

New York KIDS COUNT Research Brief on Child Well-being

Council on Children and Families
Mary E. De Masi, PhD

May 2019

This brief was funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

NEW YORK'S CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Immigrants are longstanding and essential contributors to New York state's identity and success. By looking at the arrival of immigrants in past centuries up through current day, it is evident that New York state remains a key gateway for immigrants arriving in the U.S.

Immigrants bring considerable benefits to our state and, in return, New York recognizes its responsibility to provide immigrants with the opportunities they seek.ⁱ

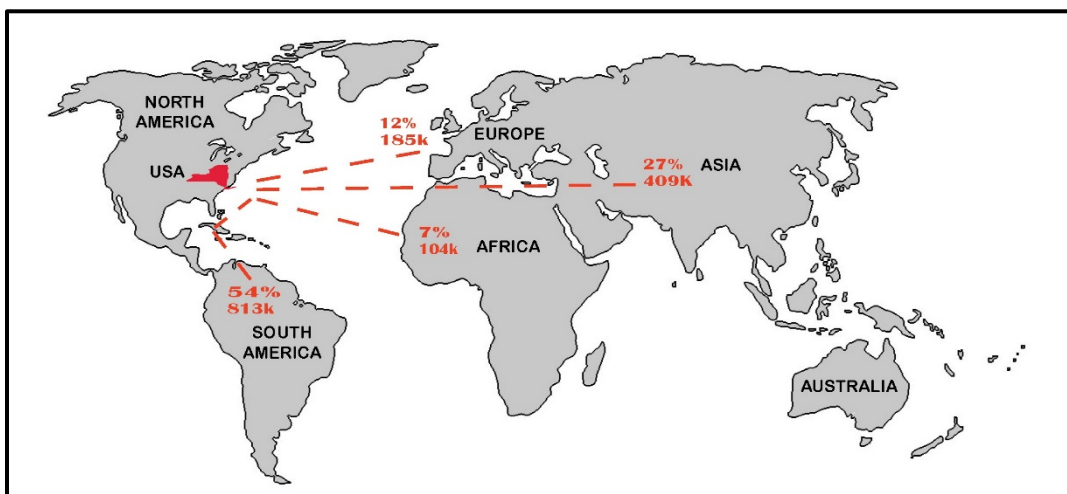
"From Brooklyn to Utica, Washington Heights to Buffalo, we are a state of immigrants. Our buildings, roads and bridges could not have been built without their skill and strength. The success of our small businesses is a testament to their hard work. The arts, culinary and hospitality industries are infused with the spirit of ethnic diversity that results from our open doors. The truth is that immigrants don't hurt our economy, they fuel its growth. When you attack immigrants, you attack the very premise of this nation. Here in the glow of Lady Liberty's torch, we will continue to lead the way forward, and immigrants will remain a vital part of the fabric of this state. We will show Washington, and the worked, that the American Dream lives on for all those who seek a better life. Ever upward. Excelsior. "

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

The major portion of children living in New York were born within the U.S. and only a small percentage of the children are immigrants (5%). However, many children have parents who were born outside the

U.S. and most of those immigrant families originated from countries in Latin America. About half (54%) of the children in immigrant families have ties to this region. Another quarter of children in immigrant families (27%) have parents who

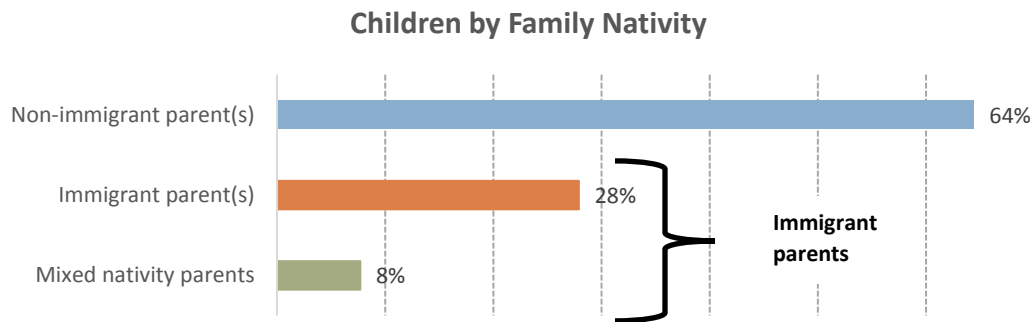
began their path to New York from Asia. The remainder are from Europe (12%) and Africa (7%).ⁱⁱ



IMMIGRANT CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Children's 'immigrant status' is often defined as a dichotomy where children are either living in an immigrant or non-immigrant family. In those instances where parent nativity is mixed, with one parent native born and the other parent foreign born, children are classified as being in an immigrant family. However, the dichotomous categories can obscure children's well-being (e.g., poverty levels). For this brief, mixed nativity is used as a separate group. This nuance provides a clearer view of children's well-being.

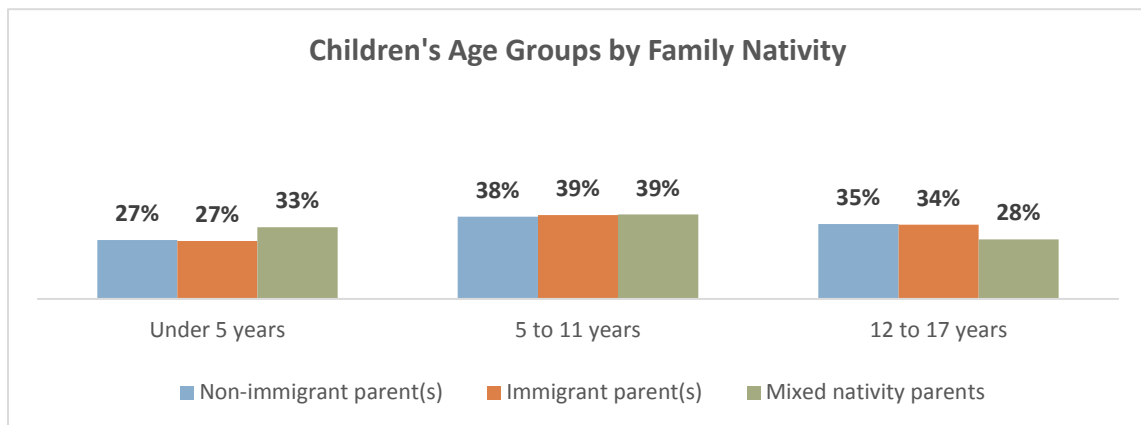
Most of New York's children (64%) tend to live in families with parents who are non-immigrants but about one in three children have at least one parent who is foreign born (36%).ⁱⁱⁱ



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Age

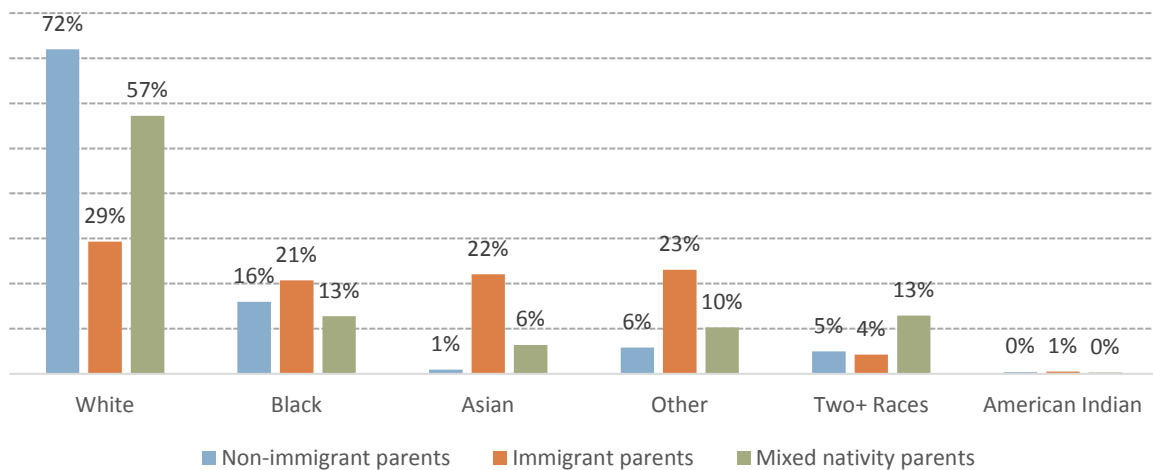
There is considerable consistency in the portion of children in each age group when comparing children in immigrant and non-immigrant families. A modest difference is observed among children with mixed nativity parents in that the youngest and oldest age categories tend to be the inverse of their peers where there is a higher percentage of children in the youngest age group among children in mixed nativity families.



Race

More racial diversity is observed among children in immigrant families than among their peers who have non-immigrant parents or parents with mixed nativity. White children are 2.5 times more likely to live in non-immigrant families compared to children in immigrant families. Asian children are about 22 times more likely to live in immigrant families than non-immigrant families. Children in mixed nativity families are more than twice as likely to identify with two or more races compared to children in immigrant or non-immigrant families.

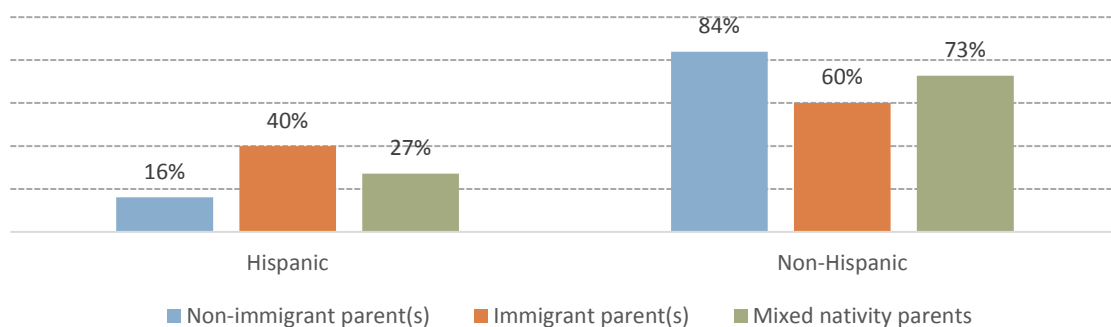
Children's Race by Family Nativity



Hispanic Ethnicity

Children living in families where both parents are immigrants are more likely to be Hispanic than children with non-immigrant parent(s) or children whose parents have mixed nativity (2.5 times and 1.5 times respectively).

Children's Hispanic Ethnicity by Family Nativity

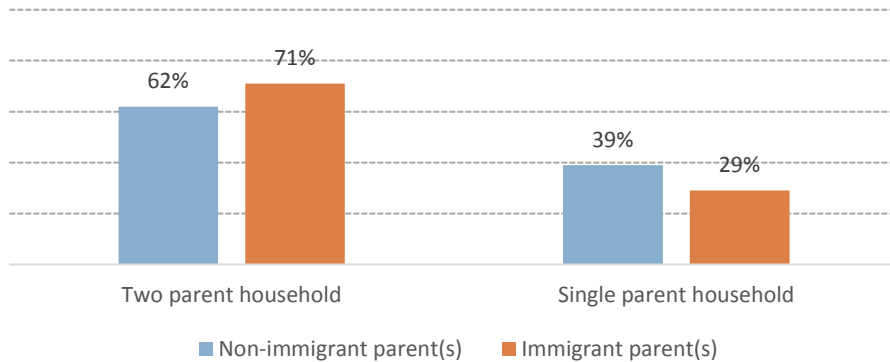


FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

Household Type

About six in ten children in non-immigrant families live in two parent households compared to seven in ten of their immigrant peers.

Household Type by Family Nativity

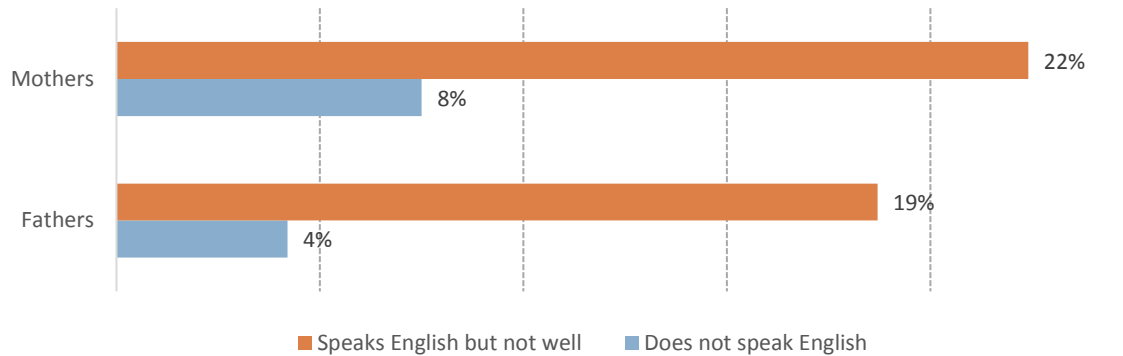


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Language Spoken

Spanish tends to be the most commonly spoken language among immigrant parents and many immigrant parents have mastered English as a second language. However, three in ten children (30%) have mothers with limited or no ability to speak English and about one in four (23%) have fathers with similar language skills. Immigrant mothers are less likely than immigrant fathers to work outside the home and this factor may influence their acquisition of English language skills. Approximately 243,000 students were enrolled in English language learner programs across the state during the 2017/18 school year.

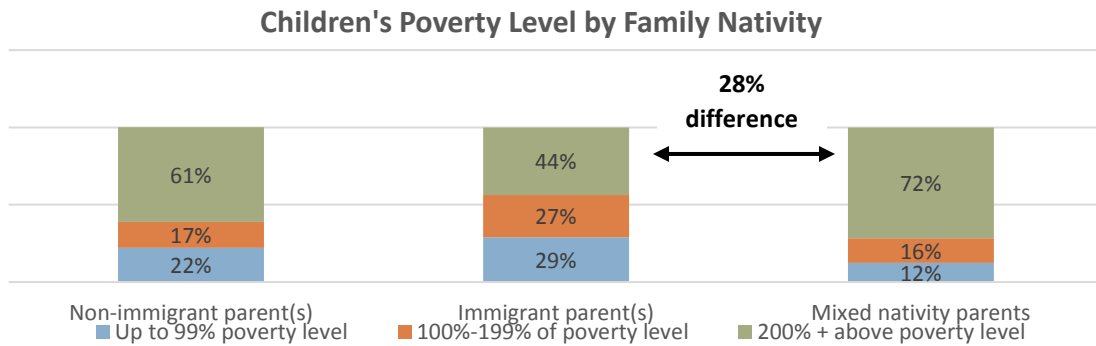
Limited or No Ability to Speak English Among Parents



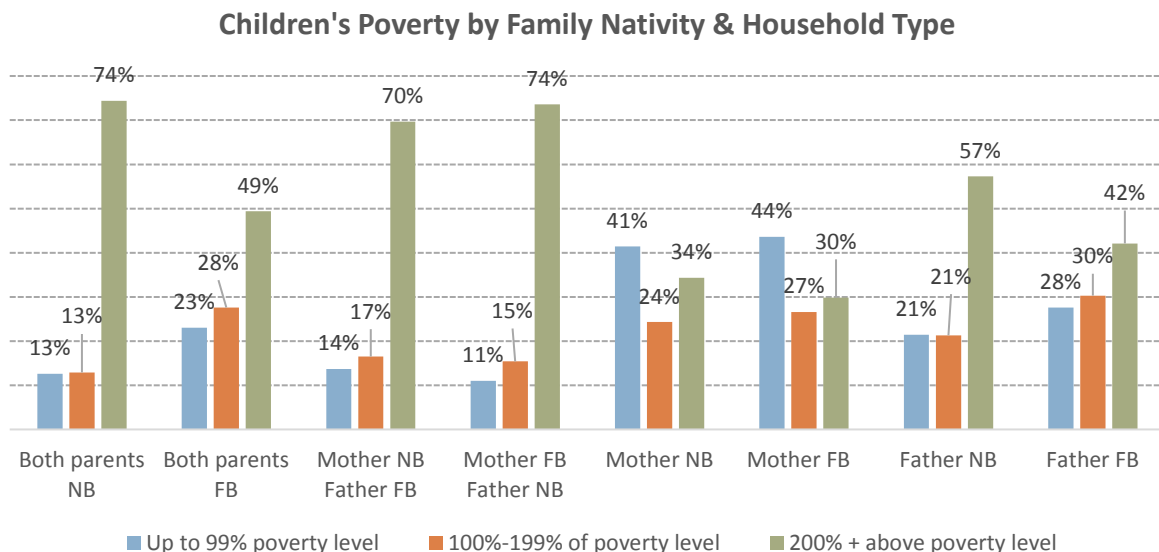
ECONOMIC SECURITY

Levels of Poverty

Children living in mixed nativity families have the greatest economic security with 72 percent living at or above 200 percent of the poverty level. This is reduced substantially to 44 percent when we look at children living with immigrant parent(s). The 28-percentage gap between children with immigrant parents and those with mixed nativity parents is an example of what may be missed when we use a broad definition of children in immigrant families (i.e., combining foreign and mixed nativity families).



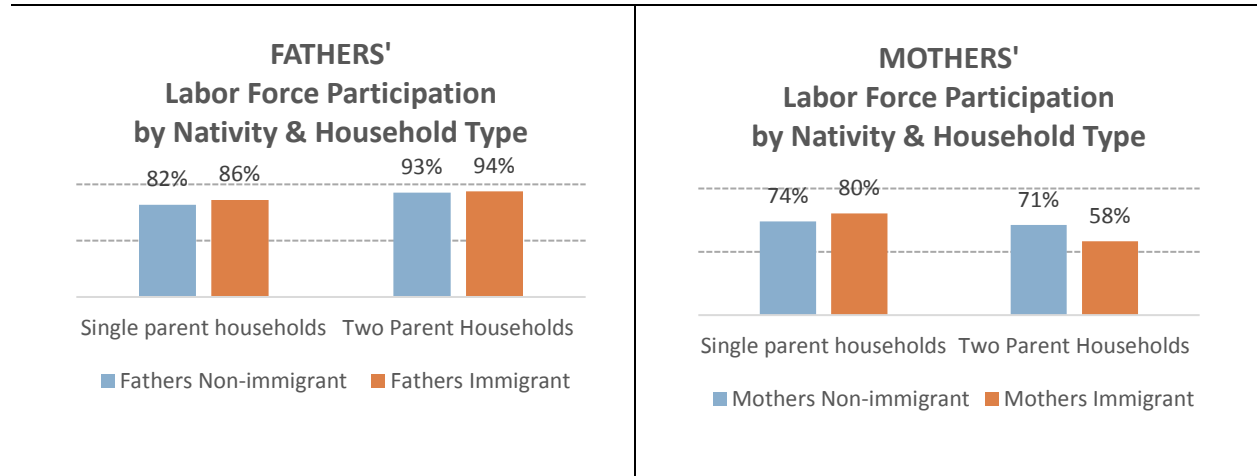
Further analyses highlight the role of household type in a family's economic security. Children in single-parent households are more likely to live in families that are 200 percent below the poverty level and this is compounded when they live in immigrant families. The 15-percent nativity gap between non-immigrant and immigrant father-headed households is noteworthy (43% vs. 58%). Among female-headed households, there is a modest four percent nativity gap between non-immigrant and immigrant mothers. However, the percent of children living 200 percent below the poverty level, *regardless of nativity*, is markedly higher than any other group of children reaching 65 percent of children in non-immigrant female households and 71 percent of children in immigrant female households.



NB refers to native born, non-immigrant parent; FB refers to foreign born, immigrant parent

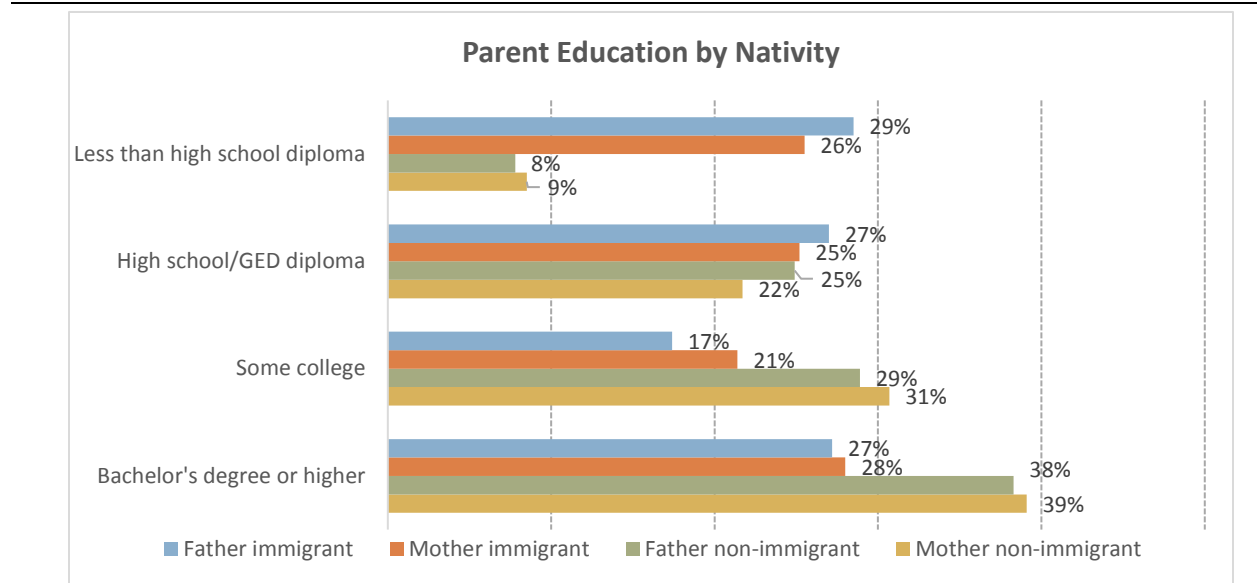
Parent Participation in Labor Force

The patterns viewed among fathers' labor force participation tends to vary more by household type than immigrant status, with fathers in single parent households having lower labor force participation rates. The largest gap is seen among children in two-parent households with immigrant mothers – about six in ten (58%) of children have mothers in the workforce, which is the lowest labor force segment.



EDUCATION

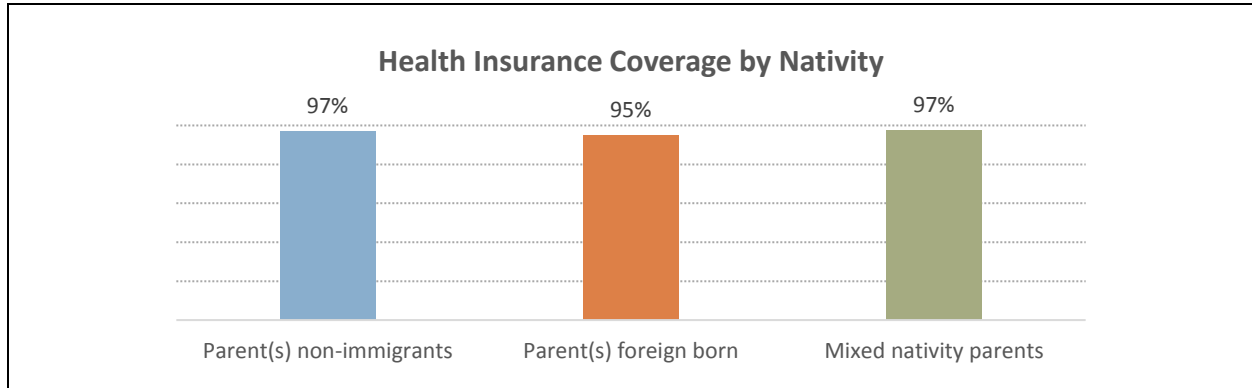
A striking difference is observed among the portion of parents with less than a high school diploma. Immigrant fathers are 3.6 times more likely to lack a high school diploma compared to non-immigrant fathers. Similarly, immigrant mothers are 2.9 times more likely than their non-immigrant peers to have this level of education. Educational attainment is most homogenous within the high school/GED diploma category. There is only a 5-percentage point gap across the portion of children with parents in this category (ranges from 22% to 27%).



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

HEALTH

Children’s access to healthcare is often influenced by whether they have health insurance. Most children in New York, regardless of parent immigrant status, have health insurance. The percentage is the same for children with non-immigrant parents and mixed nativity parents. The percentage drops marginally for children with immigrant parent(s).



FAMILY CITIZENSHIP STATUS

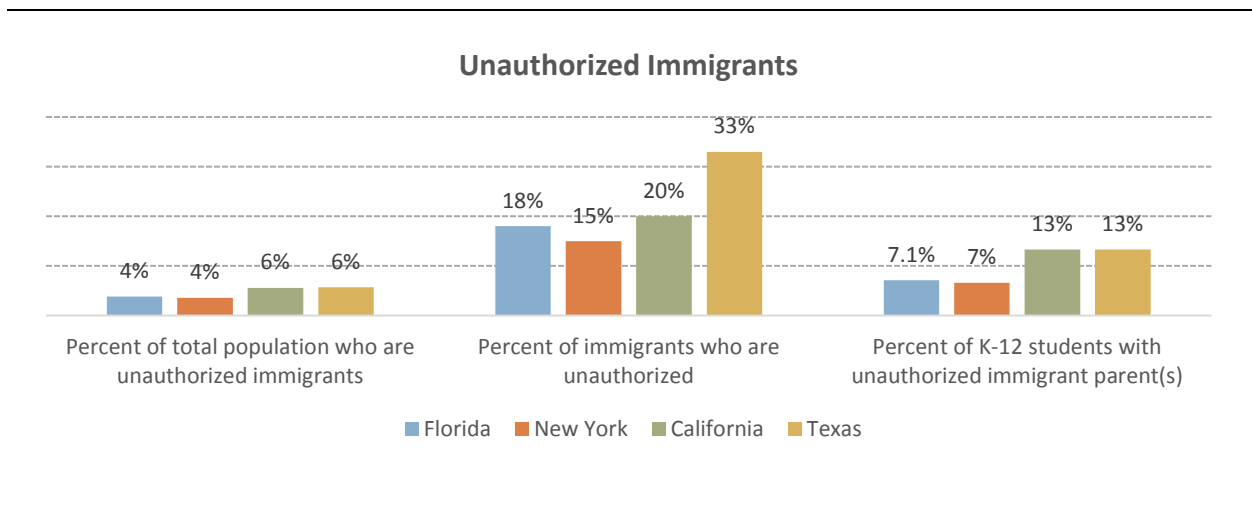
Citizenship Status Among Parents

- One in three fathers (33%) are immigrants with about half of these fathers (51%) naturalized citizens.
- About one in three mothers (32%) are immigrants and, again, about half (49%) are naturalized citizens.

Citizenship Status Among Children

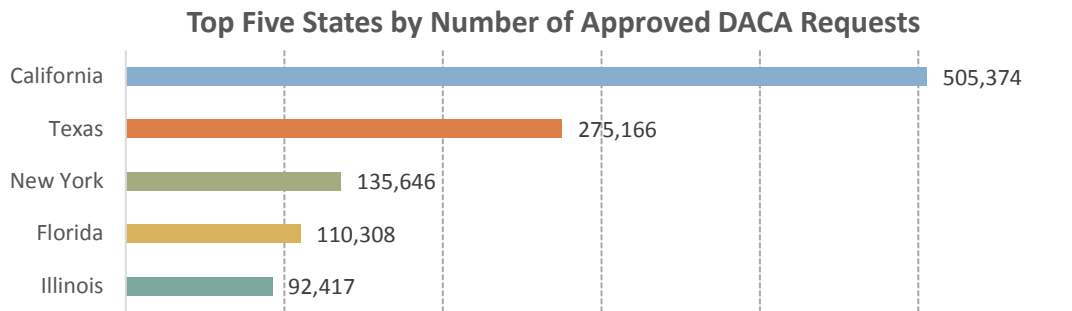
- 5 percent of New York’s children are immigrants and 3x percent are naturalized citizens.

The issue of unauthorized immigrants is often raised in discussions of immigrant families. New York ranks 45th in the U.S. with respect to the portion of immigrants who are unauthorized; about four in 100 immigrants (3.6%) are identified as such. With respect to children, about seven in 100 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade (6.6%) have unauthorized parent(s).



Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients

New York ranks third in the U.S. with respect to the number of approved DACA requests. California has about 3.7 times more approved DACA requests than New York. New York accounts for about six percent of the 2 million U.S. approved DACA requests.



Source: Department of Homeland Security; US Citizenship and Immigration Services data current as of November, 2018

Immigrants eligible for the American Dream and Promise Act contribute steadily to the state economy. Specifically, eligible immigrants and their households contribute approximately \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes each year while these households generate about \$6 billion in spending power.^{iv}

RESOURCES

Education

Education remains a steadfast agent for social mobility and success in the U.S.. Immigrant families recognize this and value opportunities that provide their children access to quality education programs from early education through higher education.

Early Learning

- *Creating Safe Space Policies* – Early learning programs play a key role in helping children in immigrant families. These programs also support parents as parents become familiar with their newly adopted country. Early care providers are frequently cited as highly trusted sources of information for parents. The CLASP [Guide to Creating ‘Safe Space’ Policies for Early Childhood Programs](#) outlines steps providers can take to support immigrant parents and their young children.

Public Schools

- *Rights of Undocumented Students* – All students over five and under 21 years of age who have not received a high school diploma are entitled to attend public school, regardless of immigration status. New York State Education Department (NYSED) [Guidelines](#) on the rights of undocumented students are available in 27 languages.
- *English Language Learner Accommodations* – New York has about 243,000 English language learners (ELL) enrolled in public schools across the state. NYSED has identified various accommodations that can be used to help ELL students complete annual state exams. For example, ELL students may have time extensions and tests may be administered to them individually or in small groups. Detailed guidelines are available on the [NYSED website](#).

Higher Education

- *DACA Students' Access to College Financial Aid & Scholarships* – In early 2019, the New York State Legislature passed a bill to provide undocumented students access to state financial aid and scholarships. This affects approximately 146,000 young people who had been ineligible to receive assistance that would help them with college expenses.^v
- *Scholarships* – Students who may pursue higher education with the State University of New York can review [frequently asked questions](#). Additional resources are below.
 - [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund \(MALDEF\) Scholarship Resource Guide 2017 – 2018](#)
 - [Educators for Fair Consideration \(E4FC\) Scholarship List](#)
 - [Golden Door Scholars](#)

Health

Access to healthcare is fundamental to children's well-being and healthy development. Insurance coverage increases the likelihood families will attend well-child visits and seek medical care when needed.

- *Children's Health Insurance* – Children under 19 years old in low-income families can get free health insurance, regardless of their immigration status. Parents can enroll their children through the New York State of Health Marketplace by calling 855.355.5777 or enrolling [online](#). Parents can use the [NY State of Health Directory](#) to find a Navigator in their community who speaks their language.

Community

A sense of belonging is fundamental to community assimilation.

- *Liberty Defense Fund* – Any immigrant that needs free legal assistance is urged to call the New Americans Hotline at 800.566.7636. All call information is confidential. Assistance is available in over 200 languages.
- *NaturalizeNY* – Fees needed to cover the naturalization process can be expensive. Since 2016, costs for more than 1,600 low-income immigrants have been covered through NaturalizeNY. Eligible applicants are entered in a lottery for a voucher to cover the \$725 naturalization application fee. NaturalizeNY, via Governor Cuomo's Office for New Americans, also provides free comprehensive support through the naturalization process, including eligibility screenings, application assistance, naturalization exam preparation, and federal fee waiver application assistance. The program offered vouchers to 768 eligible applicants in 2018.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Quote by Gov. Andrew Cuomo; excerpt from the June 16, 2017 New York Daily News Op-Ed.

ⁱⁱ Data accessed from [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Tables represent analysis of data by Council staff unless indicated otherwise. Data source is [IPUMS-USA](#), 2011-2015 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

^{iv} Svajlenka, N.P. (May 28, 2019). New York: The American Dream and Promise Act of 2019. Center for American Progress. Accessed <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2019/05/24061446/New-York.pdf>

^v NYS Times, Dream Act is Approved in NY to aid undocumented students, in rebuke to Trump, Jan. 23, 2019, Christina Goldbaum.