

KEY FINDINGS

Launch of the Innocenti Insight:
**Children in Immigrant Families in Eight Affluent Countries:
Their family, national and international context**
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Key Findings

This report presents statistics on children in eight affluent countries who are living in immigrant families with at least one foreign-born immigrant parent. Children in the families of refugees, asylum-seekers, immigrants with irregular status may or may not be included depending on the data sources. Main thematic findings include the following:

Demographic Features

- Children in immigrant families account for a large share of the overall child population in the eight affluent countries: Italy (10 per cent), United Kingdom (16 per cent), France (17 per cent), the Netherlands and the United States of America (22 per cent each), Germany (26 per cent), Australia (33 per cent) and Switzerland (39 per cent).
- Children in immigrant families from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), account for a substantial share of all children in the destination countries in this report. In Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States, they represent more than a half of the children in immigrant families.
- In six of the countries under study on which information is available, the vast majority of children in immigrant families with origins in LMICs (63–87 per cent) are second generation immigrants, that is, they were born in the country of settlement.
- Children in immigrant families with origins in LMICs will play an increasingly prominent role during adulthood in countries' economic and social life, partly because of the growth in their numbers and partly because of low rates of natural increase in the respective nonimmigrant populations are leading to population ageing in these countries.

Country of Origin and Language

- The countries under study show high concentrations of particular national immigrant groups but each country is also home to immigrants from an enormous array of countries of origin.
- The share of children in immigrant families from LMICs who speak a language at home other than the language of the country of settlement ranges from 56 per cent in Australia to 73–77 per cent in France and the United States. At the same time, few speak the heritage language of their parents at home exclusively with their parents; most also speak the language of the country of settlement with their parents.

- Children in immigrant families with origins in LMICs often differ from the native population in cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, thereby posing important challenges and opportunities for civil integration and social inclusion.

Family Composition

- Children in immigrant families from LMICs are as likely as or more likely than children in native-born families to live with two parents (except in the Netherlands), and they are more likely than children in native-born families to live in households with two or more siblings, (except in Australia).
- In the five countries under study on which information is available, at least one child in ten and, often, one child or more in every four immigrant families from specific LMICs live with at least one parent who is a citizen of the country of settlement. Thus they enjoy the civic and political rights associated with citizenship.

Parental Background

- In Australia and the United Kingdom, and to a small extent in Italy, children in immigrant families with LMIC origins are more likely than children in native-born families to live with university-educated parents; in most of the countries, they are more likely to live with parents whose educational attainment is quite limited.
- In about one-half of the countries under study, children in immigrant families with LMIC origins are about as likely as children in native-born families to live with fathers who are employed full or part time, while, in the remaining countries, the likelihood is much less. In Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, from about one third to two fifths of children in families with LMIC origins have a mother who is actively participating in the economy; this share rises to about half or more in Australia, Switzerland and the United States. The share of immigrant children living with mothers who are working full-time is much smaller.

Poverty and Housing

- After accounting for social transfers, it is found that poverty rates are higher among children in immigrant families than among households with children in native-born families by 6–7 per cent in Australia and Germany and by 12–13 per cent in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The poverty gaps separating children in families with LMIC origins from children in native-born families are greater than these figures, as children in immigrant families with origins in high-income countries (HICs) probably experience comparatively low poverty rates.
- Overcrowding is quite common among households with children in both immigrant and native-born families in Italy. It is also quite common in the other affluent countries among households with children in families with LMIC origins, particularly the households of families seeking refuge or asylum from wars, civil disturbances or persecution. In the various countries studied homeownership rates range from 25 to 66 per cent among the households of children in immigrant families with LMIC origins. This suggests that these families are investing in their communities in a tangible way, by purchasing homes.

Immigrant Youth

- Youth in immigrant families vary greatly in educational opportunities and outcomes across countries of origin; some immigrant groups are at a considerable disadvantage. Factors contributing to this variation are family socio-economic status, differences in enrolments in separate educational tracks in school and segregation and discrimination. Also, youth in immigrant families vary greatly by country of origin in their risk of not being

enrolled in school and not working. The lack of educational and employment opportunities among some groups undermines social cohesion and represents a waste of potentially valuable human resources.

Health and Social Inclusion

- The findings of this research complement and are reinforced by the outcomes of related research on immigrant families in affluent countries, which are reviewed:
 - There is considerable diversity in health outcomes among children in immigrant families relative to children in native-born families depending on country of origin and the particular health indicator.
 - Success in social inclusion is most evident among children in immigrant families who participate in the cultures of both the country of origin and the country of settlement, including by becoming fluent in both languages.

Socio-Economic Integration and Policy

- The study identifies scope for government policies in affluent countries to further foster civil integration and social inclusion in a wide range of arenas. These policies would benefit not only children and parents in immigrant families from LMICs, but also the affluent host countries.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

Note to Editors

Embargoed media materials and copies of the *Innocenti Insight* in English, as well as the sevenational reports for seven of the eight countries are available from the Centre's newsroom: <http://www.unicef-irc.org/presscentre/indexNewsroom.html>

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