LOS ANGELES 2010 STATE OF THE CITY
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Los Angeles has been the nation’s major immigrant-receiving city of the last half century, just as New York was the major gateway of the early 20th century. However, in the new century, the rapid growth of immigration has ended and past waves of immigrants have successfully settled in, marking a new maturity in Los Angeles. These changes were underway for some time, commencing with the recession of the 1990s and growing more evident since 2000. Today, the demographics in Los Angeles are very different from what they were in 1990 (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1997). What does the new era imply about the prospects for immigrant integration in Los Angeles? What are its lessons for citizen-voters and policy makers?

The new demographics of Los Angeles are not like the old. This article provides an overview of major changes in demographics that may be unrecognized because they are so recent and even startling in their difference. In the most abrupt sense, it can be said that immigration has reversed course in Los Angeles, switching from growth to decline and returning to patterns prevailing in 1970 or earlier. Yet this simple view would overlook the greater changes stemming from a consolidation of past immigrant gains. Los Angeles is not returning to the past; rather, the city is advancing to a more stable and rewarding immigrant future, one that reflects its new maturity.

Though the origins of today’s immigrants and their racial or ethnic makeup are little different than they were at the height of the immigration boom, the major change is that the number of newcomers has decreased dramatically. The total foreign-born population in Los Angeles has leveled off and even begun to decline. At the same time within this stable population, a second change is the growing average length of settlement and a much higher ratio of long-settled to recently arrived immigrants. The preponderance of the long settled is greater in some ethnic groups than others but is growing overall, which bears the promise of the civic benefit that a greater number of old hands is assisting the incorporation of newcomers. This rising “settlement ratio” is very different from earlier years when immigration was a new event and most immigrants were new. In addition, longer settlement leads directly to substantial increases in immigrant integration, because longer residence is linked to many achievements, including increased proficiency in spoken English and higher levels of homeownership, the vaunted American dream.

The new maturity of Los Angeles reaches beyond the immigrant population. It also involves a homegrown generation of native Californians, the children of immigrants as well as the children and grandchildren of Baby Boomers. We stand on the threshold of historic change, because for the first time, the majority Californians and 49.0% of Los Angeles County residents were born in California, living their full lives and educated here, not in Iowa, Texas, Mexico, Taiwan, or some other land. At the same time, the leading edge of the Baby Boomers is on the threshold of retirement, and the “senior ratio” of older Angelenos to working-age residents is slated to more than double between 2000 and 2030. Immigrants...
and their children will play an increasingly important role in this aging context. A successful future for a maturing Los Angeles will depend greatly on the integration and advancement of immigrants. Thus, these trends demand our closest attention.

**LOS ANGELES: THE LEADER IN IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT**

For several decades, Los Angeles has led the nation in immigrant settlement (Fix, McHugh, Matteo Terrazas, & Laglagaron, 2008), but it was not always that way. As recently as 1970, only 14.6% of the city’s residents were foreign born. What we think of as Los Angeles’ current demographic profile was formed in just 20 years, between 1970 and 1990. By 1990, fully 38.4% of the city’s residents were foreign born, over half of whom had lived in the U.S. less than 10 years (Table 1). Comparisons with New York City, the nation’s other leading city of immigrant settlement, are revealing. Back in 1970, New York had a much larger foreign-born share in its population (18.2%) than did Los Angeles (14.6%), but over the next two decades, the share in Los Angeles leaped past New York, reaching 38.4% in Los Angeles in 1990 versus 28.4% in New York (Table 1). In the intervening years, the Los Angeles region had become much more attractive than New York to newcomers.

Los Angeles County is roughly the size of New York City with its five boroughs. At the heart of the region’s attraction is the City of Los Angeles, which drew 754,000 new immigrant arrivals in the decade preceding 1990 (or a total of 1.5 million in the whole of Los Angeles County). In contrast, New York City drew 953,000 new arrivals, little more than the City of Los Angeles, even though New York is twice as large overall. New York’s new arrivals also did not increase the total immigrant population as much because of the much heavier turnover of population moving out of New York, both native and foreign born (data not shown).

In contrast to this history of very rapid immigrant population growth, since 1990 the rate of new arrivals to Los Angeles has slowed and the total foreign-born population has begun to level off. A close examination of the pace of accelerating and then slowing immigration to Los Angeles is provided in Figure 1, comparing the change in the annual flows since 1980 with state and national trends. To enable comparisons of geographic areas of such different size, we express each flow as a percentage of its own level in 1980.
As compared with California and the nation as a whole, the decline in immigration to Los Angeles is striking, especially in view of its earlier acceleration. Figure 1 shows the percentage of change in new immigrant arrivals since 1980. Across the United States, the number of new immigrant arrivals increased by about 45% from 1980 to 1990, and in California the increase was even higher. The 60% increase in immigration in California between 1980 and 1990 caused fears among some voters that, if this pace of acceleration continued, the state would be swamped with immigrants, and that set the context supporting passage of Proposition 187 in 1994.\(^1\) This perception persists today in some quarters, even though after 1990 immigration began to level off in California, and after 2000 it declined substantially. The trend was intensified in the case of Los Angeles, and by 2000 the number of new immigrant arrivals had fallen below 1980 levels, with steeper declines since then.

Public perception of local immigration trends is confused because of media reports based on the trends in other states and in the United States as a whole, where the flow of new arrivals continued to accelerate from 1990 to 2000 by 56.8%. Increases in immigrant arrivals were especially dramatic in certain states, growing by 177% in Arizona or 330% in southeastern states such as Georgia. This drew substantial press coverage that was also viewed by Californians, and the debates emanating from other states appear to have shaped Californians’ assumptions about the extent of immigration in their own state. In fact, California was on a different track, because the deep recession of the 1990s diverted new arrivals to other destinations with

\(^1\) No matter that illegal immigration had sharply declined in the early 1990s (Johnson, 1996; Myers, 2007, pp. 73–78), approaching 0 by time of the Prop 187 ballot vote. California voters were operating with a presumption of continued acceleration from the past.
better job opportunities. (Certainly, there was no visible decline in the Asian or Latino population, but much of that growth came from second- and third-generation residents, not new immigrants.) Those distant settlers created new migration networks that spread information about better jobs and cheaper housing in other states, leading to the dramatic increases reported in the press. Even after California's economic recovery, immigrant arrivals continued to decline in this state for a number of reasons. Better prospects elsewhere, stronger border controls, stronger enforcement of housing codes and labor laws in Los Angeles, and soaring housing costs that were far above the national average created ever higher barriers that discouraged migrants of all sorts. Subsequently, the construction industry began its contraction after 2006, eliminating many low-skilled jobs upon which Latino immigrants depended. With the onset of the Great Recession, unemployment soared in all industries, reducing the attraction for new immigrants nationwide, but especially in California where unemployment was higher.

The net result for the City of Los Angeles is that the foreign-born population ceased its rapid expansion, both because of fewer new arrivals and also the loss of some established immigrant residents. Between 1990 and 2000, the foreign-born population of the city grew by only 13.5%, reaching 1.512 million (or 40.9% of the total population). After 2000, due to even steeper declines in immigration and other losses (death of aged, long-settled immigrants and out-migration of others), the total foreign-born population of the city has leveled off in 2008 and 2009, according to the most recent available data (Table 2). At the same time, the percentage foreign born of the total population has fallen to 39.7%. This marks the end of four decades of rapid growth in the immigrant population. We now need a new understanding of the foreign-born population in a maturing Los Angeles.

### Table 2. Number and Percentage of Immigrants in Los Angeles City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign-Born Population</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage Foreign Born</th>
<th>Percentage Change in Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>802,920</td>
<td>2,978,260</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,336,665</td>
<td>3,485,398</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,512,720</td>
<td>3,694,834</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,521,119</td>
<td>3,831,880</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The slowing of immigration has led to changes in the characteristics of foreign-born residents in Los Angeles as well as their numbers. In short, there are fewer newcomers and more long-settled immigrants. Figure 2

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2 A number of different but complementary accounts provide this comprehensive view. The emphasis on stricter labor and housing enforcement is by UCLA sociologist Ivan Light (2006), while emphasis on border controls and better jobs elsewhere is the theme of Massey and Capoferro (2008). The account by Myers (2007, chapter 5) gives primacy to the shock of the deep California recession of the early 1990s, which spurred migrant exploration of other destinations. It is also interesting how Massey and Capoferro downplay the discouraging effects of housing prices, unlike Myers and Light, who live in California.

3 The latest data available from the American Community Survey during the spring/summer of 2010, when this study was conducted, were collected in 2008. In September 2010, the Census Bureau released the first data from the 2009 survey, with the complete data scheduled for December 2010 release. An update to key trends reported in the present study and supplementary analysis will be found on the Population Dynamics Web site at USC. Search for "popdynamics" or go to http://www.usc.edu/schools/spd/research/popdynamics/.

4 This percentage is lower than reported in the 2006 and 2007 American Community Survey (39.9%) as well as lower than the 2000 Census (40.9%).
shows the total percentage of Los Angeles residents who are foreign born, breaking these into the components that are recently arrived and longer settled. While the total percentage foreign born began to slow its increase, there has been a dramatic increase in the share that has resided in Los Angeles for more than five years (“settled”) and especially more than twenty years (“long settled”). In 1990, recent arrivals in the past five years comprised 12.3% of the total city population, but this fell to 5.4% of the city’s population by 2008. Whereas these newcomers of fewer than 10 years’ residence had made up 60.2% of the foreign-born population in 1980, and 56.6% in 1990, the share fell to 30.1% by 2008.

As new immigrant arrivals declined in number, those that came in the boom years would continue to be prominent in Los Angeles, but now acting as long-settled residents. A dramatic shift is portrayed in Figure 2, as immigrants residing at least 20 years in the U.S. reached 16.5% of the total city population in 2008. These long-settled immigrants comprised 42.3% of the foreign born, nearly triple their share in 1990. The overall picture is one of a rapidly maturing immigrant population, stable in total number but rapidly growing more experienced and longer settled.

Popular understanding about immigrants in Los Angeles needs to shift. The rapid accumulation of long-settled immigrants, combined with a declining number of newcomers, runs counter to widespread assumptions that immigrants are new residents. In fact, even in 1980 new arrivals were a minority of the foreign born. Today new arrivals are a far smaller minority, and nearly half of the foreign born are now long-settled residents of more than 20 years. Los Angeles is still a city of immigrants, but those immigrants may be surprisingly different from what many people expect. They are no longer new.

This maturation can be best understood through changes in the “settlement ratio,” as we term it, between long-settled and newcomer immigrants. This growing

Figure 2. Foreign-Born Population by Length of Residence in Los Angeles City

Figure 3. Ratio of Long-Settled to New Immigrants by Country of Origin

Note: Long settled immigrants have 20 or more years in the U.S.; new arrivals have less than 5 years in the U.S.
settlement ratio promises significant advantages for immigrant communities in Los Angeles. When new immigrants arrived in 1980 or 1990, they joined a community dominated by other new arrivals. There were relatively few oldtimers to offer assistance in learning the ropes of LA. Social relationships between settled immigrants and recent arrivals play an important role in immigrant integration, from providing housing advice to information about jobs, education, and services. Government agencies and philanthropic groups are most effective when they can leverage these social networks of support (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009). Just how dramatically the situation has changed can be demonstrated by forming a ratio between the numbers of long-settled and new immigrants, best calculated by country of origin, because that better reflects social networks of support.

The settlement ratio of long-settled to new immigrants has escalated six-fold, rising from 0.53 in 1980 to 3.09 in 2008, considering all foreign born in Los Angeles as a whole. This implies that newcomers today have six times as many helping hands to aid their incorporation into the city. Figure 3 charts the growth in the settlement ratio from 1980 to 2008 for Los Angeles city and county, showing this separately by sending country. Only after 1990 did this ratio begin to grow, but the major increase has been only since 2000, too recent for many to have yet noticed. For some groups the change has been particularly dramatic. Among Mexican immigrants in 1990, settled immigrants in the city were so outnumbered by recent arrivals that the settlement ratio was only 0.23. By 2008, however, the ratio increased tremendously, and there were three long-settled immigrants from Mexico of more than 20 years residence for every new arrival. This twelve-fold increase indicates a much more favorable context for social assistance in the Mexican immigrant community.

Similar increases in the settlement ratio are observed in every ethnic group in Los Angeles. The increase for Mexicans is most important because they are by far the largest group, but even greater proportional increases in the ratio of long-settled to new immigrants are found for many groups that had practically no long-settled immigrants in 1990 and now have substantial assistance ratios: Guatemalans (from 0.03 to 1.36), Koreans (from 0.06 to 2.36), and Vietnamese (from 0.02 to 5.0). These substantial increases in settlement ratios are major contributors to the growth of support structures in each ethnic community. More attention is needed to see how much the patterns of assistance have shifted and, if not, what can be done to better utilize this great resource for enhanced immigrant integration.

Before leaving this topic, we might note the differences between Los Angeles city and county settlement ratios, which reflect patterns of immigrant gateway settlement and suburbanization. Instances where the increase in the ratio proceeds equally in the city and county imply that the city is not losing its long-settled immigrants to the suburbs. However, it is apparent that the settlement ratio in 2008 is higher overall in the county for most groups (Figure 3). The greatest equality between city and county is found for immigrants from the Philippines and Vietnam; while the greatest shift toward the county is apparent for Taiwanese (largely settling in the San Gabriel Valley). Iranians stand out for posting significantly higher settlement ratios in the city of Los Angeles than the county, indicating that fewer of the earlier arrivals are being lost from the city.

**RECENT NEW ARRIVALS RESEMBLE THOSE FROM EARLIER DECADES BUT ARE MORE EDUCATED**

An understanding of Los Angeles’s changing immigrant population also requires an appreciation of the degree to which the new arrivals today resemble earlier arrivals in key characteristics. The major finding is that

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5 See the discussion of Iranian settlement in older housing and the most urbanized portion of the Los Angeles area in Modarres (1998, pp. 38–39).
countries of origin and racial composition of new immigrants are unchanged since 1980. However, within each of these origin groups, the educational attainment of new arrivals is higher today than it was for arrivals in earlier decades.

**Constant Ethnic Origins of New Arrivals**

The foreign-born residents in Los Angeles come from a myriad of backgrounds, regions, and countries. Mexico remains the most prominent sending country, accounting for 38.6% of recent arrivals, but people from 13 other countries contribute at least 1% of the city’s recently arrived foreign-born residents. A listing of arrivals in the most recent five years (2003 to 2008) is presented in Table 3.

Looking across past decades, the general makeup of new immigrant arrivals has remained very similar in Los Angeles. Figure 4 shows the racial and ethnic makeup of foreign-born residents, based on immigrant arrivals in the five years preceding each census. In 1980, nearly 60% (58.1%) of recent arrivals were Latino, compared with 23.7% Asian and 16.1% non-Hispanic white. The Latino share of foreign-born arrivals expanded somewhat in 1990, reaching 68.1% and then leveling off at about 65% in 2000 and 2008. Asians remained a substantial portion of recent foreign-born arrivals to Los Angeles in 1990 (18.3%), 2000 (18.8%), and 2008 (21.5%).

The proximity of Mexico and Central America certainly plays an ongoing role in the racial and ethnic makeup of the foreign born in Los Angeles. The steady share of Asians, however, also highlights Los Angeles as a leading player in the Pacific Rim and as a continuing popular destination for foreign born from all over the world. The one exception is that immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean seldom choose Los Angeles as their destination in the United States, more often traveling to the New York region. The racial and ethnic patterns remain so constant over the decades because migration networks link new immigrants with previous immigrants who are now

### Table 3. Top 40 Countries of Origin for Recent Immigrants in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Immigrants in Past 5 Years</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Recent Immigrants</td>
<td>203,771</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>78,710</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>24,161</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>21,961</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>12,321</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>11,030</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4,960</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4,799</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>4,178</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>3,461</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2,949</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>2,231</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel/Palestine</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1,747</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1,404</td>
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<td>Peru</td>
<td>1,281</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1,095</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>Cuba</td>
<td>958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>836</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>Ecuador</td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>454</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey, 2008.*
long settled. As a result, Latino- and Asian-origin immigrants continue to be a majority of those who come to Los Angeles.

**Increasing Education of New Arrivals**

Though the ethnic makeup of immigrants to Los Angeles remains constant, there has been a noteworthy increase in the educational attainment of recent arrivals compared with those who came in earlier decades. As shown in Figure 5, there has been a decrease in immigrant arrivals lacking a high school education and an increase in those with a bachelor’s degree or higher. These changes appear to have occurred in every ethnic group and are roughly the same in Los Angeles as in the United States as a whole. Unfortunately, the educational attainment of Latino immigrants remains markedly below that of other immigrant groups, with many more who lack a high school degree and many fewer who have completed a BA degree or higher (Figure 5). Nonetheless, college completion among Latinos is proportionally much higher in 2008 than it was in 1980 (8.7% versus 3.9%), and for all immigrant arrivals college completion increased from 17.2% to 26.4% between 1980 and 2008.

**TWO INDICATORS OF IMMIGRANT ACHIEVEMENT AFTER SETTLEMENT**

Perhaps the most striking element of immigrant integration in Los Angeles is the achievements made by the long-settled foreign-born residents. In this section we answer the question of how well immigrants are faring after they have resided in the United States for two or more decades. A common fallacy is the belief that immigrants do not change much over time, that they remain like Peter Pan, frozen in time, never growing older or advancing in any way from the time when they were newcomers (Myers 2007, pp. 104–105). All the evidence speaks against this Peter Pan fallacy. In 2008, we find that the foreign born spoke more English, owned more homes, and were more educated than at any time previously; these strides are promising for immigrant well-being and also for the growth and sustainability of the Los Angeles economy.

**Growing English Proficiency**

English proficiency is a key benchmark in immigrant integration. For non-English-speaking immigrants, learning and being able to functionally use
English outside the home is vital for civic integration and upward economic mobility. Figure 6 highlights the achievements made by immigrants of successively longer residence in Los Angeles and the United States as a whole. Latinos have a distinctly lower probability than other groups of speaking English well. However, among Latinos and other groups, there is a steady increase in the ability to speak English well as they reside longer in the United States.

In Los Angeles, among foreign-born residents of all races and ethnicities that arrived before 1980 (residing here for 28 years or longer), over 70% of most groups and 50% of Latinos are proficient in English. This is far better than the case for Latinos who arrived recently (only 32% proficiency). Many of the non-Hispanic black arrivals are from countries where English is the main language, which accounts for the near 100% English proficiency in that group. Latinos, however, come
from countries where English is not the predominant language. In addition, immigrant groups with fewer years of education have had much less opportunity to learn English in their home countries prior to emigrating to the U.S. For such groups it is especially important to have English language classes readily available in Los Angeles (Fix et al., 2009).

Immigrants who are proficient in English often prefer to converse with relatives and friends in their mother tongue. This preference is reflected in the language people report using at home. Whereas English proficiency is useful outside the home as a means of facilitating civic and economic integration, language spoken at home is a matter of cultural preference. This “home” use often carries over to streets in the community. Angelenos who are not immigrants may wonder if the people they hear speaking foreign languages know English at all. In fact, the evidence is that the percentage of immigrants who are English proficient is far greater than those choosing to speak English at home. Among all immigrants, 86% are English proficient, but only 32% are likely to speak English at home. There also is relatively little change in this preference at home even among long-time immigrants in Los Angeles (data not shown).

Soaring Rates of Homeownership

A second indicator of immigrant integration is attainment of homeownership, the American Dream. Homeownership signifies not only the desire to root oneself in a new country but also the financial and social capital to do so. Many times immigrant households pool incomes to purchase homes and make monthly payments. When foreign-born residents purchase homes, it is good for the economy as well as good for the overall status of immigrant integration in the city, state, and nation. Foreign-born homebuyers are a mainstay of the Los Angeles housing market, accounting for 45.7% of all the homebuyers in the last five years in the city. Native-born home sellers benefit directly through the partnership of buyers and sellers. In this respect, immigrant integration is a great boon to the

Figure 6. English Proficiency by Race and Length of U.S. Residence in 2008

Note: English proficient defined as those who speak English well or very well.

6 The immigrant share of home buyers is based on owner occupants who occupied their homes in the last five years, as reported in the 2008 American Community Survey.
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Figure 7. Immigrant Homeownership by Race and Length of U.S. Residence in 2008 (all immigrant householders)

Table 4. Children Under 18 in Los Angeles City in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>882,579</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Born</td>
<td>815,121</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>67,458</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Foreign Born</td>
<td>523,192</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Mixed*</td>
<td>79,798</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Native Born</td>
<td>279,589</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>67,458</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation*</td>
<td>535,532</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Generation</td>
<td>279,589</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Children with mixed-nativity parents have one foreign-born and one native-born parent, and are classified as second generation.

A NEW GENERATION BORN IN CALIFORNIA

No matter the recent history of immigration to Los Angeles and the large share of residents who are foreign born, only a small fraction of children in the city are immigrants. Of all the children under age 18 who were living in the city of Los Angeles in 2008, only 7.6% were born outside the U.S. Their families, however, often have immigrant origins. The majority of children have at least one immigrant parent, 68.3%, as detailed in Table 4. Their parents were the first generation to live in the U.S., while the children are native-born citizens and form a second generation (60.7%). Children whose parents are also native-born comprise a third (or higher) generation. That group represents less than a third (31.7%) of all children in Los Angeles.
It was only in 2009 that our research group at USC reported the discovery that a majority of California’s population for the first time in history was “homegrown,” meaning California-born rather than imported from other states and lands. The great majority of children are California born, with only a small fraction born elsewhere in the U.S. or outside the U.S. This pattern is evident among all major racial and ethnic groups in Los Angeles, as shown in Figure 8. However, among adults who are Asian and Pacific Islanders, the vast majority are foreign born, as is a very large share of Latinos who are middle-aged or older. The African American category contains the fewest foreign-born residents, and in fact a much larger share of African Americans are California-born residents than whites or any other group. The patterns for adults are the legacy of past migration, which brought large numbers of new residents to California in the post-World War II era. The slowdown of migration since 1990 has led to fewer newcomers among young adults. Instead, today's young residents are more often the children of previous migrants, whether from Iowa or Mexico.

The significance of the new generation born in California is manifold. Even with immigrant parents, the new generation is not “foreign”. These are the new native sons and daughters of California, growing up in California schools, and destined to become the future workers, tax payers, and home buyers of California. Our research shows that the native Californians are more rooted in the state and less than one third as likely to migrate away than young workers who were born outside California. By virtue of growing up in this area, they are more fully integrated, have deep attachments, and hold strong loyalties to their homeland.

The new generation has arrived none too soon, because Los Angeles's native-born population is rapidly graying, as is the entire U.S. population. The leading edge of the Baby Boomers is on the threshold of retirement, beginning to cross age 65 in 2011; and the “senior ratio” of older Angelinos to working-age residents is slated to more than double between 2000 and 2030, throwing everything out of balance in our society and economy (Figure 9). Nothing resembling this aging problem has ever been encountered before in America. This tsunami of aging threatens to undermine our economy with too many retirees and home sellers, while at the same time it overwhelms our government with the needs of aged dependents.

The problem is even worse in Los Angeles than in the nation as a whole. Whereas the senior ratio is poised to increase in the nation from 23.8 to 42.0 between 2000 and 2040 (an increase of 76.5%), in Los Angeles it is expected to soar from 18.8 to 43.6 (an increase of 132%). We face a true emergency in the next two decades, and we need to recognize that the children of Los Angeles's immigrants have a crucial role to play in this context. The challenges of a maturing Los Angeles require us to make the most of our scarce and precious human resources.

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7 The discovery of a new homegrown majority in California was reported in Myers, Pitkin, and Ramirez (2009).
8 Estimates of homegrown status for Los Angeles and other counties in 2010 were presented in Myers and Pitkin with Mawhorter, Goldberg, and Min (2010).
9 See Myers et al. (2009).
10 We define the senior ratio as the number of residents aged 65 and older divided by residents aged 25 to 64. Prime working age is commonly defined as 25 to 64. Granted that many residents over 65 may not be retired, but virtually all will be retired by age 75, and most are eligible for health care and pension benefits by 65. Similarly, many residents may be working before age 25, but most young people are either in school or military, in apprentice positions, or not yet in well-paying jobs. Demographers traditionally use age 15 as the beginnings of working age, but that is more appropriate for a rural, farm labor economy than for our modern society. Certainly these young people cannot be expected to support the elderly or buy their homes.
Figure 8. Birthplaces of Los Angeles City Residents by Age and Race in 2008 (Percentage of Each Age Group)

Demographic change is continuing so rapidly in Los Angeles that what many think of as “new” is really the pattern prevailing in 1990, which has now become “old.” Application of analytical tools and data from demography can help us comprehend the longer arc of change in Los Angeles. Some of the particular changes are so recent that policy makers can scarcely see them, let alone recognize where the change is headed or what it should mean for public policy. Our aim in this paper has been to facilitate recognition of major new insights, grouping five key findings under the broad rubric of “the new maturity.”

Immigration remains at the core of Los Angeles’s identity, but the city has entered a period of new maturity. Our first major finding is that many fewer new immigrants are entering the city today than at any time since 1970. This slowing of newcomers has been under way for 20 years, but now the total foreign-born population has stopped growing and even begun to slightly decline. This is a dramatically different feature of Los Angeles demography than we have been accustomed to over the last several decades.

Our second major finding is that Los Angeles’s immigrants are now predominantly long settled, bringing many advantages to the city. The settlement ratio of longtime residents to newcomers has sharply increased in every ethnic group. Whereas in 1980 or 1990 there may have been only one longtime immigrant resident for every two or more newcomers, by 2008 we find the ratio reversed to three long-settled immigrants for every single newcomer—a six-fold increase or even more for some ethnic groups. Policy makers and service providers have not yet begun to appreciate how this new maturity...
of immigrant settlement might enhance the prospects for immigrant integration, both among the oldtimers and
the newcomers whom they assist with helping hands.

Meanwhile, the city’s population is rapidly aging, our
third aspect of the new maturity, placing an unprecedent-
ed importance on the new generation now being raised
in the city. The soaring senior ratio of residents aged 65
and older to those aged 25 to 64 is upon us. This aspect
of the new maturity in Los Angeles poses grave economic
and policy challenges. In brief, there will be too many peo-
ple leaving the workforce, too many requiring pensions
and healthcare, which they surely deserve, and too many
who are prospective home sellers rather than buyers. The
Baby Boomer tsunami threatens to swamp us all.

The fourth facet of the new maturity in Los Angeles
is the formation of a new, homegrown generation that
has become the majority of our residents for the first
time. Since before the Gold Rush, the people of California
have been predominantly drawn from other states and
nations. It is a major sign of population maturity that Los
Angeles and California have become more than a frontier.
Ours is now a land of settlement where families are born
and raised and where the third generation Californian will
no longer be such a rarity. The majority of young people
in Los Angeles are born here, with parents who are ei-
ther immigrants or Baby Boomers. Living their whole lives
here, these children are our responsibility, and they will, in
turn, be responsible for us.

Finally, the fate of Los Angeles will depend upon our
social and political maturity: how we as voters, taxpayers,
civic leaders, and responsible citizens will exercise our
stewardship. The question in doubt about the new ma-
turity is our willingness to embrace the new Los Angeles
and the new California, to seize upon all of the positive
opportunities that are possible, and to accept our duty
of fostering the homegrown generation that will one day
help us all. To be fully realized, the new maturity requires a
new sense of responsibility for building our shared future.

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