Backgrounder

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Illegitimate Nation
An Examination of Out-of-Wedlock Births Among Immigrants and Natives

By Steven A. Camarota

The argument is often made that immigrants have a stronger commitment to traditional family values than do native-born Americans. However, birth records show that about one-third of births to both groups are now to unmarried parents. Moreover, unmarried immigrants are significantly more likely than unmarried natives to give birth. Illegitimacy may be especially problematic for children of immigrants because they need strong families to adjust to life in America.

• Both immigrants and natives have seen a dramatic increase in out-of-wedlock births, from 13 percent in 1980 for immigrants (legal and illegal) to 32 percent in 2003 and from 19 percent to 35 percent for natives over the same period.

• This modest difference disappears when teenagers, who have the highest illegitimacy levels, are excluded. There are relatively few immigrant teenagers because immigrants tend to arrive when they are older. Without teenagers, the rate is about 30 percent for both immigrants and natives.

• Hispanic immigrants have seen the largest increase in out-of-wedlock births — from 19 percent of births in 1980 to 42 percent in 2003. This is important because Hispanics account for nearly 60 percent of all births to immigrants.

• In addition to the 42 percent rate for Hispanic immigrants, the illegitimacy rate is now 39 percent for black immigrants, 11 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 12 percent for white immigrants.

• There's no indication of improvement over the generations. Among natives, the illegitimacy rate is 50 percent for Hispanics; 30 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 24 percent for whites.

• 2003 is the first time that the absolute number of illegitimate births to Hispanics (immigrant and native) outnumbered illegitimate births to blacks (immigrant and native).

• The illegitimate children of immigrants also often have to overcome their parents' low education levels. In 2003, 56 percent of illegitimate births to immigrants were to mothers without a high school diploma; for natives the rate was 33 percent. It was 65 percent for Hispanic immigrants.

• Out-of-wedlock births are highest for those with the least education; among immigrant mothers who lack a high school diploma, 45 percent of births are illegitimate.

• Illegitimacy also can be measured by the share of unmarried women who give birth. One out of every 12 unmarried immigrant women had a baby in 2003; for natives it was one out of 25. For Hispanic immigrants it was one in seven.

• The country is currently debating whether to legalize illegal aliens or alternatively, to enforce the law and cause them to go home. Since 60 percent of illegals lack a high school diploma and 80 percent are Hispanic, legalization could contribute to the illegitimacy problem by allowing illegals to remain in the United States.

• There is no evidence that illegitimacy is related to legal status. Illegitimacy is common in many immigrant-sending counties. According to the UN, in Mexico and Canada the illegitimacy rate is 38 percent; in El Salvador it's 73 percent; and it's 86 percent in Jamaica.

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- The high rate of illegitimacy for Hispanic immigrants also seems unrelated to legal status, because only one-fifth of non-Mexican Hispanic immigrants are illegal aliens, yet their illegitimacy rate is 45 percent. This compares to 41 percent for Mexican immigrants, fully half of whom are illegal.

- The high levels of out-of-wedlock births among native-born Hispanics also suggest that cultural factors play a significant role in explaining high illegitimacy in that group.

- Another reason to think illegitimacy is more related to culture than legal status is that college-educated Hispanic immigrants, only a small share of whom are illegal, still have triple the rate of illegitimacy as college educated natives.

- Birth records used in this study count all births, unlike Census Bureau data that are likely to miss some poor and less-educated immigrants, who have the highest illegitimacy. Thus Census Bureau data tend to understate family problems among immigrants. Also they do not report illegitimacy.

- Looking at family structure with Census Bureau data shows that 75 percent of the U.S.-born children of immigrants live in households headed by a married person, compared to 70 percent for natives. It's 70 percent for Hispanic immigrants and 79 percent for white natives.

- Among teenagers, who are at the greatest risk for getting into trouble, there is less difference — 70 percent of U.S.-born teenagers with immigrant parents live in unmarried households, compared to 68 percent for those with native parents.

- Like the birth records, the Census Bureau data show that neither immigrants nor natives can be said to be exemplary when it comes to marriage and children.

- A large body of research shows that children born to unmarried parents are at risk for a host of social problems, including high rates of poverty and incarceration, low academic achievement, and becoming unmarried parents themselves.

- The high level of illegitimacy among natives, particularly African Americans, has been a concern for several decades. The rise in out-of-wedlock births among immigrants, especially Hispanics, is a newer phenomenon, which could have significant implications for the integration and social mobility of these children.

- Our efforts to strengthen families must now take into account the impact of immigration on this growing national problem.

Introduction

Among supporters of high immigration it is very common to argue that immigrants are especially committed to family. President Bush has repeatedly pointed out that "family values do not stop at the Rio Grande" and that one of the important traits of Mexican and Hispanic immigrants more generally is their "love of family."[1] Other advocates of high immigration make the case that, "immigrants bring to our country strong family structures and strong morals."[2] In fact, it is common to find writers who argue that immigrants have "a stronger sense of family" than Anglo-Americans.[3] Are such assertions about the foreign-born correct? (We use the term immigrant and foreign-born synonymously in this report.)

In an often-cited 1993 article for *Commentary* magazine, Francis Fukuyama examines the issue of immigrants and what is generally referred to as "family

values."[4] Fukuyama offers a more in-depth understanding of the issue than do many other authors. Still, he feels immigrant family structure is strong and that, "the breakdown of traditional family structures, from extended to nuclear, has long been understood to be a disease of advanced industrial countries and not of nations just emerging from their agricultural pasts." Data on out-of-wedlock births collected by the United Nations does not entirely support this conclusion. As we will see, illegitimacy is common in much of Latin America. But he is certainly correct when he argues that whatever the breakdown of traditional families in immigrant communities, it will not somehow inspire natives to engage in the same behavior. Of course, this is not really the worry of those concerned about family breakdown among immigrants, particularly Hispanics. Instead, the concern is that they will add to a growing problem. That is, chil-

dren of immigrants born to unmarried parents will be at higher risk for low academic achievement, criminality, weak attachment to the labor force, high use of welfare, and all the other social problems that illegitimate children are at higher risk to experience.

The problems may be worse for illegitimate children with foreign-born parents because, as Boston College political scientist Peter Skerry has pointed out, "A virtual truism of the immigration literature is that the real challenges to the receiving society arise not with the relatively content first generation, who compare their situation with what was left behind, but with the second and third generations, whose much higher expectations reflect their upbringing in their parents' adopted home."[5] In his 1979 book *Birds of Passage*, Michael Piore traces the labor unrest of the great depression to the children of European immigrants. Children of immigrants are often caught between two worlds, torn between their parents' culture and that of the country of their birth. They have traditionally relied on strong family to help them navigate life in their parents' adopted country. If a large share of these children now have to also adjust to life in single-parent households, then the problems they face could be substantial. Being born to parents who are immigrants and unmarried may make for steep odds when it comes to joining the American mainstream.

For his part, Fukuyama recognizes that family coherence is much greater for Asian immigrants than for Hispanic immigrants. Nevertheless, he still argues that Hispanic immigrants will infuse the country with badly needed traditional family values. He states that, "the evidence suggests that most Latin American immigrants may be a source of strength with regard to family values, and not a liability."[5] If anything, his views have gotten stronger since 1993. In 2004, he argued that, "Hispanic immigrants will help to reinforce certain cultural values like the emphasis on family."[6] While his argument is more nuanced than others', Fukuyama does clearly feel that one of the benefits of immigration is immigrants' stronger commitment to traditional families. The question remains, however: Are Fukyama and other high immigration advocates right? Do immigrants have stronger families? Or put a different way, is one of the benefits of immigration that it will infuse the country with traditional family values? To be sure, the debate over immigration does not rest solely on immigrant commitment to family. Nonetheless it is a very important issue. To explore this question we focus on one of the most troubling family trends in American society — rising illegitimacy.

Why Study Illegitimacy?

The Consequences of Illegitimacy. The pejorative term "bastard" used historically to described the children of unmarried parents was not only an indication of societies' disapproval of the circumstances of their birth, but also reflected the general sense that such children often engaged in socially unapproved behavior once grown. In America, the growing problem of illegitimacy and family breakdown has concerned policy makers, researchers, and the public for more than half a century. At least as far back as Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," researchers have been concerned about the growth of out-of-wedlock births and the consequences for the children themselves and the larger society. Since then, a large body of evidence has accumulated showing that children born to unmarried parents suffer from a host of social problems.

Research shows that children of unmarried parents are much more likely to live in poverty, have low academic achievement, and have higher high school dropout rates than those born to married parents. Run-ins with the law, drug use, and incarceration are all more common among children born to unmarried parents. Welfare use is also significantly higher for families with illegitimate children. Infants born out of wedlock suffer higher mortaly rates. Illegitimate children have been found to suffer from more-difficult-to-measure problems such as low levels of self esteem and self worth. Finally, children of unmarried parents are themselves at higher risk for being unmarried parents when they reach adulthood. One of the most important and troubling findings by researchers is that being born out of wedlock increases the chances of negative social outcomes for children even after controlling for income, race, and other social factors. Illegitimacy is clearly a problem for both those born to unmarried parents and for the larger society.[7]

Of course, illegitimacy is only one measure of commitment to traditional values and family cohesion. But it is clearly one of the most important. Moreover, it is a measure of family cohesion that can be easily and reliably measured over time. Most of the data collected by the Census Bureau to study the foreign-born include some undetermined level of undercount. Those missed tend to have the lowest incomes and education levels, and thus are more likely to be single parents. In contrast, the government is confident that more than 99 percent of births are recorded in the United States.[8] Thus birth records are an ideal data source for evaluating whether immigrants are uniquely committed to traditional marriage and child rearing because these data do not suffer from the undercount problem.

Dealing with the Problem of Illegitimacy. Given all the difficulties associated with illegitimacy, it is important to understand the extent of the problem in immigrant communities. There are a few government and non-governmental initiatives designed to reduce births to unmarried parents. Such programs may need to be redesigned so that they are more effective at reaching immigrants. In addition to preventing unmarried births, other programs are designed to help children born to unmarried parents. If we simply embrace the stereotype of immigrants being largely immune to this problem, private and governmental efforts may fail to serve immigrant communities. Thus, examining illegitimacy among immigrants is an absolute prerequisite both for efforts to combat the problem and to help illegitimate children.

Illegitimacy and Immigration Policy. The share of children born to immigrants who are unmarried may have direct bearing on immigration policy. While selecting immigrants based on their country is neither desirable nor politically likely, other selection criteria, such as education, could be used that might significantly lower the number of immigrants who are likely to have illegitimate children in the future. If we think illegitimacy is a problem, and we find that educated immigrants are much less likely to have a child out of wedlock, then selecting legal immigrants based on education could greatly reduce its prevalence among future immigrants. Enforcing immigration laws may also reduce the number of less-educated immigrants in the country, and this too could reduce illegitimacy. But only by studying the problem among immigrants can we see what changes in immigration law might be useful in reducing births to unmarried immigrants.

Methodology

Data. The primary data for this study come from birth certificates registered in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), which compiles the data, reports that more than 99 percent of births occurring in this country are registered.[9] In contrast to data collected by the Census Bureau, NCHS data include births to all illegal aliens and other difficult-to-count segments of the population. The 1980 and 2003 public use natility files used for this study include all births in the United States (over four million in 2003) and are not samples. However, the 1980 public use file includes 100 percent data for all but seven states, which provided NCHS with 50 percent samples.[10] All figures in this report are for births

occurring within the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Information about the mother's current place of residence, race, age, and education level, as well as other information, are available in the public use file for all mothers.

In most of its published reports, the NCHS does not include births to mothers who indicated that they reside outside of the United States. We follow the government's example and count births that took place in the 50 states and the District of Columbia to mothers who live in the United States. All births in the public use file in 2003 reported whether the mother was married or not at the time she gave birth.[11] The 1980 data are a good point of comparison because that was one of the first years in which all states asked about marital status. Most NCHS longitudinal data on illegitimate births use 1980 as a starting point. Throughout this report we use the terms unmarried births, illegitimate births, and out-of-wedlock births interchangeably.

As a point of comparison, later in this study we also examine data collected in 2003 by the Census Bureau, including both the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS). These are two of the most common data sources used by immigration researchers because they include a question on whether a person is foreign- or native-born.

Foreign-Born Mothers. We follow the NCHS and define foreign-born or immigrant mothers as those born outside of the United States.[12] However, unlike the NCHS, we do not include births to mothers who themselves were born in the outlying territories of the United States, such as Puerto Rico, as immigrants. Although the NCHS considers these mothers foreign-born, and includes them in statistics for the foreign-born (including those on marriage), the Census Bureau considers persons born in outlying territories as natives. Because persons from outlying territories tend to have high rates of illegitimacy, our not counting them with the foreign-born, as the NCHS does, reduces the illegitimacy rate among immigrants slightly. While both NCHS and the Census Bureau can make a reasonable case for their approach, these mothers account for well less than 1 percent of births, so excluding them makes little difference to the analysis. Moreover, mothers from outlying territories are not technically immigrants, and so they have little bearing on immigration policy.[13]

What About Immigrant Fathers? The natility data used in this study do not include a question about the father's country of birth, so there is no way to say what share of births to foreign-born mothers are also to foreign-born

fathers. However the Current Population Survey (CPS) collected by the Census Bureau does ask this question, though the sample size is relatively small, and unlike the natality data there is some undercount in the CPS. Recent surveys indicate that about 84 percent of children born to foreign-born mothers also have immigrant fathers. If adjusted for undercount in the CPS, then it seems likely that 85 or 86 percent of births to immigrant mothers are also to immigrant fathers.
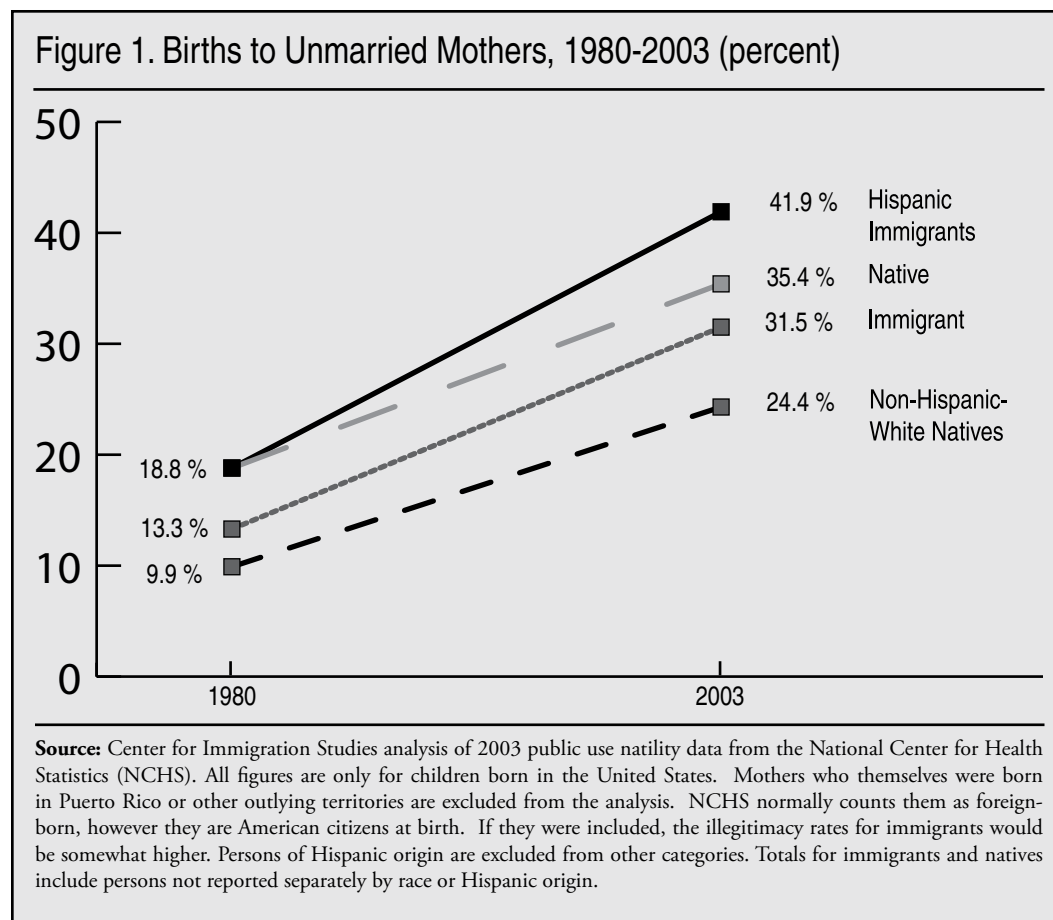
Findings

Illegitimacy 1980 to 2003. Figure 1 reports the share of births to immigrants and natives based on whether the mother was unmarried. It also reports the illegitimate births for the two largest groups within each category — Hispanics for immigrants and non-Hispanic whites for natives. In 1980, 18.8 percent of births to native-born mothers were illegitimate, compared to 13.3 percent of births to foreign-born mothers — a 5.5 percentage-point difference. By 2003, it had grown dramatically for both groups, to 35.4 percent for natives and 31.5 percent for the foreign-born — a 3.9 percentage-point difference. Overall, these figures indicate that the differences between immigrants and natives were never that large to

begin with. And what differences there are seem to be disappearing. At least with regard to the birth data, it is hard to find strong evidence that immigration is going to strengthen traditional family values. With roughly a third of births to both groups being illegitimate in 2003, the problem of illegitimacy is now extremely common among immigrants and natives alike. It may be worth noting that if mothers born in Puerto Rico or other outlying areas are counted with immigrants, as the NCHS does, then the percent for immigrants would be slightly higher at 32 percent rather than the 31.5 shown in Figure 1.

Slow Convergence. As indicated at the outset of this report, we use 1980 data because that is the first time all states asked about martial status and whether the mother was foreign-born on birth certificates. We use 2003 data because that is the most recent year for which public data are available. However, it certainly is possible to look at other years. Doing so generally shows a slow convergence among immigrants and natives in the intervening years. In 1995, for example, the share of immigrant births to unmarried parents was 28.4 percent, compared to 32.8 for natives, a 4.4 percentage-point difference. This is a smaller difference than the 5.5 percentage in 1980, but

larger than the 3.9 percentage found in 2003. It seems likely that in the years to come the modest differences in illegitimacy that exist between the two groups will continue to narrow.

Hispanic Immigrants. Figure 1 also shows that, for Hispanic immigrants, illegitimacy has increased more than it has for natives or immigrants generally. In 1980 the rates matched those of natives (18.8 percent); in 2003 they were a good deal higher at 41.9 percent.

Figure 1. Births to Unmarried Mothers, 1980-2003 (percent)

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natality data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). All figures are only for children born in the United States. Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. NCHS normally counts them as foreign-born, however they are American citizens at birth. If they were included, the illegitimacy rates for immigrants would be somewhat higher. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories. Totals for immigrants and natives include persons not reported separately by race or Hispanic origin.

The situation among Hispanics is certainly important because they now account for 59 percent of all births to foreign-born mothers. How the children of Hispanic immigrants fare is one of the most critically important questions we face as a nation with regard to the integration of children from immigrant families. The birth data indicate that a very large share of these children are starting life at a significant social disadvantage.

This disadvantage is especially pronounced in comparison to the children of non-Hispanic white natives. Figure 1 shows that 24.4 percent of non-Hispanic white children were born to unmarried parents in 2003. Adapting to life in their parents' adopted home country is often a significant challenge for children from immigrant families. But the birth data show that in comparison to whites (the largest group in the United States) the children of Hispanic immigrants are much less likely to be born to married parents. In fact, the gap with whites has gotten larger. In 1980, Figure 1 shows, 8.9 percentage points separated immigrant Hispanics from native-born whites in 1980; in 2003 17.6 percentage points separated the two groups. However, it must be made clear that non-Hispanic white natives, like their Hispanic immigrant counterparts, also have seen a huge increase in unmarried births. In fact, the 24 percent for white natives is as high as the rate for black Americans in

the 1960s that prompted Moynihan to write his report. Figure 1 shows clearly that illegitimacy is a significant problem throughout American society and is not confined to one group. However, it is hard to see from these birth records that Hispanics will be Fukuyama's "source of strength" when it comes to family values.

Immigrants as a Share of Illegitimate Births. Figure 2 shows the share of all illegitimate births to immigrants in 1980 and 2003. In 2003, 21.3 percent of illegitimate births were to unmarried parents, up from just 6.9 percent in 1980. Figure 2 shows that immigrants' share of illegitimate births has grown faster than their share of total population. Immigrants increased their share of the nation's total population from 6.7 percent in 1980 to 13.1 percent in 2003, a 96 percent increase.[14] But their share of illegitimate births increased from 6.9 to 21.3 percent, a 209 percent increase. On the other hand, the overall rate of illegitimacy is not higher because of immigrants. In 2003, roughly 35 percent of U.S. births were illegitimate with or without immigrants. Thus while immigration has significantly increased the number of illegitimate births, the share of all births that are illegitimate is unaffected. The fact that the overall rates are unaffected by immigration can be seen as an indication that immigration is neither strengthening nor weakening "family values."
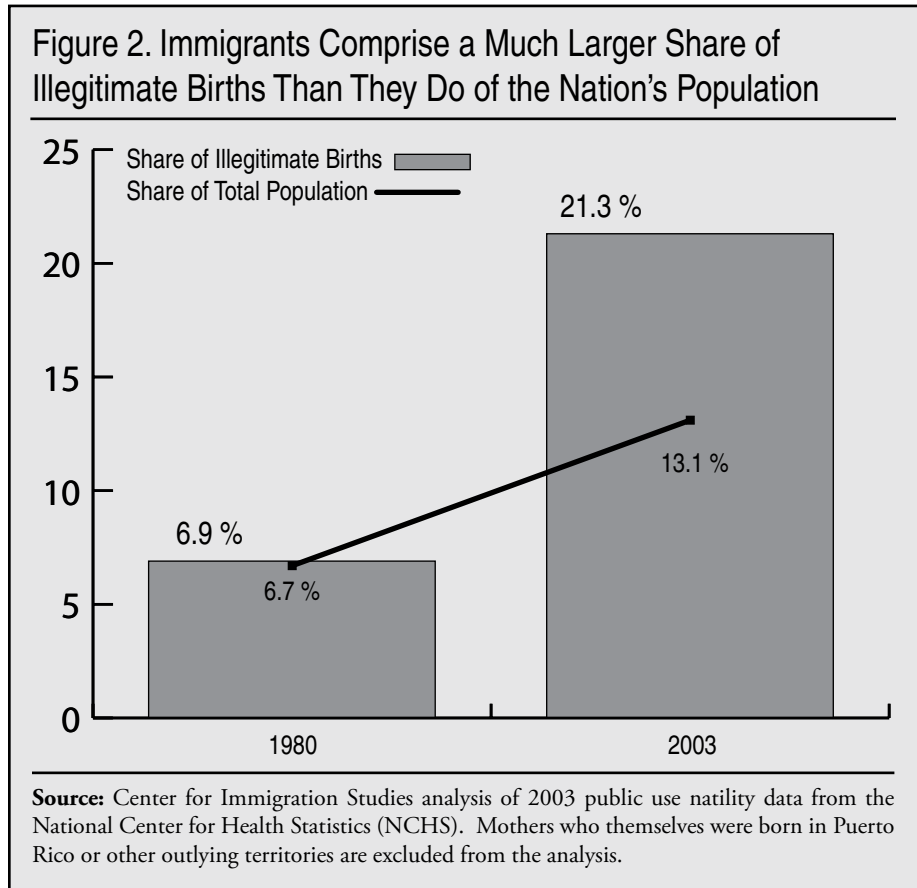
Number of Illegitimate Births to Immigrants. Figure 3 reports the number of unmarried births to immigrants and natives. The figure shows that, numerically, out-of-wedlock births have grown dramatically for both groups, rising from about 45,000 for immigrants in 1980 to almost 300,000 in 2003, a six-fold increase. For natives the increase was from about 600,000 in 1980 to slightly more than 1.1 million in 2003, somewhat less than double. This means that births to immigrants accounted for about one-third of the total national increase in illegitimacy.

And the number of illegitimate births was roughly one-fourth larger in 2003 than it would otherwise have been had it not been for illegitimate births to

Figure 2. Immigrants Comprise a Much Larger Share of Illegitimate Births Than They Do of the Nation's Population

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.

Figure 3. Number of Illegitimate Births to Immigrants and Natives, 1980-2003

Number of Illegitimate Births to Immigrants ■
Number of Illegitimate Births to Natives ▨

Year	Immigrants	Natives
1980	44,764	607,393
2003	298,332	1,105,404

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.

Table 1. Number and Percent of Illegitimate Births for Immigrants and Natives by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1980-2003

	2003		1980	
	Percent Illegitimate	Number Illegitimate	Percent Illegitimate	Number Illegitimate
Immigrants[1]	**31.5 %**	**298,332**	**13.3 %**	**44,764**
Hispanic	41.9 %	234,317	18.8 %	27,243
Non-Hisp. White	11.8 %	16,054	6.3 %	6,583
Non-Hisp. Black	39.4 %	27,815	32.6 %	7,447
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	11.0 %	19,804	4.2 %	2,433
Natives[1]	**35.4 %**	**1,105,404**	**18.8 %**	**607,393**
Hispanic	49.6 %	165,520	25.9 %	36,174
Non-Hisp. White	24.4 %	537,423	9.9 %	248,111
Non-Hisp. Black	72.5 %	368,285	57.5 %	307,390
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	29.9 %	10,146	17.7 %	2,308
Total	**34.5 %**	**1,403,736**	**18.3 %**	**652,157**

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). All figures are only for children born in the United States. Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. NCHS normally counts them as foreign-born, they are American citizens at birth. If they were included, the illegitimacy rates for immigrants would be somewhat higher.

[1] Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories. Totals for immigrants and natives include persons not reported separtely by race or Hispanic origin.

immigrants. Immigration clearly contributed to the growing number of illegitimate births in the United States, but it is also clear that most of the increase occurred among natives. It is probably worth noting that the increase among natives is partly related to immigration, because about one-fourth of the numerical increase in illegitimate births among natives is due to the increase among Hispanic natives. A significant share of native-born Hispanics are the children of recent immigrants, who by 2003 had reached their child-bearing years.

Illegitimacy Among Racial/Ethnic Groups. Table 1 reports detailed figures for different racial groups. It also shows the number of illegitimate births. The figures show that all groups, without exception, have experienced a very significant increase since 1980. This is true even of groups that have low rates of illegitimacy relative to other groups, such as Asian immigrants.

In 1980, only about 4 percent of births to this group were to unmarried parents. By 2003 it had grown to 11 percent. While the share of births to unmarried parents has increased among all groups, very large differences exist between them. For example, among Hispanic immigrants, the 41.9 percent of out-of-wedlock births is dramatically higher than the 11 percent for Asian immigrants. Among natives, the 72.5 percent for blacks is three times the 24.4 percent for non-Hispanic whites.

Impact on the Number of Illegitimate Births. In terms of the growth in the number of illegitimate births among immigrants, Table 1 makes clear that Hispanics account for most of the numerical increase. Between 1980 and 2003, the number of illegitimate births to Hispanic immigrants increased by 207,000 and accounted for 82 percent of the total increase in such births among immigrants. Among natives, 58 percent of the numerical increase has been among non-Hispanic whites, while native-born Hispanics account for 26 percent, and native-born blacks account for 12 percent. As for the growth in the total number of illegitimate births to both natives and immigrants, Hispanics (native and immigrant) account for 45 percent of the national increase in the total number of such births. This can be seen as a large share of the national increase because Hispanics (immigrant and native) accounted for 22 percent of all births in 2003. Again looking at all births, non-Hispanic whites (immigrant and native) account for 34 percent of the national increase and their share of the total number of births was 55 percent in 2003. Because they accounted for a large share of the national increase, Hispanics (immigrant and native) now account for 28.5 percent of all illegitimate births, up from 10 percent in 1980. In fact, 2003 was the first time that the number of unmarried births to all Hispanics (immigrant and native), outnumbered the number of such births to all black Americans (immigrant and native).

No Evidence of Improvement Over Generations. Because it reports illegitimacy for natives and immigrants, Table 1 provides some insight into whether the rates of illegitimate births to immigrants may be only a function of their being foreign-born. The table shows no indication that the problem improves over the generations. Among native-born Hispanics, 49.6 percent of births are now illegitimate; for native-born Asian/Pacific Islanders it is 29.9 percent; and for native-born whites it is 24.4 percent. For every racial/ethnic group, illegitimacy is higher among natives than among the foreign-born. Of course, the native-born mothers in Table 1 are not

the children of current immigrants, but rather the children of immigrants who arrived at least a generation ago. Therefore, there is no way to know for certain if the children born to today's immigrants will follow the pattern of past generations. Nonetheless, the available evidence indicates that there is no reason to believe that the problem will be any better in the next generation. Thus, hoping that the descendants of today's immigrants will somehow strengthen family values seems unfounded.

Illegitimacy by Education Level. Table 2 reports illegitimacy by race/Hispanic origin and education level. Overall, the table shows that education seems to play a significant role in determining whether mothers in both 1980 or 2003 were unmarried. High school dropouts for every racial/ethnic group have much higher levels of illegitimacy than do more educated persons within the same racial/ethnic group. However, the really big change between 1980 and 2003 was among mothers in the middle educational categories. For example, in 1980, 14.3 percent of births to immigrant mothers with only a high degree were out-of-wedlock. In 2003 it was 34.7 percent. The same basic pattern exists for native mothers. In 1980, 16.2 percent of births to native women with only a high school degree were illegitimate, but by 2003 it had jumped all the way to 47.5 percent. College graduates are the one group for whom illegitimacy remains relatively rare. In 2003, only 8 and 6.4 percent of births to immigrant and native college graduates, respectively, were illegitimate. Table 2 shows clearly that the least educated immigrants and natives have high levels of illegitimacy. It should be noted that nearly 40 percent of all births (married and unmarried) to immigrant mothers are to those without a high school diploma. At least with regard to illegitimacy, it is hard to find support for Fukuyama's argument when it comes to immigrants with less than a high school education.

Education Levels and Immigration Policy. In terms of immigration policy, allowing in only college graduates would substantially reduce the number and share of unmarried births to immigrants. Like their native-born counterparts, only immigrants with a college degree have what can be described as low rates of out-of-wedlock births. So if the goal were to select immigrants who are unlikely to have illegitimate children, it would probably mean immigration should be limited to only college graduates or at least only those with some college.

Table 2 sheds light on the issue of illegitimacy among illegal immigrants. The table shows that illegitimacy among immigrant Hispanics does not vary as much by education as it does for natives. This suggests that

Table 2. Illegitimacy by Education Level for Immigrants and Natives

	Percent Illegitimate	
	2003	**1980**
All Immigrants[1]	**31.5 %**	**13.3 %**
>HS	45.4 %	21.0 %
HS only	34.7 %	14.3 %
Some College	23.3 %	10.1 %
4 or More College	8.0 %	5.6 %
Hispanic	41.9 %	18.8 %
>HS	46.6 %	21.0 %
HS only	40.8 %	14.3 %
Some College	31.8 %	10.1 %
4 or More College	17.7 %	5.6 %
Non-Hisp. White	11.8 %	6.3 %
>HS	28.1 %	10.1 %
HS only	16.6 %	5.4 %
Some College	11.7 %	3.6 %
4 or More College	4.7 %	1.6 %
Non-Hisp. Black	39.4 %	32.6 %
>HS	54.1 %	54.0 %
HS only	46.3 %	34.7 %
Some College	39.5 %	26.0 %
4 or More College	20.5 %	9.6 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	11.0 %	4.2 %
>HS	27.4 %	4.9 %
HS only	19.8 %	3.9 %
Some College	12.3 %	2.7 %
4 or More College	3.1 %	1.4 %
All Natives[1]	**35.4 %**	**18.8 %**
>HS	71.9 %	40.6 %
HS only	47.5 %	16.2 %
Some College	29.1 %	9.9 %
4 or More College	6.4 %	2.4 %
Hispanic	49.6 %	25.9 %
>HS	69.4 %	47.5 %
HS only	50.5 %	23.5 %
Some College	36.3 %	16.5 %
4 or More College	13.1 %	7.3 %
Non-Hisp. White	24.4 %	9.9 %
>HS	62.3 %	25.2 %
HS only	36.5 %	8.1 %
Some College	20.1 %	4.2 %
4 or More College	4.1 %	1.2 %
Non-Hisp. Black	72.5 %	57.5 %
>HS	92.1 %	75.6 %
HS only	78.3 %	54.4 %
Some College	62.1 %	42.1 %
4 or More College	30.7 %	16.8 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	29.9 %	17.7 %
>HS	76.3 %	55.5 %
HS only	50.1 %	26.2 %
Some College	32.7 %	9.0 %
4 or More College	5.9 %	2.2 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Figures for 1980 should be interpeted with caution because a number of states did not ask about education level in that year.
[1] Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

cultural factors are more likely play a significant role in illegitimacy than does legal status. If legal status exerted an important influence, then illegitimacy should decline very dramatically with education because the share of Hispanics in the more-educated categories who are illegal is much lower than in the less-educated categorizes. Yet Table 2 shows relatively modest declines in illegitimacy by education among Hispanic immigrants compared to natives. For example, the difference between dropout Hispanic immigrants and high school graduate Hispanic immigrants is only 5.8 percentage points; between high school graduates and those with some college it's only 9 percentage points; and between those with some college and those with at least a bachelors degree it's around 14.1 percentage points. In contrast, the corresponding differences for all natives are 24.5, 18.4, and 22.7 percentage points. In other words, as you move up the educational distribution among natives, illegitimacy declines dramatically in a way it does not for Hispanic immigrants.

The nation is currently debating whether to allow illegal aliens to stay and gain citizenship or to enforce the law and cause them to go home. Between 50 and 60 percent of illegals are estimated to lack a high school education, and another 20 to 25 percent are thought to have only a high school degree. Moreover, 80 percent of illegals are estimated to be Hispanic.[15] Given that most illegals are less-educated and Hispanic, and given the high rates of out-of-wedlock births among less-educated Hispanics shown in Table 2, an amnesty rather than an enforcement approach could contribute greatly to the illegitimacy problem in this county. Of course illegitimacy is only one of many factors to consider when deciding what to do about illegal immigration. But Table 2 indicates that it is probably unrealistic to expect that illegals and their children will prosper once given legal status.

It must be pointed out that children born to dropout Hispanic immigrants are much less likely to be illegitimate than those born to native dropouts. Nor can illegitimacy be said to be particularly low for natives in any educational category, with the exception of college graduates. Nonetheless, the fact that illegitimacy is more uniform across education levels for Hispanic immigrants may be an indication of the importance of culture rather than legal status. At the very least, it is certainly not the pattern one would expect if lack of legal status explained the high rates among Hispanics.

Illegitimacy Among Illegal Aliens. In this report we have not tried to measure illegitimacy for legal immigrants compared to illegal immigrants. However, as already indicated, the birth data do include births to all

or virtually all illegal aliens. Most researchers agree that some 80 percent of the illegal population is Hispanic.[16] As we have seen, Hispanics have the highest illegitimacy among immigrants. Thus it is reasonable to assume that illegal immigrants have higher rates of out-of-wedlock births than do legal immigrants. The question remains, is the high level of illegitimacy among Hispanics related in some way to their legal status? As the discussion above on education level indicated, the answer to this question appears to be no. There are other reasons to think that illegitimacy among Hispanics is not related to legal status. As we have seen, Hispanic natives actually have higher levels of illegitimacy than do Hispanic immigrants. By definition, Hispanic natives cannot be illegal aliens.[17] Yet about 50 percent of children born to Hispanic natives are illegitimate. This strongly indicates that cultural factors play a significant role in explaining high rates of illegitimacy in that group and not legal status.

Another reason to think that illegitimacy among Hispanics is related much more to culture than to legal status is that illegitimacy among Hispanics does not vary across groups in the way one would expect if it was tied to legal status. Birth records show that among Mexican immigrants, illegitimacy is 41 percent and among non-Mexican Hispanic immigrants it is 45 percent. More than half of the Mexican-born population in the United States are illegal aliens and for the rest of Latin America it is less than a third.[18] If illegal Hispanics had much higher rates than legal Hispanics, then the rate for Mexicans should be much higher than the rate for other Hispanics because a much larger share are illegal immigrants. Yet birth records show that the levels are very similar for Mexican and non-Mexican immigrants, with non-Mexican Hispanics actually having slightly higher rates. This suggests that factors other than legal status, such as culture, explain the relatively high level among Hispanics. There is one additional reason to think that illegitimacy is not a function of legal status — illegitimacy is now common in many of the top immigrant-sending counties. For example, the illegitimacy rate in Mexico is 38 percent, in the Dominican Republic it's 63 percent, and in El Salvador it's 73 percent. Hispanic countries are not the only immigrant-sending countries in which illegitimacy is high. In Jamaica it's 86 percent, in Canada it's 38 percent, and in the United Kingdom it's 40 percent.[19] It should come as no surprise that immigrants who come from societies in which illegitimacy is common have high rates of illegitimacy in the United States. It seems clear that illegitimacy is related to factors other than legal status.

The Interaction of Education and Illegitimacy. Table 3 is somewhat complex but reports important information. The first column reports the share of births that are illegitimate, which can be found in the preceding tables. The second column reports the share of illegitimate births that are to a mother who has not completed high school. The third column reports the share of *all* births that are to a mother who is either unmarried *or* lacks a high school degree. Thus the table reads as follow: 31.5 percent of births to immigrants are illegitimate, and of those illegitimate births, 56.1 percent are to mothers without a high school degree. In addition, 52.9 percent of all births to immigrants are to a mother who either lacks a high school diploma or is unmarried.

Overall, Table 3 shows that a very large share of children start out life with significant social disadvantages, and sometimes more than one disadvantage. The 56.1 percent of illegitimate births to immigrants that are also to a mother who does not have a high school education is a good deal higher than the 32.8 percent for similar natives. Among Hispanic immigrants,

Table 3. Education and Illegitimacy

	Percent Illegitimate	Of illegimate births, share to mothers without high school diplomas	Share of all births that are illegitimate OR to a mother without a high school diploma
All Immigrants [1]	**31.5 %**	**56.1 %**	**52.9 %**
Hispanic	41.9 %	65.0 %	72.8 %
Non-Hispanic	16.3 %	22.1 %	23.1 %
All Natives [1]	**35.4 %**	**32.8 %**	**40.0 %**
Hispanics	49.6 %	43.2 %	58.6 %
Non-Hisp. White	24.4 %	30.0 %	28.6 %
Non-Hisp. Black	72.5 %	31.8 %	74.3 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.
[1] Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

it is an extremely high 65 percent. Since education is a key determinant of income, poverty, welfare use, and other measures of socio-economic status, Table 3 shows that most children of unmarried immigrants are born to mothers whose lack of education is very likely to make it difficult for them to support their children. Moreover, the fact that the parents are not from the United States may add still further to challenges these children will face. In contrast to immigrants, a larger percentage of unmarried native mothers at least have an education level that might allow the children to not grow up in poverty. Turning to the last column in Table 3, we also see that more than half of births to immigrants are either illegitimate or to a mother who lacks a high school degree. And for Hispanic immigrants, 72.8 percent are to a mother who is unmarried or lacks a high school degree. Again, it must be remembered that Hispanics account for almost 60 percent of births to immigrants. It should be obvious that one cannot say for certain how these children will do in life based only on the information in Table 3. As in any human population, some will be successful, others will not. But it is also obvious that the figures in the table should be viewed with deep concern by policy makers and the general public.

Illegitimacy by Age. Table 4 reports births to unmarried mothers based on age. Probably the most important finding in Table 4 is that the small difference between natives and immigrants in the share of births that are illegitimate almost entirely disappears when teenagers are excluded. The 29.3 percent for native mothers 20 years of age and older is virtually identical to the 28.5 percent for immigrants. As the table clearly shows, teenagers have the highest level of illegitimacy. However, immigrants mostly arrive after age 20. The American Community Survey collected by the Census Bureau shows that among women in their primary child-bearing years (ages 14 to 44), a much larger share of natives are teenagers than are immigrants; 20 percent of native

women 14 to 44 years of age are teenagers (ages 14 to 19), in contrast to 10 percent of foreign-born women. Since there are relatively few teenage immigrants, there are relatively fewer illegitimate births to teens, the group with the highest levels of out-of-wedlock births. Thus when teens are excluded, the modest difference between immigrants and natives in terms of out-of-wedlock births becomes very small.

Table 4 also shows that there are some differences by age among immigrants and natives. The share of births to immigrants in their teens and 20s that are illegitimate is higher for natives than immigrants, but the reverse is true for births to women in their 30s and 40s, with immigrants having the higher levels. While some of the differences are significant, there are no huge differences between the two groups by age. For both natives and the foreign-born, illegitimacy tends to decline with age. But the decline is somewhat steeper for natives.

Illegitimacy by State. Table 5 reports the share of births that are to unmarried mothers for the major racial/ethnic groups in 2003. The share of out-of-wedlock births is higher for natives in most states, though there are a number of exceptions. Comparing Hispanic immigrants to natives shows that, in the vast majority of states, Hispanics have higher levels of illegitimacy. This is especially true in comparison to non-Hispanic white natives. In contrast, Hispanic immigrants have lower rates than native-born blacks across the country. Table 5 also shows that Hispanic natives almost always have higher levels

Table 4. Illigitimacy by Age of Mother for Immigrants and Natives

	2003		1980	
	Percent Illegitimate	Number Illegitimate	Percent Illegitimate	Number Illegitimate
Immigrants	**31.5 %**	**298,332**	**13.3 %**	**44,763**
20 and older	28.5 %	249,719	11.3 %	34,378
19 and under	69.9 %	48,613	32.9 %	10,385
20-29	36.4 %	174,351	12.6 %	25,825
30-39	18.8 %	69,417	8.5 %	8,000
40 and older	20.7 %	5,951	10.2 %	553
Natives	**35.4 %**	**1,105,404**	**18.8 %**	**607,393**
20 and older	29.3 %	812,965	12.9 %	349,634
19 and under	83.9 %	292,439	49.3 %	257,759
20-29	40.3 %	654,833	14.4 %	303,560
30-39	13.6 %	145,135	7.5 %	43,832
40 and older	16.7 %	12,997	12.2 %	2,242

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 1980 and 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.

Table 5. Illegitimacy by State, 2003

State	Immigrants		Natives				All Hispanics (Immigrant & Native)	
	All Immigrants	Hispanic	All Natives	Hispanic	Non-Hisp. White	Non-Hisp. Black	Illegitimacy	Share of All Illegitimate Births
Total	31.5 %	41.9 %	35.4 %	49.6 %	24.4 %	72.5 %	44.8 %	28.5 %
AK	21.3 %	26.2 %	36.1 %	47.2 %	24.0 %	47.6 %	40.7 %	8.8 %
AL	20.4 %	23.6 %	36.1 %	29.9 %	20.1 %	70.0 %	24.3 %	3.3 %
AR	35.3 %	40.7 %	38.3 %	45.2 %	27.7 %	76.3 %	41.4 %	9.4 %
AZ	45.3 %	51.1 %	39.8 %	55.6 %	26.4 %	67.1 %	52.9 %	55.7 %
CA	31.0 %	40.2 %	35.7 %	48.4 %	22.2 %	65.5 %	43.2 %	64.3 %
CO	28.0 %	34.6 %	26.3 %	49.3 %	18.7 %	57.6 %	41.3 %	47.6 %
CT	27.1 %	48.5 %	28.6 %	69.2 %	17.4 %	75.0 %	59.1 %	30.0 %
DC	41.3 %	59.0 %	58.2 %	51.9 %	5.5 %	77.6 %	58.4 %	13.7 %
DE	38.5 %	58.6 %	42.3 %	58.3 %	29.4 %	72.4 %	58.5 %	15.8 %
FL	34.6 %	39.6 %	42.0 %	43.7 %	30.0 %	75.2 %	40.9 %	25.0 %
GA	34.5 %	45.3 %	39.1 %	40.2 %	21.7 %	68.9 %	44.9 %	15.6 %
HI	25.0 %	21.0 %	36.7 %	47.2 %	24.4 %	25.4 %	43.8 %	18.7 %
IA	28.6 %	38.2 %	30.0 %	53.5 %	27.4 %	80.6 %	42.8 %	9.4 %
ID	26.2 %	33.0 %	21.8 %	41.2 %	19.5 %	48.1 %	36.4 %	22.0 %
IL	30.0 %	41.5 %	37.1 %	50.2 %	22.0 %	78.5 %	44.2 %	28.8 %
IN	36.2 %	49.2 %	37.2 %	52.3 %	31.3 %	78.1 %	50.1 %	10.5 %
KS	31.2 %	41.7 %	31.7 %	52.1 %	26.6 %	71.0 %	45.1 %	19.5 %
KY	31.3 %	46.4 %	34.0 %	36.2 %	29.9 %	74.9 %	44.3 %	4.6 %
LA	22.7 %	33.2 %	48.8 %	36.7 %	28.6 %	76.4 %	34.5 %	1.8 %
MA	27.6 %	51.8 %	26.4 %	73.1 %	20.5 %	71.9 %	60.2 %	22.8 %
MD	27.9 %	47.8 %	36.8 %	39.5 %	21.9 %	64.8 %	46.5 %	12.0 %
ME	17.9 %	19.4 %	34.4 %	41.8 %	34.0 %	54.4 %	33.1 %	1.1 %
MI	16.8 %	39.0 %	37.0 %	50.1 %	27.1 %	75.4 %	43.7 %	7.2 %
MN	31.2 %	48.8 %	27.1 %	54.5 %	22.0 %	77.3 %	50.3 %	12.7 %
MO	28.4 %	45.8 %	36.2 %	45.5 %	28.3 %	78.9 %	45.7 %	5.8 %
MS	32.0 %	46.1 %	47.6 %	40.3 %	24.0 %	75.5 %	44.8 %	1.2 %
MT	18.0 %	15.4 %	32.7 %	46.9 %	26.8 %	52.2 %	42.6 %	4.4 %
NC	39.7 %	51.5 %	34.4 %	38.8 %	21.0 %	68.2 %	50.0 %	19.0 %
ND	13.9 %	17.4 %	29.3 %	39.3 %	23.2 %	38.7 %	33.3 %	2.5 %
NE	33.5 %	42.1 %	29.0 %	47.8 %	24.1 %	79.1 %	43.6 %	19.6 %
NH	14.8 %	34.8 %	25.7 %	41.5 %	25.3 %	48.9 %	37.6 %	5.0 %
NJ	30.4 %	52.1 %	28.1 %	54.4 %	13.9 %	72.3 %	52.8 %	39.3 %
NM	41.7 %	46.8 %	50.1 %	58.0 %	28.5 %	61.5 %	54.7 %	60.2 %
NV	38.8 %	44.8 %	39.3 %	49.4 %	30.4 %	73.3 %	46.2 %	42.7 %
NY	39.1 %	58.4 %	34.4 %	63.3 %	20.6 %	75.9 %	60.1 %	34.7 %
OH	21.7 %	46.1 %	37.1 %	55.2 %	29.2 %	78.8 %	50.8 %	4.7 %
OK	32.4 %	40.2 %	37.7 %	48.5 %	30.4 %	73.0 %	43.2 %	13.0 %
OR	29.3 %	40.6 %	32.4 %	50.2 %	29.4 %	73.2 %	43.2 %	25.0 %
PA	26.6 %	46.6 %	34.2 %	65.6 %	25.5 %	77.5 %	57.2 %	10.5 %
RI	39.5 %	49.0 %	33.2 %	66.8 %	26.3 %	76.9 %	54.3 %	25.8 %
SC	33.7 %	43.8 %	41.8 %	40.0 %	24.4 %	72.9 %	43.3 %	6.8 %
SD	28.8 %	45.1 %	34.4 %	52.7 %	24.2 %	64.2 %	49.3 %	4.4 %
TN	33.7 %	48.2 %	37.6 %	44.3 %	26.8 %	75.3 %	47.6 %	7.9 %
TX	28.7 %	33.1 %	36.8 %	45.1 %	22.9 %	66.3 %	38.9 %	55.0 %
UT	27.4 %	35.7 %	15.5 %	45.4 %	12.8 %	62.5 %	38.7 %	31.7 %
VA	24.4 %	43.8 %	32.0 %	38.3 %	20.2 %	66.5 %	42.9 %	14.1 %
VT	16.9 %	16.0 %	30.8 %	39.4 %	30.6 %	68.6 %	29.3 %	0.9 %
WA	24.7 %	39.7 %	30.1 %	47.6 %	25.8 %	61.8 %	42.5 %	24.4 %
WI	25.7 %	39.1 %	30.8 %	54.8 %	22.9 %	84.2 %	45.3 %	11.3 %
WV	16.8 %	22.4 %	35.0 %	45.8 %	33.5 %	76.5 %	34.0 %	0.5 %
WY	29.7 %	41.4 %	32.8 %	54.4 %	29.2 %	54.0 %	50.1 %	15.2 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

Table 6. Illegitimacy by State for Selected Charicteristics, 2003

	Illegitimate Births Teenagers Excluded		Of Illegimate Births, Share to Mothers Without a H.S. Diploma[1]			Share of Births That Are Illegitimate OR to a Mother Without H.S. Diploma[1]		
State	Immigrants	Natives	All Immigrants	Hispanic Immigrants	All Natives	All Immigrants	Hispanic Immigrants	All Natives
Total	28.5 %	29.3 %	56.1 %	65.0 %	32.8 %	52.9 %	72.8 %	40.0 %
AK	18.4 %	30.6 %	22.0 %	27.6 %	28.7 %	28.8 %	38.3 %	40.3 %
AL	18.1 %	29.5 %	60.5 %	77.7 %	35.8 %	54.1 %	77.3 %	43.4 %
AR	32.6 %	31.4 %	66.4 %	74.6 %	32.1 %	66.2 %	81.2 %	44.5 %
AZ	40.4 %	33.0 %	67.9 %	69.9 %	37.4 %	68.9 %	77.8 %	44.9 %
CA	28.0 %	29.9 %	62.1 %	67.2 %	29.8 %	55.9 %	73.6 %	39.4 %
CO	24.1 %	20.7 %	66.3 %	72.3 %	33.9 %	59.9 %	77.1 %	31.1 %
CT	24.8 %	24.0 %	39.0 %	52.6 %	27.6 %	35.8 %	64.3 %	29.9 %
DC	38.4 %	52.5 %	51.4 %	67.2 %	27.6 %	51.0 %	81.8 %	58.4 %
DE	34.4 %	36.0 %	69.0 %	81.2 %	31.9 %	55.8 %	86.7 %	46.0 %
FL	32.0 %	35.4 %	39.9 %	48.4 %	33.3 %	45.4 %	53.9 %	46.1 %
GA	31.3 %	32.7 %	62.3 %	73.1 %	35.5 %	57.3 %	80.2 %	44.4 %
HI	22.4 %	31.7 %	25.1 %	21.4 %	17.3 %	30.2 %	35.3 %	38.6 %
IA	24.5 %	24.4 %	59.5 %	72.3 %	27.9 %	54.0 %	78.9 %	33.4 %
ID	22.0 %	17.4 %	65.6 %	71.5 %	31.0 %	55.0 %	74.4 %	27.0 %
IL	27.0 %	30.7 %	59.2 %	65.4 %	32.1 %	52.1 %	73.5 %	40.0 %
IN	32.5 %	30.9 %	66.6 %	74.1 %	34.5 %	57.5 %	80.7 %	43.2 %
KS	27.8 %	25.6 %	61.1 %	67.7 %	31.3 %	55.7 %	74.8 %	35.9 %
KY	27.2 %	28.2 %	60.2 %	75.2 %	34.9 %	49.4 %	76.6 %	41.8 %
LA	20.4 %	41.6 %	37.6 %	52.4 %	35.9 %	35.3 %	52.7 %	53.6 %
MA	25.5 %	22.0 %	33.3 %	43.7 %	28.2 %	35.8 %	64.0 %	27.9 %
MD	25.5 %	30.9 %	39.1 %	59.0 %	25.3 %	36.5 %	66.8 %	38.8 %
ME	15.6 %	29.4 %	25.6 %	66.7 %	24.4 %	28.6 %	36.7 %	36.5 %
MI	14.7 %	31.0 %	56.6 %	72.4 %	33.8 %	34.9 %	74.8 %	40.4 %
MN	27.9 %	22.3 %	44.8 %	62.1 %	22.6 %	45.4 %	73.1 %	28.2 %
MO	24.7 %	29.9 %	53.0 %	65.0 %	34.9 %	42.8 %	72.5 %	41.3 %
MS	29.0 %	40.5 %	54.6 %	66.7 %	36.5 %	49.8 %	71.9 %	53.9 %
MT	15.0 %	27.0 %	30.4 %	85.7 %	31.1 %	29.7 %	44.0 %	38.2 %
NC	36.3 %	28.1 %	69.2 %	75.3 %	34.4 %	62.8 %	82.5 %	39.1 %
ND	11.1 %	24.4 %	28.3 %	25.0 %	22.5 %	24.3 %	47.7 %	31.3 %
NE	29.7 %	23.5 %	68.5 %	75.1 %	25.5 %	65.0 %	81.3 %	32.0 %
NH	13.6 %	21.6 %	30.3 %	51.6 %	25.6 %	21.8 %	52.4 %	28.1 %
NJ	27.9 %	23.5 %	43.5 %	50.9 %	26.0 %	39.2 %	66.3 %	29.9 %
NM	36.2 %	42.6 %	65.9 %	69.4 %	35.7 %	67.4 %	77.0 %	55.0 %
NV	34.8 %	33.4 %	62.1 %	69.6 %	34.3 %	63.5 %	76.4 %	44.5 %
NY	37.0 %	29.6 %	39.7 %	51.3 %	32.5 %	50.6 %	73.0 %	37.4 %
OH	19.1 %	30.8 %	44.2 %	64.8 %	32.4 %	32.5 %	72.5 %	41.7 %
OK	28.3 %	31.3 %	66.8 %	74.9 %	36.1 %	60.0 %	79.3 %	44.0 %
OR	25.8 %	27.2 %	63.9 %	71.6 %	28.6 %	55.1 %	78.6 %	36.2 %
PA	23.4 %	28.4 %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
RI	36.7 %	27.8 %	34.1 %	38.7 %	28.0 %	46.9 %	59.1 %	34.9 %
SC	30.2 %	34.8 %	62.2 %	71.6 %	33.7 %	56.6 %	78.1 %	46.3 %
SD	27.1 %	28.7 %	54.3 %	72.5 %	31.1 %	46.9 %	76.5 %	38.5 %
TN	29.9 %	31.0 %	65.4 %	75.3 %	34.5 %	55.2 %	79.7 %	43.5 %
TX	25.2 %	29.5 %	68.1 %	71.5 %	39.1 %	63.3 %	74.3 %	44.8 %
UT	24.0 %	12.0 %	65.9 %	72.1 %	35.5 %	52.1 %	69.6 %	19.2 %
VA	21.9 %	26.4 %	52.1 %	64.5 %	27.6 %	36.6 %	67.1 %	35.2 %
VT	14.9 %	26.8 %	19.4 %	50.0 %	23.6 %	20.6 %	32.0 %	33.2 %
WA	21.9 %	25.0 %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
WI	22.6 %	25.1 %	58.6 %	68.2 %	31.0 %	49.6 %	75.8 %	34.2 %
WV	13.8 %	29.1 %	25.0 %	63.6 %	33.0 %	22.9 %	53.1 %	42.2 %
WY	27.3 %	27.0 %	45.6 %	49.5 %	30.4 %	47.9 %	67.4 %	37.9 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 1980 and 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.   [1] Teenagers are included.

of illegitimacy than foreign-born Hispanics. This is not the direction one would hope for in terms of assimilation. Of course, as we have seen, illegitimacy is higher for natives than immigrants in all racial/ethnic groups. The concern with Hispanics is that the immigrant generation already starts out with high levels of illegitimacy. The fact that it is even higher for native-born Hispanics is certainly not good news.

Table 5 also shows the total share of births to Hispanics (immigrant and native) that are illegitimate. Overall, Hispanic illegitimacy tends to fall between native-born whites and native-born blacks. The last column in the table shows the Hispanic share of all illegitimate births to Hispanics (immigrant and native) for each state. Hispanics account for a majority of unmarried births in four states and at least a fifth of such births in 13 additional states.

As discussed above, there are relatively few immigrant teenagers because immigrants generally arrive after age 19. Table 6 (first two columns) reports the share of births that are to unmarried immigrants and natives, teenagers excluded. As expected, there are many more states in which the difference between immigrants and natives is modest in size without teenagers. Still, there remain a number of states where the immigrant rate is still a good deal lower than that of natives, though there are also a number where it is a good deal higher. Columns 3 through 5 show the share of illegitimate births that are to mothers who have not graduated high school. As is true nationally, in most states a majority of illegitimate births to immigrants are to mothers who also have not graduated high school. This is especially true for Hispanic immigrants. The gap between natives and Hispanic immigrants is enormous in just about every state. Consider California: In that state, 65 percent of illegitimate births to Hispanic immigrants are to mother who did not graduate from high school, compared to 29 percent of illegitimate births to natives. The last columns of Table 6 show the share of births that are to mothers who are either unmarried or lack a high school diploma. As is the case nationally, the share of births to immigrants that are to an unmarried mother or one with very little education is much higher for immigrants than for natives in all but a handful of states.

Immigrants as a Share of Illegitimate Births. Figure 5 reports the share of illegitimate births that immigrant mothers account for. Thus, figure 5 reads as follows: In California 42.6 percent of births to unmarried mothers were to immigrant mothers in 2003, up from 24.5 percent in 1980. In most of the large immigrant-receiving states, immigrants account for at least 20 percent

of births to unmarried mothers. As shown throughout this report, with the very notable exception of Hispanic and black immigrants, the percentage of births to immigrants that are unmarried, while high, is not particularly high relative to natives. Nor is it particularly low relative to natives. Figure 5 indicates that immigration has certainly added to the illegitimacy problem in a number of places in the country. Nonetheless, it is also true that natives account for most illegitimate births.

Illegitimacy by CMSA. Table 7 (page 16) reports the illegitimacy rates for the nation's Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs). As is true of the state data, immigrant illegitimacy overall tends to be lower than that for natives. The differences are large in some metro areas and small in others. And again, like the states, in some CMSAs it is immigrants who have the higher illegitimacy. As is also true nationally, Hispanic immigrant illegitimacy is much higher than it is for natives, especially white natives. The last two columns in Table 7 report the combined illegitimacy rate for Hispanic immigrants and Hispanic natives. The table shows that Hispanics (immigrants and natives) have higher rates of illegitimacy than do natives generally and white natives in particular. Also Hispanics (immigrant and native) comprise a very large share of births to unmarried parents in many metro areas. Figure 6 (page 17) shows the share of illegitimate births that are to immigrant mothers in each CMSA. Even more so than the state data, the figure shows that immigrants comprise a large share of births to unmarried parents. In 10 of the nation's CMSAs, immigrants comprise at least a quarter of births to unmarried mothers.

Illegitimacy by County. Table 8 (page 18) reports illegitimacy in the nation's 50 counties with the most births. There is a good deal of variation between counties. It's hard to generalize about the large counties. But overall, immigrants tend to have lower rates of illegitimacy, with many exceptions. Also, Hispanic immigrants tend to have higher rates of illegitimacy relative to natives. In comparison to natives, Hispanic immigrant illegitimacy is higher than that of white natives in all but one county. The table also shows that immigrants comprise at least a quarter of all illegitimate births in 40 of the nation's 50 largest counties.[20]

Birth Rates Among Unmarried Women. So far we have measured illegitimacy based on the share of births that are to unmarried women. However, it is also common to measure it based on the share of unmarried women who give birth each year. This is usually reported as the

Figure 5. Immigrants as a Share of Illegitimate Births by State, 2003 and 1980
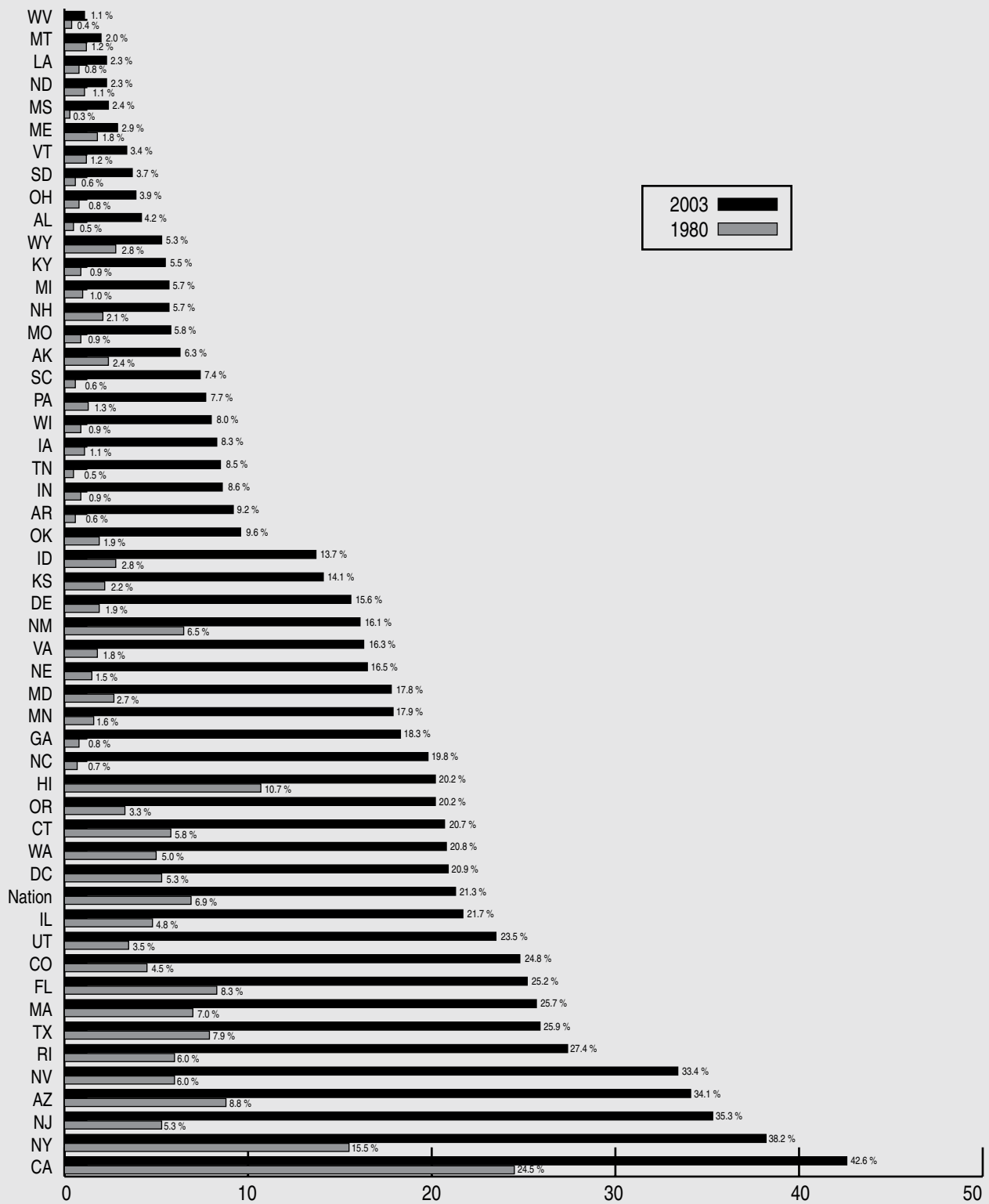
State	2003	1980
WV	1.1 %	0.4 %
MT	2.0 %	1.2 %
LA	2.3 %	0.8 %
ND	2.3 %	1.1 %
MS	2.4 %	0.3 %
ME	2.9 %	1.8 %
VT	3.4 %	1.2 %
SD	3.7 %	0.6 %
OH	3.9 %	0.8 %
AL	4.2 %	0.5 %
WY	5.3 %	2.8 %
KY	5.5 %	0.9 %
MI	5.7 %	1.0 %
NH	5.7 %	2.1 %
MO	5.8 %	0.9 %
AK	6.3 %	2.4 %
SC	7.4 %	0.6 %
PA	7.7 %	1.3 %
WI	8.0 %	0.9 %
IA	8.3 %	1.1 %
TN	8.5 %	0.5 %
IN	8.6 %	0.9 %
AR	9.2 %	0.6 %
OK	9.6 %	1.9 %
ID	13.7 %	2.8 %
KS	14.1 %	2.2 %
DE	15.6 %	1.9 %
NM	16.1 %	6.5 %
VA	16.3 %	1.8 %
NE	16.5 %	1.5 %
MD	17.8 %	2.7 %
MN	17.9 %	1.6 %
GA	18.3 %	0.8 %
NC	19.8 %	0.7 %
HI	20.2 %	10.7 %
OR	20.2 %	3.3 %
CT	20.7 %	5.8 %
WA	20.8 %	5.0 %
DC	20.9 %	5.3 %
Nation	21.3 %	6.9 %
IL	21.7 %	4.8 %
UT	23.5 %	3.5 %
CO	24.8 %	4.5 %
FL	25.2 %	8.3 %
MA	25.7 %	7.0 %
TX	25.9 %	7.9 %
RI	27.4 %	6.0 %
NV	33.4 %	6.0 %
AZ	34.1 %	8.8 %
NJ	35.3 %	5.3 %
NY	38.2 %	15.5 %
CA	42.6 %	24.5 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 1980 and 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.

Table 7. Illegitimacy for Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas

CMSA	Immigrants		All Natives	Natives				All Hispanics (Immigrant & Native)	
	All Immigrants	Hispanic		Hispanic	Non-Hisp. White	Non-Hisp. Black	Illegitimacy	Illegitimacy	Share of All Illegitimate Births
Nation	31.5 %	41.9 %	35.4 %	49.6 %	24.4 %	72.5 %		44.8 %	28.5 %
Boston-Worcester-Lawrence	27.0 %	51.1 %	24.0 %	67.7 %	19.5 %	70.0 %		56.4 %	20.9 %
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha	30.3 %	41.7 %	37.5 %	50.5 %	16.0 %	78.0 %		44.4 %	36.1 %
Cincinnati-Hamilton	22.8 %	47.8 %	36.1 %	42.0 %	28.1 %	79.4 %		46.5 %	3.6 %
Cleveland-Akron	14.1 %	37.0 %	38.5 %	56.9 %	25.0 %	79.4 %		50.3 %	5.0 %
Dallas-Fort Worth	30.7 %	37.9 %	34.6 %	47.5 %	20.9 %	67.1 %		40.9 %	46.0 %
Denver-Boulder-Greeley	27.2 %	33.7 %	25.3 %	48.6 %	16.6 %	61.3 %		39.7 %	52.0 %
Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint	11.8 %	34.3 %	38.1 %	46.1 %	23.5 %	74.3 %		38.8 %	5.5 %
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria	29.0 %	35.0 %	37.6 %	45.3 %	21.5 %	64.7 %		38.5 %	50.5 %
LA-Riverside-Orange Cty.	34.1 %	41.9 %	37.9 %	48.8 %	21.1 %	66.2 %		44.3 %	71.9 %
Miami-Fort Lauderdale	34.6 %	35.1 %	45.2 %	35.5 %	23.3 %	76.4 %		35.2 %	41.2 %
Milwaukee-Racine	27.9 %	42.3 %	39.4 %	58.1 %	19.7 %	84.7 %		49.4 %	15.2 %
NY-North. NJ-Long Island	36.8 %	56.1 %	29.8 %	60.6 %	11.2 %	74.0 %		57.5 %	44.7 %
Phila.-Wilmington-Atlantic City	30.4 %	52.9 %	38.5 %	68.1 %	21.5 %	75.8 %		60.2 %	16.0 %
Portland-Salem	28.5 %	43.7 %	29.5 %	49.8 %	25.9 %	74.3 %		45.2 %	29.4 %
Sacramento-Yolo	22.5 %	32.8 %	33.4 %	46.4 %	23.9 %	66.6 %		38.9 %	34.7 %
San Fra.-Oakland-San Jose	21.7 %	37.5 %	28.1 %	44.6 %	16.4 %	66.0 %		39.6 %	51.1 %
Seattle-Tacoma	20.9 %	40.7 %	26.8 %	40.1 %	22.5 %	61.2 %		40.5 %	18.2 %
Washington-Baltimore	26.5 %	45.8 %	33.0 %	37.4 %	17.7 %	65.1 %		44.7 %	18.1 %
Not part of a CMSA	32.6 %	41.0 %	36.2 %	49.1 %	26.7 %	72.8 %		44.5 %	21.3 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

To calculate birth rates for single women, we use the birth records for the number of births and the American Community Survey (ACS) for the number of women in the population, immigrant or native, ages 15 to 45. The table shows that a much higher percentage of immigrant women give birth each year than do single native women. Overall, 8.3 percent of unmarried immigrant women had a child in 2003, compared to 4.1 percent of native women. Put a different way, one out of every 12 unmarried immigrant women had a child in 2003, compared to about one out of 25 for native women. The birth rate for single immigrants is twice the rate for natives. Among Hispanic immigrant women, it's 14 percent, meaning that almost one out of seven had children in 2003.

Earlier in this report we pointed out that there is some undercount in Census Bureau data, but no such undercount in the birth records. Thus, dividing the number of births by the number of women in the population may overstate birth rates among single immigrant women. In other words, if there are more single immigrant women in the county than are shown in Census Bureau data and reported in Table 9, then the
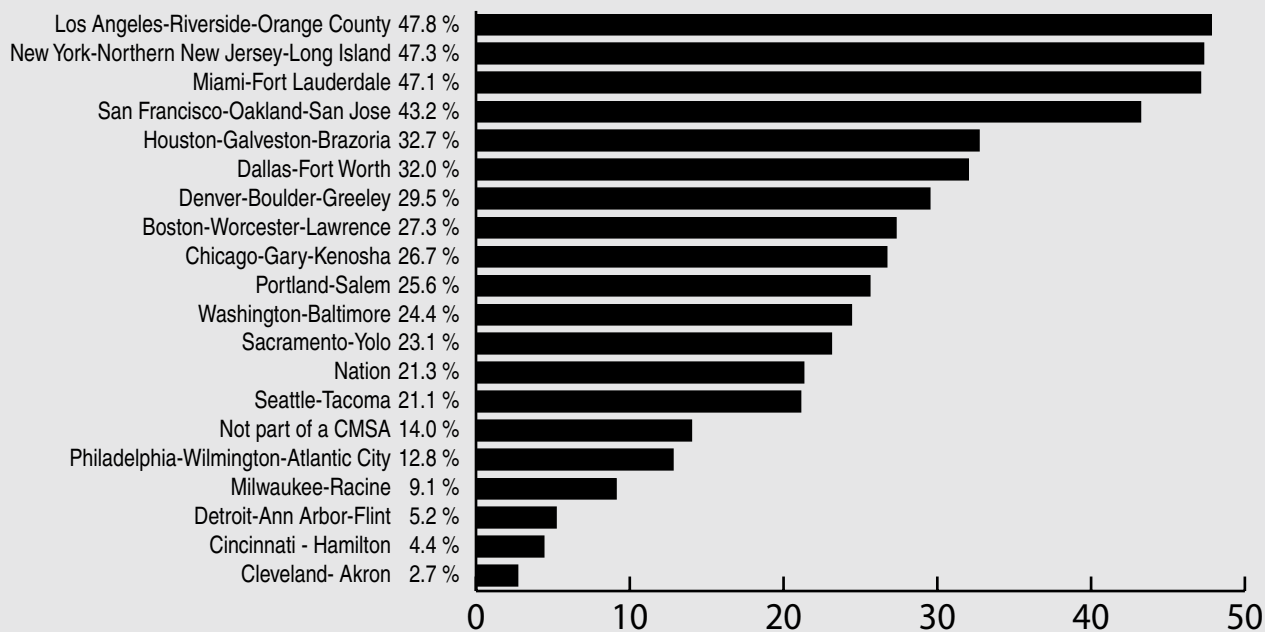
birth rate for unmarried or single women. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) calculates birth rates for unmarried women by taking the number of unmarried women in the population and dividing it by the number of births to such women. Table 9 (page 19) reports the birth rates for unmarried women by nativity.[21]

Figure 6. Immigrants as a Share of Illegitimate Births by CMSA, 2003

CMSA	%
Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County	47.8 %
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island	47.3 %
Miami-Fort Lauderdale	47.1 %
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose	43.2 %
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria	32.7 %
Dallas-Fort Worth	32.0 %
Denver-Boulder-Greeley	29.5 %
Boston-Worcester-Lawrence	27.3 %
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha	26.7 %
Portland-Salem	25.6 %
Washington-Baltimore	24.4 %
Sacramento-Yolo	23.1 %
Nation	21.3 %
Seattle-Tacoma	21.1 %
Not part of a CMSA	14.0 %
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City	12.8 %
Milwaukee-Racine	9.1 %
Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint	5.2 %
Cincinnati - Hamilton	4.4 %
Cleveland- Akron	2.7 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis.

share having a child during the year would be less. Some research indicates that about 5 percent of immigrants are missed by the Census Bureau. If that is the case the birth rate among single immigrant women would drop from the 8.3 percent shown in Table 9 to 7.9 percent. If the undercount is 10 percent among the foreign-born, then the birth rate for single immigrant women would be 7.6 percent. Either way, the rate is still much higher than the 4.1 percent for natives. In fact, there must also be some undercount for natives, though smaller, so a fairer comparison would be to adjust their figures as well. But even assuming the undercount is 10 percent, and even assuming no adjustment for an undercount among natives, the birth rates for single immigrant women are around twice that of native single women. Put another way, even assuming a 10 percent undercount among immigrant women, one in 13 unmarried immigrant women gave birth in 2003 compared to one in 25 native women. Thus, if commitment to traditional family values is measured based on birth rates among the unmarried, then it seems immigrants are much less committed to traditional family values than are natives. Of course, this is not the only way to measure commitment to traditional family values. But it does run completely counter to the arguments made by President Bush, Francis Fukuyama, and others.

Birth Records vs. Birth Rates. One may ask why illegitimacy is so similar among immigrants and natives, about one-third for both, when measured in terms of the share of births to unmarried women, but so different when measured in terms of birth rates for unmarried women. This is because a much larger share of native women (ages 15 to 45) are single compared to immigrant women in the same age group. Put simply, a much smaller number of unmarried immigrant women are having a very large number of children. This means that illegitimacy is much more common among single immigrant women than among single native women. But a smaller fraction of immigrant women are single in the first place, so the overall share of births that are illegitimate for the two groups are similar. In 2003, 37 percent of immigrant women (ages 15 to 45) were single, compared to 53 percent of native women in the same age group.[22] While at first glance differences in illegitimacy as measured by birth rates among single women compared to the share of births that are illegitimate may appear inconsistent, in fact they are not.

Census Bureau Data

Family Structure vs. Illegitimacy. This report has focused on birth certificate records for two reasons: First, as already indicated, birth records count all or virtually

Table 8. Illegitimacy in 50 Counties with Most Births,
Ranked by Share of Immigrant Births that are Illegitimate

	Immigrants		Natives				Share of Illegitimate Births	
County	All Immigrants	Hispanic	All Natives	Hispanic	Non-Hisp. White	Non-Hisp. Black	Immigrants as Share of All Illigitmate Births	Hispanics (Immigrant & Native) as a Share of All Illigitmate Births
Bronx County, NY	57.6 %	67.2 %	71.5 %	75.4 %	28.4 %	80.9 %	47.4 %	57.3 %
Marion, IN	47.9 %	59.9 %	49.3 %	53.3 %	36.7 %	76.6 %	16.0 %	14.5 %
Maricopa, AZ	46.5 %	52.9 %	35.8 %	56.1 %	23.7 %	68.6 %	41.5 %	61.9 %
Pima, AZ	42.3 %	48.7 %	43.5 %	55.5 %	29.7 %	66.0 %	27.3 %	59.3 %
Kings County, NY	41.8 %	63.9 %	43.4 %	69.8 %	8.7 %	78.2 %	51.6 %	34.0 %
Clark, NV	40.1 %	45.9 %	41.7 %	50.0 %	31.1 %	73.4 %	35.0 %	44.5 %
Kern, CA	39.3 %	42.5 %	44.8 %	53.5 %	32.4 %	72.2 %	32.2 %	64.4 %
NY County, NY	39.2 %	62.2 %	34.2 %	71.2 %	7.5 %	78.6 %	50.1 %	55.3 %
Queens, NY	38.3 %	59.5 %	40.4 %	54.9 %	14.0 %	68.7 %	67.6 %	49.4 %
Fresno, CA	37.6 %	42.5 %	47.0 %	55.6 %	28.3 %	76.8 %	33.5 %	68.7 %
Palm Beach, FL	37.1 %	43.8 %	36.7 %	46.1 %	20.7 %	78.2 %	38.6 %	30.4 %
Suffolk, NY	37.0 %	50.9 %	18.7 %	41.7 %	12.5 %	67.4 %	39.6 %	41.4 %
Miami-Dade, FL	36.7 %	36.8 %	50.4 %	35.3 %	26.7 %	79.1 %	51.9 %	52.4 %
Los Angeles, CA	35.9 %	44.1 %	42.3 %	50.6 %	19.8 %	68.8 %	51.5 %	74.6 %
Hillsborough, FL	35.9 %	47.4 %	41.8 %	49.9 %	28.0 %	74.4 %	21.1 %	30.2 %
Dallas, TX	35.5 %	41.2 %	45.1 %	51.0 %	23.5 %	69.5 %	39.3 %	53.9 %
Hennepin, MN	34.2 %	53.8 %	28.2 %	56.2 %	16.7 %	78.5 %	32.6 %	20.1 %
Riverside, CA	33.4 %	36.9 %	37.7 %	47.9 %	26.4 %	58.4 %	35.4 %	65.6 %
San Bernardino, CA	33.4 %	38.0 %	43.3 %	49.5 %	31.4 %	63.6 %	28.6 %	61.4 %
Orange, FL	33.0 %	40.5 %	41.7 %	51.8 %	26.3 %	72.0 %	24.9 %	25.9 %
El Paso, TX	32.2 %	32.7 %	44.2 %	47.4 %	23.3 %	39.8 %	36.0 %	93.3 %
Fulton, GA	32.0 %	43.8 %	48.1 %	41.1 %	9.5 %	79.2 %	19.7 %	16.5 %
Nassau, NY	31.4 %	51.0 %	13.6 %	25.1 %	7.0 %	60.8 %	53.5 %	44.9 %
Cook, IL	31.0 %	42.0 %	47.7 %	52.8 %	14.8 %	79.3 %	26.6 %	36.2 %
Salt Lake, UT	30.8 %	39.7 %	20.3 %	50.8 %	16.8 %	64.2 %	29.4 %	37.4 %
Harris, TX	30.7 %	35.9 %	40.5 %	45.8 %	21.2 %	66.3 %	36.6 %	54.5 %
Shelby, TN	30.7 %	43.3 %	56.6 %	40.7 %	20.8 %	76.6 %	6.5 %	5.5 %
Broward, FL	30.6 %	29.0 %	39.6 %	36.1 %	21.8 %	72.9 %	39.0 %	22.1 %
Milwaukee, WI	30.4 %	44.3 %	52.4 %	60.4 %	25.0 %	85.2 %	9.2 %	15.3 %
San Diego, CA	29.9 %	38.2 %	27.4 %	41.3 %	17.7 %	51.0 %	43.9 %	60.9 %
Orange, CA	29.7 %	40.6 %	22.9 %	41.3 %	14.5 %	49.0 %	60.4 %	75.8 %
Franklin, OH	29.2 %	54.1 %	39.7 %	50.0 %	28.4 %	74.9 %	13.3 %	8.6 %
Tarrant, TX	28.5 %	34.0 %	36.3 %	47.9 %	23.2 %	67.7 %	26.5 %	42.0 %
Hidalgo, TX	28.3 %	28.6 %	31.9 %	32.6 %	20.3 %	45.5 %	50.3 %	97.7 %
Bexar, TX	26.2 %	29.4 %	40.3 %	47.4 %	20.4 %	59.0 %	13.4 %	77.5 %
Montgomery, MD	24.8 %	43.1 %	17.5 %	40.1 %	8.3 %	52.3 %	57.1 %	40.1 %
Honolulu, HI	23.6 %	17.1 %	31.7 %	42.2 %	17.8 %	23.0 %	23.2 %	17.3 %
Travis, TX	23.1 %	28.7 %	30.8 %	46.9 %	14.9 %	65.7 %	29.6 %	60.9 %
Sacramento, CA	22.9 %	33.7 %	37.9 %	48.9 %	26.6 %	67.3 %	23.2 %	33.3 %
Contra Costa, CA	22.8 %	32.8 %	27.3 %	40.3 %	16.6 %	64.6 %	35.1 %	42.3 %
Du Page, IL	22.3 %	40.6 %	14.7 %	34.9 %	10.7 %	57.9 %	42.3 %	45.3 %
Fairfax, VA	20.3 %	43.5 %	13.7 %	36.1 %	7.9 %	53.3 %	60.3 %	52.6 %
Middlesex, MA	20.1 %	42.2 %	15.3 %	55.5 %	12.9 %	51.2 %	38.5 %	17.8 %
Santa Clara, CA	19.3 %	42.3 %	27.3 %	48.5 %	14.5 %	56.1 %	52.0 %	67.7 %
King, WA	19.2 %	40.2 %	23.6 %	42.6 %	17.9 %	65.6 %	29.6 %	22.1 %
Alameda, CA	19.1 %	34.4 %	35.4 %	44.6 %	17.9 %	68.1 %	36.2 %	41.0 %
Wayne, MI	13.9 %	33.9 %	54.0 %	50.0 %	27.3 %	76.8 %	4.8 %	5.3 %
Allegheny, PA	13.8 %	20.8 %	33.0 %	42.1 %	22.0 %	79.3 %	3.4 %	1.8 %
Cuyahoga, OH	12.8 %	39.1 %	46.7 %	58.7 %	24.2 %	79.8 %	2.7 %	4.8 %
Oakland, MI	8.5 %	33.2 %	22.3 %	40.6 %	16.1 %	57.8 %	8.5 %	7.7 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

Table 9. Birth Rates for Unmarried Immigrant and Native Women, 2003			
	Number of Women Ages 15 to 45	Number of Illegitimate Births	Share of Unmarried Women Having a Child During the Year
Immigrants	**3,585,336**	**298,332**	**8.3 %**
Hispanic	1,677,541	234,317	14.0 %
Non-Hisp. White	406,943	16,054	3.9 %
Non-Hisp. Black	406,943	27,815	6.8 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	801,496	19,804	2.5 %
Natives	**26,686,286**	**1,105,404**	**4.1 %**
Hispanic	2,668,766	165,520	6.2 %
Non-Hisp. White	17,963,659	537,423	3.0 %
Non-Hisp. Black	5,329,424	368,285	6.9 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	499,057	10,146	2.0 %
Total	**30,271,622**	**1,403,736**	**4.6 %**

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of 2003 public use natlility data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and public use file of 2003 American Community Survey. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories. Totals for immigrants and natives include persons not reported separtely by race or Hispanic origin.

headed by a married person.[23] The table reads as follows: 74.5 percent of the U.S.-born children of immigrants live in households headed by a person who is married. For the children of natives it's 69.9 percent. Thus, the U.S.-born children are immigrants are somewhat more likely than the children of natives to live in married households. The difference is 4.6 percentage points. As will be recalled from Table 1, the difference in the share of births that are illegit-

all births in the United States. Thus the records do not suffer from the kind of undercount problems associated with the decennial census, the Current Population Survey (CPS), and the American Community Survey (ACS), which are used by most immigration researchers. In its estimates of the foreign-born population, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that some two million — or about 5 percent — of immigrants are missed by the Census Bureau. Those missed by the Census Bureau are disproportionately the poorest and least-educated people. As we have seen, the less-educated have the highest rates of illegitimacy. Thus looking at illegitimacy or family structure more generally using Census Bureau data tends to understate family breakdown because those missed tend have such problems. The birth data avoid this problem. The second reason we use birth records is that the Census Bureau does not ask about marital status when a child is born. Therefore, such data cannot be used to study illegitimacy.

Census Bureau Data: Married Households. Despite their limitations, Census Bureau data can be used to examine family structure. Table 10 reports statistics on the U.S.-born children of immigrants and natives in 2003. We focus on the U.S.-born children of immigrants because they represent the second generation and are directly comparable to the birth records, which are the focus of this study. The first column of Table 10 shows the share of children (under age 18) who live in households

imate is 3.9 percentage points. Although birth records and family structure from Census Bureau data measure very different things, both data sources show only modest differences between immigrants and natives.

The Census Bureau data reported in the first column of Table 10 are for all minor children, not just newborns. Also, it is very important to realize that the household head may not be married to the parent of the children who live in the household. People with minor children are often married to someone other than the children's parents. Many people with children remarry after divorce, become windowed, or simply never marry the child's father or mother but then marry someone else later. It should also be remembered that, because Table 10 uses Census Bureau data, some children are missed by the survey. And those missed children are the most likely to be illegitimate.

Looking at the largest immigrant group, Hispanics, shows that 65.2 percent of their children live in married households. This is somewhat lower than the 69.9 percent for natives overall. And it is a good deal lower than the 78.7 percent for whites, who are the largest group among natives. For all children under age 18, Table 10 shows that there is good deal of variation among groups. Blacks and Hispanics tend to have the highest rates of children living in unmarried households, while whites and Asians tend to have the lowest. Like the share of births that are illegitimate, there is no evidence that the problem of children raised in unmarried households

Table 10. Family Structure for the U.S.-Born Children of Immigrants and Natives

	Share of U.S.-Born Children Living in Households Headed by a Married Person[1]		Share of U.S.-Born Children Living with Both Parents[2]		Of U.S.-born children in unmarried households, share in which household head lacks a high school diploma	Share of U.S.-born children living in household headed by unmarried person or one without high school education
	All Children (Under 17)	Teenagers (13 to 17)	All Children (Under 17)	Teenagers (13 to 17)		
Children of Immigrants	74.5 %	69.5 %	72.9 %	68.5 %	39.8 %	49.1 %
Hispanic	70.2 %	65.2 %	68.0 %	63.2 %	53.0 %	67.8 %
Non-Hisp. White	83.3 %	76.6 %	83.5 %	77.1 %	9.3 %	21.7 %
Non-Hisp. Black	58.9 %	50.2 %	55.4 %	50.0 %	20.9 %	48.8 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	86.0 %	81.6 %	85.5 %	81.9 %	13.3 %	22.9 %
Children of Natives	69.9 %	67.9 %	66.7 %	65.8 %	19.1 %	35.6 %
Hispanic	61.1 %	60.2 %	55.5 %	56.2 %	30.0 %	53.3 %
Non-Hisp. White	78.7 %	75.5 %	76.6 %	73.9 %	14.6 %	25.8 %
Non-Hisp. Black	37.0 %	38.0 %	32.5 %	34.4 %	22.7 %	67.2 %
Non-Hisp. Asian/Pacific	83.0 %	80.9 %	81.3 %	82.4 %	29.5 %	18.6 %
Total	70.5 %	68.2 %	67.9 %	66.2 %	22.6 %	15.4 %

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of March 2003 Current Population Survey. All figures are only for children born in the United States. To be consistent with our analysis of birth certificates, the small number of children born to mothers who themselves were born in Puerto Rico or other outlying territories are excluded from the analysis. Persons of Hispanic origin are excluded from other categories.

[1] Figures are for U.S.-born children with either an immigrant mother or father who live in a households headed by a married person whose spouse is present. The household head may or may not be the parent of some or all of children in household.

[2] Parents of child may or may not be married.

gets better over generations. The share of children who live in unmarried households is higher for the children of natives than for the children of immigrants in every racial/ethnic group reported in Table 10. The 61.1 percent of children of native-born Hispanics who live in a married household is low.

Teenagers are the group most at risk for getting into trouble if two parents are not present. Table 10 shows that among U.S.-born teenagers (13 to 17) the share living in a married household is very similar for those with immigrant parents and those with native parents. It is 69.5 percent among the U.S.-born children of immigrants and 67.9 percent among the U.S.-born children of natives, a 1.6 percentage-point difference. Hispanic teenage children of immigrants have a lower share living in married households, 65.2 percent. This is lower than the 67.9 percent among natives. The 65.2 percent for the teenage children of Hispanic immigrants is a good deal lower than the 75.5 percent for the teenage children of native whites. When teenagers are considered, Table 10 shows that at least when measured by the share living in married households there is very little difference between those with immigrant versus those with native parents. Nearly a third of teenagers born in this country live in a households headed by unmarried persons, regardless of where their parents where born.

Census Bureau Data: Two Parents Present. Marriage is not the only way to think about families. Households headed by married parents are more stable and better off economically. However,

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sometimes children still grow up with both parents, but they may never marry. This is certainly common in some Latin American countries. Columns 3 and 4 in Table 10 try to address this question by looking at the share of U.S.-born children who live with both of their parents, regardless of whether they are married. It is important to realize that this is a different measure of family cohesion than the married households reported in the first part of the table. The table shows that the share of U.S.-born children living with both parents is higher among immigrants than natives, 72.9 percent versus 66.7 percent — a 6.2 percentage-point difference. The share among Hispanic immigrants is very similar to the share for natives overall, 68 percent compared 66.7 percent. Also, like the statistics for married households, Hispanic immigrants have significantly lower rates of two-parent homes than do whites, who are the largest group among natives — 68 percent compared to 76.6 percent.

Turning to U.S.-born teenagers (13 to 17 years of age) we find that there is relatively little difference between immigrants and natives. The 68.5 percent of U.S.-born teenagers of immigrants who live with both parents is quite similar to the 65.8 percent among the teenage children of natives. The 2.7 percentage-point difference is modest. Among the largest groups, the 63.2 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic teenagers with immigrant parents who live with both their mother and father is less than the 65.8 percent for natives overall and good deal lower than the 73.9 percent for white teenagers with native parents.[24]

Overall, the share of U.S.-born children of immigrants who live with both parents is somewhat higher for immigrants than natives, though this is much less true for Hispanic immigrants. When we consider U.S.-born teenagers, the difference is much smaller and for Hispanic teenagers the rate is actually lower than for natives overall. Of course, two unmarried parents living with their children probably does not fit the common understanding of a traditional family. When parents are not married the union tends to be less stable, and often their time horizons tend to be shorter, such as for saving for a house. Like birth records, the Census Bureau data show that neither immigrants nor natives can be said to be exemplary when it comes to marriage and children.

It's probably worth noting that the teenagers in Table 10 were born between 1986 and 1990. Illegitimacy for all groups was much lower then. In general marriages break up and cohabiting couples separate over time. Thus, the share of teenagers in 2003 living with both parents initially was higher and then declined to the rates shown in Table 10. But today, a much larger share of babies start out life with unmarried parents than was

true in the late 1980s. So it seems certain that a much larger share of children born in 2003 than is shown in Table 10 will not be living with both parents when they reach their teenage years.

Census Bureau Data: Education Levels. The breakdown of the traditional family can interact with other social problems, such as parents' low levels of educational attainment. The second-to-last column in Table 10 reports the share of U.S.-born children in unmarried households headed by someone who did not graduate high school. The table shows that 39.8 percent of the U.S.-born children of immigrants in unmarried households also live in households headed by a person who did not graduate from high school. The comparison figure for natives is 19.1 percent. As we saw with the data from birth records, children born to unmarried immigrant parents often have the added disadvantage of being born to parents who have very little education. The household data collected by the Census Bureau show the same general pattern. Education is the single most important determinant of income and social status in American society. Thus a much larger share of U.S.-born children of immigrants living in unmarried households also have to overcome their parents' low education levels.

The last columns in Table 10 show the share of children who live in households headed by a person who is either unmarried or has not graduated from high school. The 49.1 percent for immigrants overall and the 67.8 percent for Hispanic immigrants in particular is certainly not good news. Both are much higher than the comparable figures for natives. It seems clear that a very large share of children born in the United States to immigrant parents start out life with significant social disadvantages. These disadvantages exist in addition to any problems that might normally be expected for children trying to adapt to life in their parents' adopted country.

The Census Bureau data shown in Table 10 provide different information than the birth records, which are the main focus of this paper. But like the birth records, the Census Bureau data show that neither immigrants nor natives can be said to be exemplary when it comes to the environment in which children are being raised. A very large share of children among both groups are not growing up in traditional families. It must also be remembered that the birth records do not suffer from the undercount that exists with Census Bureau data. Since those missed by the Bureau tend to be the poorest and least-educated, the data in Table 10 tend to overstate the share of children living in married households or those living with both parents. This is especially true for immigrants.

Conclusion

President Bush and many other advocates of high immigration argue that immigrants bring with them a stronger commitment to traditional families than native-born Americans. This study uses publicly available birth records to examine one of the most important measures of family cohesion — illegitimacy. A large body of research indicates that children born to unmarried parents are at risk for a host of social problems, including high rates of poverty and incarceration, as well as low academic achievement and becoming unmarried parents themselves. Birth records are an ideal data source to examine immigrants because, unlike Census Bureau data that tend to miss poor and less-educated immigrants who have the highest illegitimacy rates, birth records cover all children born in the country, even hard-to-count populations like low income or illegal alien mothers.

The findings show that a large and growing share of babies born each year have unmarried parents, and this is true for both immigrants and natives. About a third of babies born to both immigrant and native mothers were illegitimate in 2003. In the past, immigrants did enjoy somewhat lower rates of illegitimacy relative to natives. But over the last 25 years both groups have seen their out-of-wedlock birth rates rise dramatically, and what was a modest gap with natives has tended to close over time.

The findings also show that illegitimacy levels differ significantly by group. Among Hispanic immigrants the share of births that are illegitimate is 42 percent. In contrast, about one-fourth of children born to white and Asian natives were illegitimate. Illegitimacy also varies significantly by education level for both immigrants and natives. In 2003, 45 percent of births to immigrants without a high school degree were illegitimate, compared to 8 percent for those born to immigrant mothers with a college degree. We find no evidence that illegitimacy is related to legal status. Illegitimacy is now common in many immigrant-sending counties. Moreover, the high rates of out-of-wedlock births among native-born Hispanics (50 percent) also suggest that cultural factors play a significant role in explaining high illegitimacy in that group. Some 80 percent of illegal aliens are estimated to be Hispanic, and 60 percent of all illegals are estimated to lack a high school education. These facts may be relevant to the current debate over whether to allow illegal aliens to stay and gain citizenship or enforce the law and cause them to go home.

Illegitimacy can also be measured by the share of unmarried women who give birth. Unmarried immigrants are much more likely to give birth than unmarried natives. One out of every 12 unmarried immigrant women had a child in 2003; for natives it was one out of 25. It was one out of seven for Hispanic immigrants.

The argument made by well-known author Francis Fukuyama that, "Hispanic immigrants will help to reinforce certain cultural values like the emphasis on family," is not supported by an analysis of birth records. It is also not supported by an analysis of Census Bureau data. Neither immigrants generally nor Hispanic immigrants in particular can be said to be exemplary when it comes to marriage and children. It must be emphasized that the same is true of natives. It would be wrong to blame immigrants for the breakdown in American families, just as it would be wrong to think they will help solve the problem. This is especially true for Hispanic immigrants, a large and rapidly growing share of whom are having children out-of-wedlock.

High rates of illegitimacy among natives, particularly African Americans, has been a concern for several decades. The rise of illegitimacy among immigrants, particularly Hispanics, is a newer phenomenon, which is likely to have significant implications for the integration and social mobility for these children. More than one-fifth of all children born to unmarried parents now has an immigrant mother. And Hispanics (immigrant and native) have grown from 10 percent of illegitimate births in 1980 to almost 29 percent in 2003. In terms of the absolute number of illegitimate births, 2003 was the first time that Hispanics (immigrant and native) outnumbered blacks (immigrant and native). Our efforts to strengthen families must now take into account the impact of the growing diversity of the illegitimate population caused by immigration. Of course, sending illegal aliens home and selecting legal immigrants in the future based more on their education levels rather than the current system, which mainly gives visas to those with a relative here (or simply admitting fewer immigrants overall), could significantly reduce illegitimacy among immigrants in the future.

There is an unfortunate tendency to see immigrants either as paragons of virtue or as morally deficient in some way. When it comes to family values, neither view is correct. Immigrants are subject to the same social forces as everyone else, and illegitimacy is as big a problem among immigrants as it is for the rest of society. Thus, the idea that immigration will reinvigorate traditional family values is unrealistic.

End Notes

[1] See presidential remarks in 2004 which can be found at www.nnirr.org/elections/candidates/bush_address.html

[2] See "Immigrants and Immigration" at www.123helpme.com/assets/15306.html

[3] See "The Power of Social Networks Is Not so Obvious" at www.scf.usc.edu/~jour556/issues/family.shtml.

[4] Francis Fukuyama, "Immigrant Family Values," *Commentary*, May 1993, http://heather.cs.ucdavis.edu/pub/Immigration/ImmAndTheFamily/Fukuyama.html

[5] Professor Skerry's essay, *Do We Really Want Immigrants to Assimilate?* Can be found at www.cis.org/articles/1998/what.pdf

[6] "Identity Crisis Why we shouldn't worry about Mexican immigration," *Slate* magazine, June 4, 2004, www.slate.com/id/2101756

[7] *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, March 1965, http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm. Daniel T. Lichter et al.,"Race and the Retreat from Marriage: A Shortage of Marriageable Men?" *American Sociological Review,* December 1992. David Murray, "Poor Suffering Bastards," *Policy Review*, Spring 1994, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3647/is_199404/ai_n8716437. Sara McLanahan and Gary D. Sandefur, *Growing up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps,* Harvard University Press, 1994. Nicholas Eberstadt, *The Tyranny of Numbers: Mismeasurement & Misrule,* American Enterprise Institute Press, 1995. James Q. Wilson, "Why We Don't Marry," *City Journal,* Winter 2002, http://www.city-journal.org/html/12_1_why_we.html. Robert E. Rector, et al., "Increasing Marriage Would Dramatically Reduce Child Poverty," Heritage Foundation, May 2003, www.heritage.org/Research/Family/cda0306.cfm. Robert E. Rector, "Marriage: Still the Safest Place For Women and Children," Heritage Foundation, March 2004, www.heritage.org/Research/Family/bg1732.cfm.

[8] See "National Vital Statistics, Births: Final Data 2003," Vol. 54, No. 2, www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf

[9] See end note 8.

[10] We follow the example of NCHS in its reports and weight the data from the seven states to reflect the total number of births in 1980. For one section of this report we also use the 1995 NCHS data, which include 100 percent of births.

[11] In 2003 there were no missing values for marriage, but in earlier years there are a few cases in which the mother's marital status was not recorded.

[12] The mother's place of birth is not recorded for a very small fraction of births in the public use data. We allocate these mothers to native or foreign-born based on the age, race, and Hispanic origin of the mother. In 2003, 0.4 percent of mothers did not report a place of birth; in 1980 0.3 percent did not report a mother's place of birth.

[13] The NCHS definition of foreign-born is somewhat different from the concept of foreign-born used by the Census Bureau, which considers persons born in outlying U.S. territories and those born to American parents living overseas as natives. Unlike Census data, NCHS data do not include a question asking respondents if the mother was born abroad of American parents and therefore such persons cannot be distinguished from others born in foreign countries. Both those born in outlying territories and those born aboard of American parents comprise a very modest share of all births, thus the difference between the NCHS and Census Bureau definitions does not make a meaningful difference for this analysis.

[14] The figures for both 1980 and 2003 are based on the immigrant or foreign-born share of the total population using the NCHS definition and not that used by the Census Bureau.

[15] See Center for Immigration Studies Paper 23, *The High Cost of Cheap Labor: Illegal Immigration and the Federal Budget,* http://www.cis.org/articles/2004/fiscal.html. Also, Jeffrey S. Passel, "Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics," Pew Hispanic Center Paper, http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=46.

[16] Both the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, and the Pew Hispanic Center have estimated that 80 percent of the illegal alien population is from Latin America. See "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2005," http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ILL_PE_2005.pdf . See also "Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S." http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=61.

[17] Like all American citizens, Hispanic natives have the ability to sponsor anyone they choose to marry for a green card, subject to no numerical limitation. In fact, most Hispanic natives actually marry other natives, but those that wish to marry foreigners who are illegally in the country could still sponsor somone, which would allow that person to stay permanently. Thus it is very hard to see how illegality would cause high rates of illegitimacy among Hispanic natives. As we have seen, rates for native-born Hispanics are higher than for foreign-born Hispanics, a large percentage of whom are illegal aliens themselves.

[18] In its estimates based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), the Pew Hispanic Center estimated 6.2 million illegal immigrants from Mexico and 2.5 from the rest of Latin America. The CPS for March 2005 shows 10.8 million total immigrants (legal and illegal) from Mexico and 8.1 million from the rest of Latin America. Pew's estimates based on the CPS are adjusted for an undercount of about two million immigrants. Most of the undercount is for Mexican and Latin American immigrants. But even if the totals for immigrants (legal and illegal) from the CPS are adjusted up 10 percent (1.9 million), it would still mean that slightly more than half of the Mexican population is illegal and slightly less than 30 percent of the non-Mexican Hispanic immigrant population is illegal. See "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S." http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf.

[19] Figures for out-of-wedlock births come from the World Fertility Report 2003 Country Profiles, published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldfertility/Country_Profiles.pdf.

[20] Data for other counties at www.cis.org/articles/2007/illegitimacy.xls

[21] Like the NCHS we divide the number of single women ages 15 to 45 by the total number of births to such women, including the tiny number of births to women under age 15 or over age 45. We use the American Community Survey (ACS) for the number of women in this age group. The 2 percent of non-Hispanic persons who choose "other" or more than one race in the American Community Survey, are allocated to racial categorizes based on their share of the overall population. This is necessary so as to not overstate illegitimacy rates.

[22] Previously we mentioned that there are relatively few teenage immigrants. And of course, the vast majority of teenagers are unmarried among both immigrants and natives. So the fact that fewer immigrant women are in their teenage years may account for the higher marriage rate among immigrants. However, even if one looks at those over 20, the share of immigrant women who are unmarried is still much lower than natives: 31 percent for immigrants versus 44 percent for natives.

[23] Although we report figures by household in Table 10, when calculated by family the share of U.S.-born children living in family headed by married persons is almost exactly the same. A household is made up of individuals, related and unrelated, living in the same housing unit. A family is comprised of related individuals living in the same household unit. Thus there can be more than one family in a household. But the vast majority of both immigrants and natives live in single family households.

[24] The Census Bureau does the same kind of calculations as done in Table 10. For example see *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2005,* www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005.html. Table C2 of the Census report has the same general findings as those in Table 10 of this study. It should pointed out that the figures in Table C2 are for 2005 and include all children, not just U.S.-born children as is the case in Table 10. Despite this, the results from the Census Bureau match very closely those in Table 10 of this study.

Backgrounder

Illegitimate Nation
An Examination of Out-of-Wedlock Births
Among Immigrants and Natives

By Steven A. Camarota

The argument is often made that immigrants have a stronger commitment to traditional family values than do native-born Americans. However, birth records show that about one-third of births to both groups are now to unmarried parents. Moreover, unmarried immigrants are significantly more likely than unmarried natives to give birth. Illegitimacy may be especially problematic for children of immigrants because they need strong families to adjust to life in America.

- Both immigrants and natives have seen a dramatic increase in out-of-wedlock births, from 13 percent in 1980 for immigrants (legal and illegal) to 32 percent in 2003 and from 19 percent to 35 percent for natives over the same period.

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