register to vote in California. The Secretary of State's Office states that the balance of adults, 3,469,610 include people who are institutionalized, on felony parole or immigrants. The majority are reported to be immigrants.

<sup>14</sup> Abel Valenzuela Jr. and Paul M. Ong. 2001. "Immigrant Labor in California." Paul Ong and James Lincoln. (eds.) *The State of California Labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

<sup>15</sup> Hans P. Johnson. PPIC. Testimony. Slide 36. See also, Alicia Bugarin and Elias Lopez. July 1998. *Farmworkers in California*. Sacramento, CA: California Research Bureau.

<sup>16</sup> The National Immigration Forum. "A Fiscal Portrait of the Newest Americans." [http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax\\_study.htm](http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax_study.htm).

<sup>17</sup> Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda. 2001. "Comprehensive Migration Policy Reform in North America." NAID Center Working Paper No. 12. Los Angeles, CA: North American Integration and Development Center, UCLA. Page 6.

<sup>18</sup> George Borjas. 2002. "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Immigrant Welfare Use." Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies. <http://www.cis.org/articles/2002/borjaspr.html>.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed discussion of the literature on the public costs and benefits of immigrants, see Background, page 11.