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## **New Study Examines California's Immigrants** *Poverty and High Welfare Usage Prevalent on State and National Levels*

**WASHINGTON, DC (August 8, 2012)** – A new report from the Center for Immigration Studies provides a detailed picture of immigrants (legal and illegal) in the United States and in California. Using the latest Census Bureau data from 2010 and 2011, the study shows California's immigrant population as one of the poorest and least educated of the top immigrant receiving states. While having the nation's largest immigrant population, the pace of growth in the state slowed significantly in the last decade.

"There is considerable concern in this country about issues like poverty and the large uninsured population. But what has generally not been acknowledged is the impact of immigration on these problems," notes Steven Camarota, the Center's Director of Research. "Absent a change in policy, 11 to 15 million new immigrants are likely to settle in this country in the next decade and may further exacerbate present problems."

The report is online at <http://cis.org/2012-profile-of-americas-foreign-born-population>.

### **California's Immigrants:**

California immigrant population (legal and illegal) grew 15 percent (1.3 million) from 2000 to 2010. Nationally the immigrant population grew 28 percent over the same period. (Table 2, pg. 15)

Immigrants accounted for 27 percent of California residents in 2010, by far the largest share of any state. Immigrants are 34 percent of workers in the state. (Table 1, pg. 14 & Table 35, pg. 68)

Of California immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18), 22 percent live in poverty compared to 12 percent of natives and their children. (Table 30, pg.61)

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18) account for 37 percent of the state's overall population and 51 percent of all persons in poverty. (Table 32, pg. 63)

Of California immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18), 28 percent lack health insurance, compared to 15 percent of natives and their children (under 18). Immigrants and their children account for 52 percent of those without insurance in the state. (Tables 31 & 32, pgs. 62-63)

Of households headed by immigrants in California, 42 percent used at least one major welfare program, primarily food assistance and Medical, compared to 21 percent of native-headed households. (Table 33, pg. 65)

California immigrants' home ownership rate is 48 percent, compared to 59 percent for natives. (Table 29, pg. 59)

The lower socio-economic status of California's immigrants is not because most are recent arrivals. Their average length of residence in the United States is 21 years. (Table 1, pg. 14)

One of the primary reasons so many immigrants in the state are poor and access the welfare system is a large share arrive in the U.S. as adults with relatively modest levels of education.

Of adult immigrants (25 to 65) in the state 36 percent have not completed high school, compared to 6 percent of natives. (Table 34, pg. 66)

The share of immigrants in the state with at least a bachelor's degree is 26 percent compared to 37 percent for natives. . (Table 34, pg. 66)

In 2010, nearly half of students in California public schools were from immigrant households. Overall, about half of public school students in the state speak a language other than English at home. (Tables A3 & A4, pgs. 87-88)

### **Illegal Immigrants in California:**

Our best estimate is that about one-fourth of California's immigrants are in the country illegally. Illegal immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18) account for 10 percent of the state's overall population, 18 percent those in poverty, 25 percent of the uninsured and 14 percent of the school age population, 5 to 17 years of age. (Tables 36, 37, 38 and 40, pgs. 70-74).

### **National Figures:**

The number of immigrants (legal & illegal) in the country hit a new record of 40 million in 2010, a 28 percent increase over the total in 2000. (Table 2, pg. 15)

Immigrants (legal and illegal) account for 16 percent of all workers in the country. (Table 35, pg. 68)

In 2010, 23 percent of immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18) lived in poverty, compared to 13.5 percent of natives and their children. (Table 10, pg. 27)

Immigrants and their children accounted for one-fourth of all persons in poverty in the United States. (pg. 26)

Immigrants make significant progress the longer they live in the country. However, even immigrants who have lived in the United States for 20 years have not come close to closing the gap with natives. (Figure 5, pg. 46, pgs. 42-49).

\*The poverty rate of adult immigrants who have lived in the United States for 20 years is 50 percent higher than that of adult natives. (Figure 5, pg. 46).

\*The share of households headed by an immigrant who has lived in the United States for 20 years using one or more welfare programs is nearly twice that of native-headed households. (Figure 5, pg. 46).

\*The share of households headed by an immigrant who has lived in the United States for 20 years that are owner occupied is 22 percent lower than that of native households. (Figure 5, pg. 46).

**Data Source** The data for this backgrounder comes primarily from the public use files of the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS), and the March 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS). State specific information comes from a combined sample of the March 2010 and 2011 CPS as well as the 2010 ACS. In this report, the terms foreign born and immigrant are used synonymously. Immigrants are persons living in the United States who were not American citizens at birth. This includes naturalized American citizens, legal permanent residents (green card holders), illegal immigrants, and people on long-term temporary visas such as foreign students or guest workers.

The **Center for Immigration Studies** is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit, research organization. Since its founding in 1985, the Center has pursued a single mission – providing immigration policymakers, the academic community, news media, and concerned citizens with reliable information about the social, economic, environmental, security, and fiscal consequences of legal and illegal immigration into the United States.

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