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New Study Examines Washington's Immigrants

State's Immigrant Population Grows 44% with Double the Poverty Rate of Natives

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 Washington State. Washington has the nation's 10th largest immigrant population. Using the latest Census Bureau data from 2010 and 2011, the study reveals that the state's immigrants are significantly poorer and less-educated than the native-born population.

"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>.

Washington's Immigrants:

Washington's immigrant population (legal and illegal) grew 44 percent (272,000) from 2000 to 2010. Nationally the immigrant population grew 28 percent over the same period. (Table 2, pg. 15)

Immigrants (legal and illegal) accounted for 13 percent of the state residents in 2010 and 17 percent of workers in the states. (Table 1, pg. 14 & Table 35, pg. 68)

Of Washington immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18), 20 percent live in poverty compared to 10 percent of natives and their children. (Table 30, pg. 61)

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18) account for 18 percent of the state's overall population and 30 percent of all persons in poverty. (Table 32, pg. 63)

Of Washington immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18), 22 percent lack health insurance, compared to 12 percent of natives and their children (under 18). Immigrants and their children account for 29 percent of the state's uninsured. (Tables 31 & 32, pgs. 62-63)

Of households headed by immigrants in Washington, 40 percent used at least one major welfare program, primarily food assistance and Medicaid, compared to 21 percent of native-headed households. (Table 33, pg. 65)

Although they tend to be significantly poorer than natives, homeownership is relatively high among Washington's immigrants (55 percent), compared to 65 percent for natives. (Table 29, pg. 59)

The lower socio-economic status of Washington's immigrants is not because most are recent arrivals. Their average length of residence in the United States is 18 years. (Table 1, pg. 14)

One of the primary reasons immigrants in the state tend to be poor and access welfare programs at high rates is a large share arrive in the U.S. as adults with relatively low levels of education.

Of adult immigrants (25 to 65) in the state 22 percent have not completed high school, compared to 4 percent of natives. (Table 34, pg. 66)

However, the share of immigrants in the state that have a bachelor's degree matches that of natives — 34 percent. (Table 34, pg. 66)

In 2010, 23 percent of public school students in New York were from immigrant households. Overall, 23 percent of public students in the state speak a language other than English at home. (Tables A3 & A4, pgs. 87-88)

Illegal Immigrants in Washington:

Our best estimate is that 40 percent of Washington immigrants are in the country illegally. Illegal immigrants and their U.S.-born children (under 18) account for 7 percent of the state's overall population, 12 percent those in poverty, 18 percent of the uninsured and 9 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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