

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Changing FACE of Massachusetts



A PROJECT OF THE NEW SKILLS FOR A NEW ECONOMY AWARENESS AND ACTION CAMPAIGN BY:

MassINC
THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE FOR A NEW COMMONWEALTH
Publisher of *CommonWealth* magazine

**CENTER FOR LABOR
MARKET STUDIES**

SPONSORED BY:



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MassINC wishes to express its thanks to those individuals and organizations whose financial support makes our work possible. Your generosity is deeply appreciated.

MassINC's Mission

The mission of MassINC is to develop a public agenda for Massachusetts that promotes the growth and vitality of the middle class. We envision a growing, dynamic middle class as the cornerstone of a new commonwealth in which every citizen can live the American Dream. Our governing philosophy is rooted in the ideals embodied by the American Dream: equality of opportunity, personal responsibility, and a strong commonwealth.

MassINC is a non-partisan, evidence-based organization. We reject rigid ideologies that are out of touch with the times and we deplore the too-common practice of partisanship for its own sake. We follow the facts wherever they lead us. The complex challenges of a new century require a new approach that transcends the traditional political boundaries.

MassINC is a different kind of organization, combining the intellectual rigor of a think tank with the vigorous civic activism of an advocacy campaign. Our work is organized within four Initiatives that use research, journalism, and public education to address the most important forces shaping the lives of middle-class citizens:

- Economic Prosperity—Expanding economic growth and opportunity
- Lifelong Learning—Building a ladder of opportunity through the continuum of learning
- Safe Neighborhoods—Creating crime-free communities for all
- Civic Renewal—Restoring a sense of “commonwealth”

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The Mission of the New Skills for a New Economy Campaign

Our mission is to create opportunities for workers to acquire the skills necessary to be productive contributors to the economic vitality of Massachusetts. By mobilizing state leaders—both public and private—we aim to safeguard the Commonwealth's competitive position in the global economy. We will promote workforce development policies, resources, and practices that have demonstrated effectiveness in preparing workers for the challenges of the 21st century workforce and seek the reforms necessary to maintain our competitive edge.

About the Authors:

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The Changing **FACE** of Massachusetts

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June 2005

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Dear Friend:

MassINC is proud to present *The Changing Face of Massachusetts*. This joint project with the Center for Labor Market Studies was made possible by the generous support of a number of sponsors, including the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Verizon, Citizens Bank, Polaroid, and Bank of America's Frank W. and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund.

The demographics of Massachusetts are changing, and they are changing rapidly. As of 2004, 1 in 7 Massachusetts residents was born in another country. The impact of immigrants on the Massachusetts economy is significant. Over the last 25 years, the share of immigrants in our workforce has nearly *doubled*. Today, 17 percent of our workforce are immigrants—up from roughly 9 percent in 1980. Moreover, over the last few years, it appears that the rate of increase is accelerating.

There has also been a major shift in the countries of origin among immigrants arriving in Massachusetts. Nearly half of all new immigrants hail from Latin America and the Caribbean, and another 23 percent come from Asia. Consider that from 2000 to 2003, nearly 1 out of every 5 immigrants entering the state was Brazilian. Increasingly, immigrants are coming from countries where English is not the primary language. Thus, while immigrants have become our state's principal source of new labor, growing numbers are arriving with limited English-speaking skills and a substantial number lack a high school diploma.

Immigrants with limited English skills are clustered in the state's larger cities. In some cities, such as Lawrence and New Bedford, a substantial portion of the city's overall population does not speak English at all or does not speak it well. These facts add up to a serious human capital challenge for local leaders and our state as a whole.

For MassINC, *The Changing Face of Massachusetts* has been a particularly exciting project. It builds on *The Changing Workforce*, previous research with the Center for Labor Market Studies and Citizens Bank. It is also an outcome of our New Skills for a New Economy Awareness and Action Campaign. The New Skills campaign recognizes that the Bay State's basic comparative advantage is having the most skilled workforce in the nation and focuses on preparing that workforce for the new economy ahead. Speaking English is a key part of this challenge as this new research bears out. We hope and expect it will be a valuable resource for all those who care about the future of the Massachusetts workforce.

We are extraordinarily grateful to our partners: Andrew Sum, Johan Uvin, Ishwar Khatiwada and their colleagues. This project, which began as a brief inquiry, has culminated in a comprehensive report that allows us to answer critical questions about how our immigrant population is changing and the implications for the state's economy. On the MassINC team, Dana Ansel, John Schneider, Rachel Deyette Werkema, and Greg Leiserson helped shepherd this project to completion. We would also like to thank the many reviewers whose critical insights have strengthened the final report.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our sponsors who have been generous and enthusiastic partners throughout the development of this project. They have been ideal sponsors—encouraging the authors to go where the data led them. MassINC aims to inject solid, objective research into today's public policy debates, and to that end, we hope that you find *The Changing Face of Massachusetts* a provocative and timely resource. We invite you to become more involved in MassINC, and we welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,



Ian Bowles
President & CEO



Gloria Cordes Larson
Co-Chair



Peter Meade
Co-Chair



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The full report is available free of charge at www.massinc.org

The face of Massachusetts is changing. Today, 1 in 7 Bay State residents (907,000) was born in another country. In less than 15 years, the number of immigrants living in our state has increased by nearly 40 percent. Immigrants have changed the social fabric and culture of our state. They also have played a critical role in our state's economy. Over the last 25 years, the share of immigrants in the Massachusetts workforce has nearly doubled. In 2004, immigrants accounted for 17 percent of the state's labor force.

Based on the most up-to-date information, this research provides a comprehensive picture of the state's immigrant population.¹ It documents immigrants' continued demographic and economic contributions while also uncovering serious challenges facing our state. This research identifies what countries our immigrants come from and how their national origins have changed over time, where they live in Massachusetts, and their education and language skills. It also evaluates their ability to succeed in the Massachusetts labor market.

The economic importance of a college education is now common knowledge. MassINC has a long track record in analyzing the changing economy and the education and skills required by the knowledge economy. As the earnings premium from additional years of schooling has grown, the Massachusetts economy has become less forgiving for those with limited education and skills. Immigrants play by the same rules, but many also face an additional challenge—the need to speak English well. This research breaks new ground in quantifying the economic importance of the ability to speak English.² A good education alone is not enough. The ability to speak English well has become a key ingredient for economic success.

While immigrants live in every city and town, they are concentrated in the state's cities, especially the cities in the eastern part of the state. Many urban immigrants have a limited ability to speak English. For some cities, this translates into a high fraction of the total population who cannot

speak English well. In Lawrence, nearly 12 percent of the population has limited English-speaking skills, and in the state's largest city, Boston, 7 percent of the residents do not speak English at all or do not speak it well. Thus, the challenge of preparing immigrants to participate in and contribute to the economy is enormous. Teaching immigrants to speak English proficiently is central to an urban economic revitalization strategy.

THE SHARE OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE HAS NEARLY DOUBLED.

Immigrant workers have become our state's principal source of new labor. Yet, many immigrants have limited education and increasing numbers are arriving with limited English-speaking skills. The immigrants who joined the Massachusetts labor force in the 1990s were almost 3 times as likely as native-born adults to lack a high school diploma. In addition, about 1 in 4 of the new immigrant workers (45,000 workers) had limited English-speaking skills. Going forward, our state faces a serious human capital challenge. Immigrant workers have become indispensable to the Massachusetts economy. But, at the same time that the education and skills required for success are increasing, large numbers of immigrants lack a high school diploma and have limited English-speaking skills.

Immigrants and Population Growth

Over the last several decades, the population of Massachusetts has been growing but only very slowly. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Massachusetts actually lost population in 2004, earning us the dubious distinction of being the only state in the country to shrink in size. The slow growth in the number of residents is largely due to the fact that every year large numbers of people leave Massachusetts for other states. Recent MassINC research, *Mass.Migration*, found

that between 1990 and 2002, excluding international immigrants, more people moved out of Massachusetts than moved into the state, even during the economic boom years. Immigrants have quietly played a key role in offsetting the loss of these domestic out-migrants.

In the 1980s, without new immigrants, the state's population would have likely not grown at all, and in the 1990s, it could have shrunk. Our dependence on immigrants appears to have increased in the first half of this decade. From 2000

INTEGRATING IMMIGRANTS INTO OUR WORKFORCE REQUIRES A PUBLIC/PRIVATE STRATEGY.

to 2004, Massachusetts gained 172,054 immigrants, and without these new immigrants, the state's population would have shrunk.³ New York was the only other state in the country to be completely dependent on immigrants for its population growth from 2000 to 2004. The future appears to hold more of the same. The Census Bureau has recently projected that Massachusetts will remain totally dependent on immigrants for all of its population growth over the remainder of

this decade. Integrating immigrants into our workforce is a long-term issue facing the state that requires a comprehensive public/private strategy.

Immigrants and the Massachusetts Labor Force

Massachusetts has built its economic success on the brains and skills of its workers. Human capital is our most important economic resource. Yet, our state has one of the lowest rates of labor force growth. In the 1990s, our labor force grew by only 2 percent—the fifth lowest rate in the nation. Since 2000, the state's labor force is estimated to have grown by less than one percent. The absence of labor force growth poses a serious threat to the state's ability to sustain a healthy economy. A lack of available workers can discourage companies from locating in Massachusetts or prevent existing companies from expanding their operations here in the Commonwealth.

New immigrants have become a critical source of labor, and over the last 25 years, they have become an increasing share of the workforce. As previous MassINC research, *The Changing Workforce*, documented, our strong reliance on immigrants began in the mid-1980s, and this trend has continued in recent years. While the nation has

KEY FACTS:

- As of 2004, 14.3% of Massachusetts residents (906,866) were born in another country, a large increase from 1980 when 9.4% of the population was foreign-born.
- From 2000 to 2004, 172,054 new immigrants entered the Bay State. Without these immigrants, the population of Massachusetts would have shrunk.
- Between 1980 and 2004, the share of immigrants in our labor force nearly doubled from 8.8% to 17.0%.
- Since 2000, the state's labor force is estimated to have grown by less than 1%. Without immigrants, the state's labor force would have shrunk.
- Of the immigrants who arrived between 2000 and 2004, 47.3% were from Latin America and the Caribbean and another 23.1% were from Asia. From 2000 to 2003, nearly 1 out of 5 immigrants (19%) was Brazilian.
- Of the immigrant workers who arrived in the 1990s, 1 in 4 (45,000 workers) had limited English-speaking skills.
- Since 1980, the overall share of immigrants who only speak English at home decreased from 35.1% to 20.6%, while the share with limited English-speaking skills increased from 17.5% to 21.5%. From 1980 to 2000, the number of immigrants with limited English skills increased by almost 92,000 people.

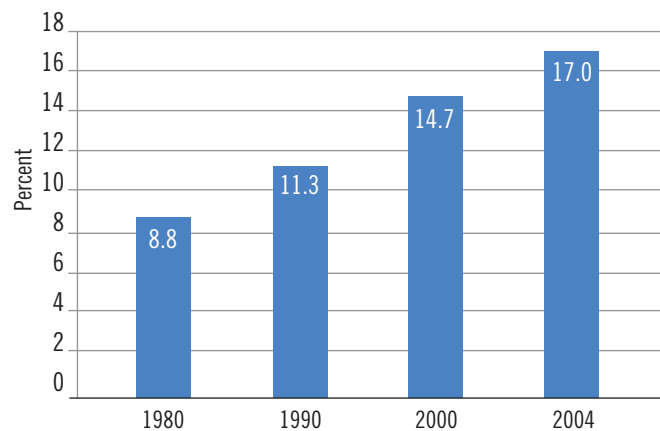
become increasingly dependent on immigrants —with nearly two-thirds of its labor force growth coming from immigrants—Massachusetts remains even more dependent with all of the state’s modest labor force growth from 2000 to 2004 due to immigrants. Without immigrants, the state’s labor force would have shrunk. By 2004, immigrants accounted for 17.0 percent of the state’s workforce, a sharp increase from 1980 when immigrants were only 8.8 percent of the workforce (Figure ES1).

The New Faces of Massachusetts

As anyone who has traveled the state knows, the immigrant population is incredibly diverse. In the 1990s, 83 countries sent 500 or more immigrants to Massachusetts. But, at the same time, a relatively small number of countries (9) and Puerto Rico accounted for half of all the new immigrants that arrived during the decade. These countries are Brazil, the Dominican Republic, China, India, Vietnam, Russia, Haiti, El Salvador, and Colombia. Brazil has become the single largest source of immigrants: from 2000 to 2003, almost one out of every five immigrants entering the state was Brazilian (Table ES1).

FIGURE ES1:

Foreign-Born Share of the Labor Force in Massachusetts, 1980-2004



Source: Authors’ calculations using U.S. Census, 1980, 1990, and 2000; Current Population Survey, 2004

In 2000, immigrants from Puerto Rico accounted for nearly 12 percent of all immigrants in Massachusetts (Table ES2). After Puerto Rico, Portugal, the Dominican Republic, Canada, and China were the most common countries of origin for immigrants.⁴ Brazilians accounted for 4.2 percent of all immigrants, but with the recent inflow, the share of Brazilian immigrants is increasing.

More generally, there has been a fundamental shift in the countries of origin of immigrants over the last few decades. Immigrants arriving after

- On average, an immigrant who only spoke English at home earned 2.5 times as much as an immigrant who did not speak English well (\$38,526 vs. \$14,221).
- Nearly 30% of adult immigrants have at least a college degree. But, immigrants are more than three times as likely as native-born adults to lack a high school diploma (25% vs. 8%).
- The average earnings of an immigrant college graduate are \$40,179 compared with \$14,687 for immigrant high school dropouts.
- Seventy-one percent of adult immigrants in Massachusetts are not prepared for the knowledge economy. 245,161 immigrants either lack a high school diploma or have limited English-speaking skills. Another 221,986 immigrants lack the literacy skills needed in today’s economy.
- Nearly one-quarter of all immigrants live in Suffolk County, although the county accounts for only 11% of the state’s population. About 1 in 4 Boston residents are immigrants. At 36%, Chelsea has the largest share of immigrants in the state.
- In 11 of the 20 largest cities, at least 1 out of every 4 immigrants has limited English-speaking skills. And in New Bedford, Fall River, Lawrence, and Lynn, 1 in 3 immigrants has limited English-speaking skills.
- Chelsea leads the state with 14% of its residents having limited English-speaking skills. In Lawrence, nearly 12% of the city’s population does not speak English at all or does not speak it well. And, in Boston, 7% of the population has limited English-speaking skills.

TABLE ES1:

Top Eleven Countries of Origin of New Immigrants to Massachusetts, 2000 to 2003

COUNTRY	PERCENT OF NEW IMMIGRANTS
Brazil	19.1
El Salvador	8.6
India	5.8
Japan	5.2
Haiti	4.7
Dominican Republic	3.3
Vietnam	3.2
Germany	3.2
China	3.0
Canada	2.8
Russia	2.8
Total, Top Eleven	61.6
Total Number of New Immigrants	115,482

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey, 2003

1990 were much more likely to have come from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia than those immigrants who arrived before 1980. Prior to 1980, immigrants were overwhelmingly from Europe, Canada, or Puerto Rico. In recent years the numbers coming from Europe and Canada have declined substantially.

This shift in the countries of origin has changed the overall composition of immigrants

NEARLY 1 OUT OF EVERY 5 NEW IMMIGRANTS WAS BRAZILIAN.

in our state. In 1980, more than half of all immigrants in Massachusetts (53%) were from Europe. By 2000, that number had decreased to 28 percent. The fraction of immigrants from Canada also dropped dramatically from 14 percent to 5 percent. In contrast, during this same period, the share of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean almost tripled from 9 percent to 26 per-

TABLE ES2:

Top Ten Countries of Origin of All Immigrants Living in Massachusetts, 2000

COUNTRY	PERCENT OF IMMIGRANTS
Puerto Rico	11.7
Portugal*	7.6
Dominican Republic	5.3
Canada	4.6
China	4.5
Brazil	4.2
Haiti	3.9
Vietnam	3.5
Italy	3.2
India	3.2
Total, Top Ten	51.7
Total Number of Immigrants	877,655

* Since Cape Verde became independent from Portugal in 1975, this figure likely includes some but not all Cape Verdeans living in Massachusetts.

Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

cent, and the share from Asia increased from 9 percent to 23 percent (Figure ES2). The shift toward these regions of the world is even more dramatic among the newest immigrants. Of all immigrants entering Massachusetts between 2000 and 2004, nearly half were from Latin America and the Caribbean and another 23 percent were from Asia (Figure ES3). If these trends persist, the demographic face of Massachusetts will continue to change well into the future.

Immigrants and the Educational Divide

Massachusetts attracts large numbers of both highly educated immigrants and immigrants with limited schooling. On the one hand, adult immigrants in Massachusetts were more than three times as likely to lack a high school diploma as native-born residents (29% vs. 8%). On the other hand, a large share of immigrants had at least a college degree. Still, immigrants are less likely than native-born residents to have at least a four-

FIGURE ES2:

Massachusetts Immigrant Population by Region of Birth, 1980-2000

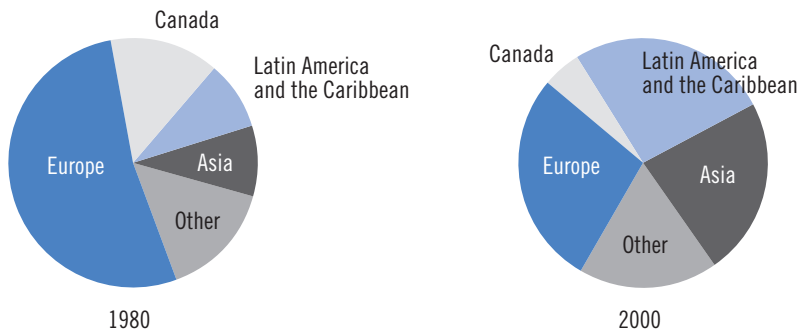
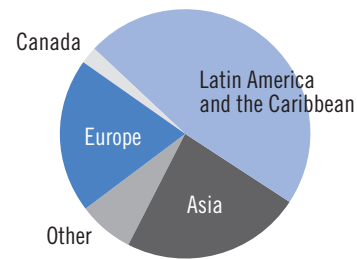


FIGURE ES3:

New Immigrants by Region of Birth, 2000-2004



Note: Europe includes the former Soviet Union in all three periods. Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 1980 and 2000; Current Population Surveys, 2004

year college degree (29% vs. 36%) (Figure ES4).

The educational level of immigrants varies considerably across regions of the world and countries of origin. For instance, more than 60 percent of the new immigrant workers from Central America lacked a high school diploma, while only 15 percent of those from Asia lacked one. At the other end of the educational spectrum, more than 60 percent of the new immigrant workers from Asia had a college education, while only 7 percent of those from Central America were four-year college graduates.

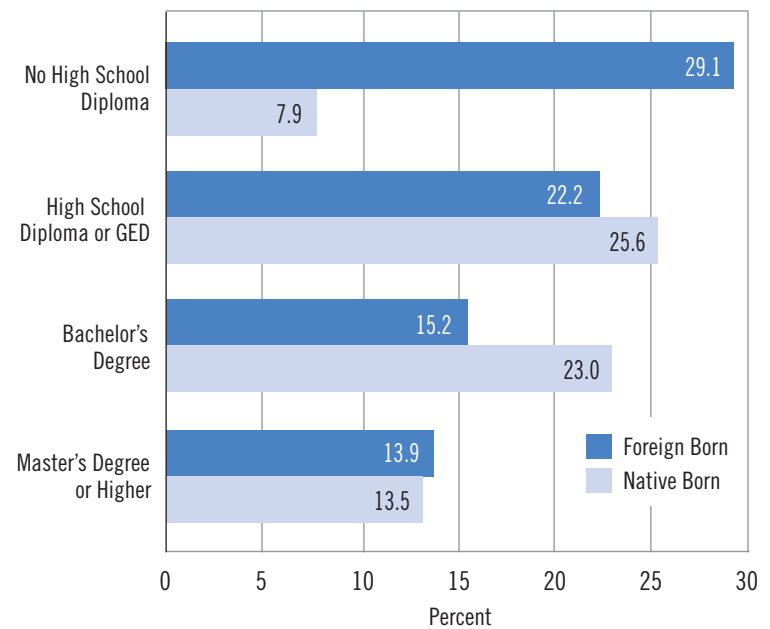
The economic benefits of a strong education for immigrants are quite clear. Those immigrants with more years of schooling were much more likely to participate in the labor market and more likely to be employed. While 9 percent of immigrant high school dropouts were unemployed in 2000, only 3 percent of immigrant college graduates were. Further, immigrant college graduates were much more likely to work in high-end jobs. More than half of all immigrant college graduates were professionals, managers, or technical workers but only 4 percent of immigrant high school dropouts held these types of jobs. Correspondingly, the average annual earnings of immigrants holding a college degree were \$40,179 compared with \$14,687 for immigrant high school dropouts, a relative difference of nearly 3 to 1 (Figure ES 5).

Using statistical methods, we isolated the inde-

pendent impact of education on the earnings of immigrants by controlling for other differences such as a person's work experience, length of time in the United States, race and ethnic origin, marital status, and the ability to speak English. The results are striking and unambiguous: An immigrant college graduate can be expected to have earnings that are 66 percent greater than an immigrant with similar characteristics who is a high

FIGURE ES4:

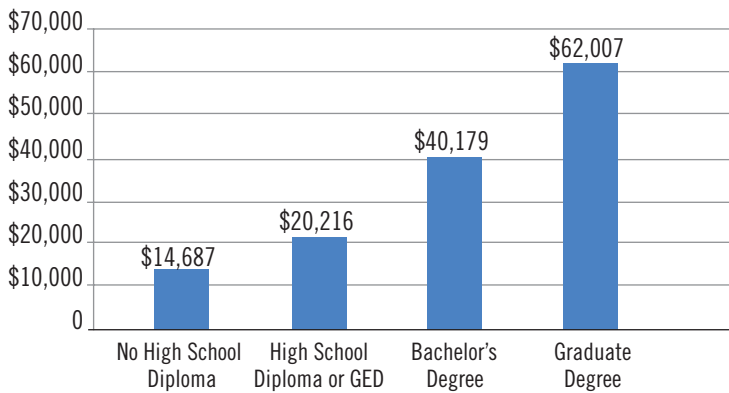
Educational Attainment of the Adult Population in Massachusetts, 2000



Note: Shares represent the individuals for which the given level is the highest level of formal education achieved. Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

FIGURE ES5:

Average Annual Earnings of Immigrants (20-64 Years Old) in Massachusetts by Educational Attainment, 1999



Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

school graduate.⁵ The earnings of an immigrant with a professional degree are estimated to be 149 percent greater than those of an immigrant high school graduate. At the other end of the educational scale, the annual earnings of a high school dropout can be expected to be 10 percent less than those of an immigrant high school graduate. Overall, an immigrant's education level is quite significant in determining a person's ability to succeed in the Massachusetts economy.

AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NEW IMMIGRANTS DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH WELL.

The New Fault Line: The Ability to Speak English
Education by itself does not guarantee economic success for immigrants or for native-born workers. The ability to speak English proficiently has also become a dividing line, separating those who succeed from those who struggle in the labor market. The number of immigrants with limited English-speaking skills has increased over the last 20 years, while the number of immigrants who only speak English at home has declined. In 1980, 35 percent of all immigrants in Massachusetts only spoke English at home. By 2000, that number had dropped to 21 percent. That is, 79 percent of

immigrants spoke another language besides English at home.

Increasingly, immigrants are coming from countries where English is not the primary language. Consequently, an increasing number of the new immigrants do not speak English well. In the 1990s, about 1 in 4 of the new immigrant workers had limited English-speaking skills. From 1980 to 2000, the number and share of immigrants with limited English-speaking skills increased considerably from 17 percent to 22 percent. From 1980 to 2000, the sheer number of immigrants with limited English skills increased by almost 92,000 people.

Like their education levels, the English-speaking skills of immigrants varied by their region and country of origin. Half of the new immigrant workers from Central America did not speak English at all or did not speak it well, while only 14 percent of the new immigrant workers from Europe had limited English-speaking skills.

The link between a person's ability to speak English and their ability to succeed in the Massachusetts economy is clear and indisputable. First, it is simply difficult to fully participate in the formal labor market without speaking English. Of those immigrants who only speak English, 77 percent are active members of the state's labor force compared with only 59 percent of the immigrants who do not speak English well. The type of jobs that immigrants hold is also related to their ability to speak English. Less than 8 percent of immigrants who do not speak English well are professionals, managers, or technical workers, while 35 percent of immigrants who only speak English hold these high level jobs.

The ability to speak English strongly influences a person's earnings. In 1999, an immigrant who only spoke English earned, on average, 2.5 times as much as an immigrant who did not speak English well (\$38,526 vs. \$14,221) (Figure ES6). Using statistical methods to isolate the effect of a person's ability to speak English, this

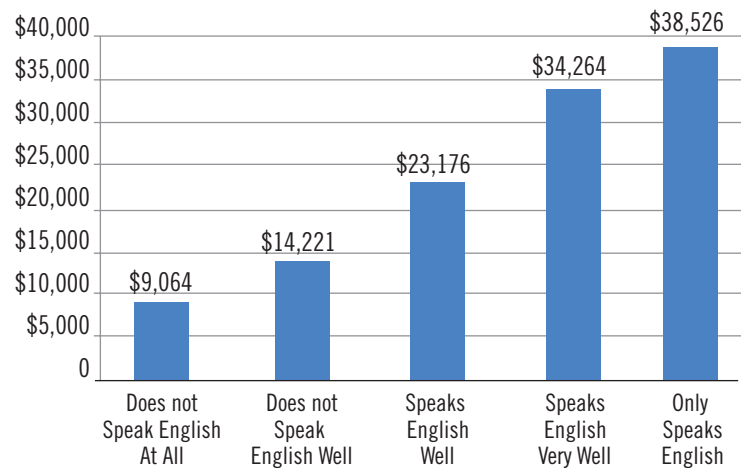
research finds that immigrants with limited English-speaking skills earned 28 percent less than those immigrants with similar characteristics who only spoke English, and immigrants who speak English well earned 16 percent less than immigrants who only speak English. In the Massachusetts economy, strong English-speaking skills are key to economic success.

Since both education and the ability to speak English well are important, not surprisingly, those immigrants who had both a high level of education and strong English-speaking skills had the highest earnings. While these two traits often go together, that is not always the case. What becomes clear, however, is the importance of being able to speak English proficiently—even for immigrants with high levels of education. Consider that the average earnings of an immigrant college graduate who speaks English well is about \$20,000 less than those of an immigrant college graduate who only speaks English at home. Having a good education does not substitute for strong English-speaking skills. The Massachusetts economy requires both a strong education and strong English-speaking skills.

The opportunity to achieve a middle-class standard of living is also strongly related to a person’s English-speaking skills.⁶ Overall, immigrants are less likely than native-born residents to be in the middle class. Of all immigrant adults in Massachusetts, 38 percent had achieved at least a middle-class standard of living, compared with 59 percent of native-born residents. More than half of the immigrants who only spoke English (53%) were in the middle class or higher, but only 11 percent of the immigrant families who did not speak English were in the middle class. Of course, the immigrants who were most likely to succeed were those with strong English skills and high levels of education. Nearly 70 percent of immigrant college graduates who only spoke English achieved at least a middle-class standard of living.

FIGURE ES6:

Average Annual Earnings of Immigrants (20-64 Years Old) in Massachusetts by English-Speaking Ability, 1999



Source: Authors’ calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

Immigrants and the New Economy

The skills demanded by the Massachusetts economy are high, and the economic penalties for those who lack them are substantial. Previous MassINC research, *New Skills for a New Economy*, identified three specific skills needed to succeed in the knowledge economy: a minimum of a high school diploma, the ability to speak English proficiently, and strong literacy and numeracy skills, including the ability to successfully complete tasks such as comparing two bar graphs or calculating the interest owed on a hypothetical loan.⁷ In contrast to *New Skills for a New Economy*, this research focuses only on immigrants, asking: How many adult immigrants in Massachusetts are not prepared for the new economy?⁸

A very large fraction of adult immigrants faces at least one of these three skill challenges. In 2000, there were 658,002 adult immigrants (ages 20 to 64) living in Massachusetts. Of these adult immigrants, 191,502 lacked a high school diploma, thus facing an Education Challenge. In addition, 136,890 immigrants faced a Language Challenge—meaning they either did not speak English at all or did not speak it well.⁹ There is considerable

overlap between these two groups in that 83,231 immigrants both lacked a high school diploma and had limited English-speaking skills. If we do not double-count those immigrants who faced both challenges, we end up with 245,161 immigrants. Thus, more than one-third of all adult immigrants in Massachusetts (37%) either lack a high school diploma or have limited English-speaking skills (Table ES3).

In addition, a significant number of high school graduate immigrants who speak English still lack the literacy skills required in today's knowledge economy. They are not illiterate in the traditional sense of being unable to read or write, but rather they have limited reading, math, and analytical skills. This higher standard of literacy reflects the demands of the twenty-first century. We estimate that an additional 221,986 immigrants face what we call the "New Literacy Challenge." Thus, the combined, unduplicated number of adult immigrants who are not adequately prepared for the knowledge-based economy is 467,147 or 71 percent of all adult immigrants in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts economy has increasingly become dependent on immigrants for its work-

force, and the future appears to hold more of the same. Some immigrants are highly skilled and are able to thrive, fully participating in and contributing to the knowledge economy. At the same time, large numbers of immigrants lack one or more of the skills needed to succeed. There are some positive signs, however. First, the average education level and English-speaking skills of Massachusetts immigrants are higher than those of their national counterparts. In addition, joining the workforce and working continuously does pay off over time. In the early years after their arrival in the United States, each year of work experience adds about 3 percent to their annual earnings, holding all other determinants of earnings constant. Ten years of work experience translates into at least a 20 percent increase in earnings. If immigrants can also obtain more education and improve their English speaking and writing skills while working, the earnings gains are even higher.

The Workforce of Tomorrow

The ability to speak English well and educational outcomes are closely linked for young adult immigrants. Nearly half (47%) of all young immigrants in Massachusetts between the ages of 16 and 24

TABLE ES3:

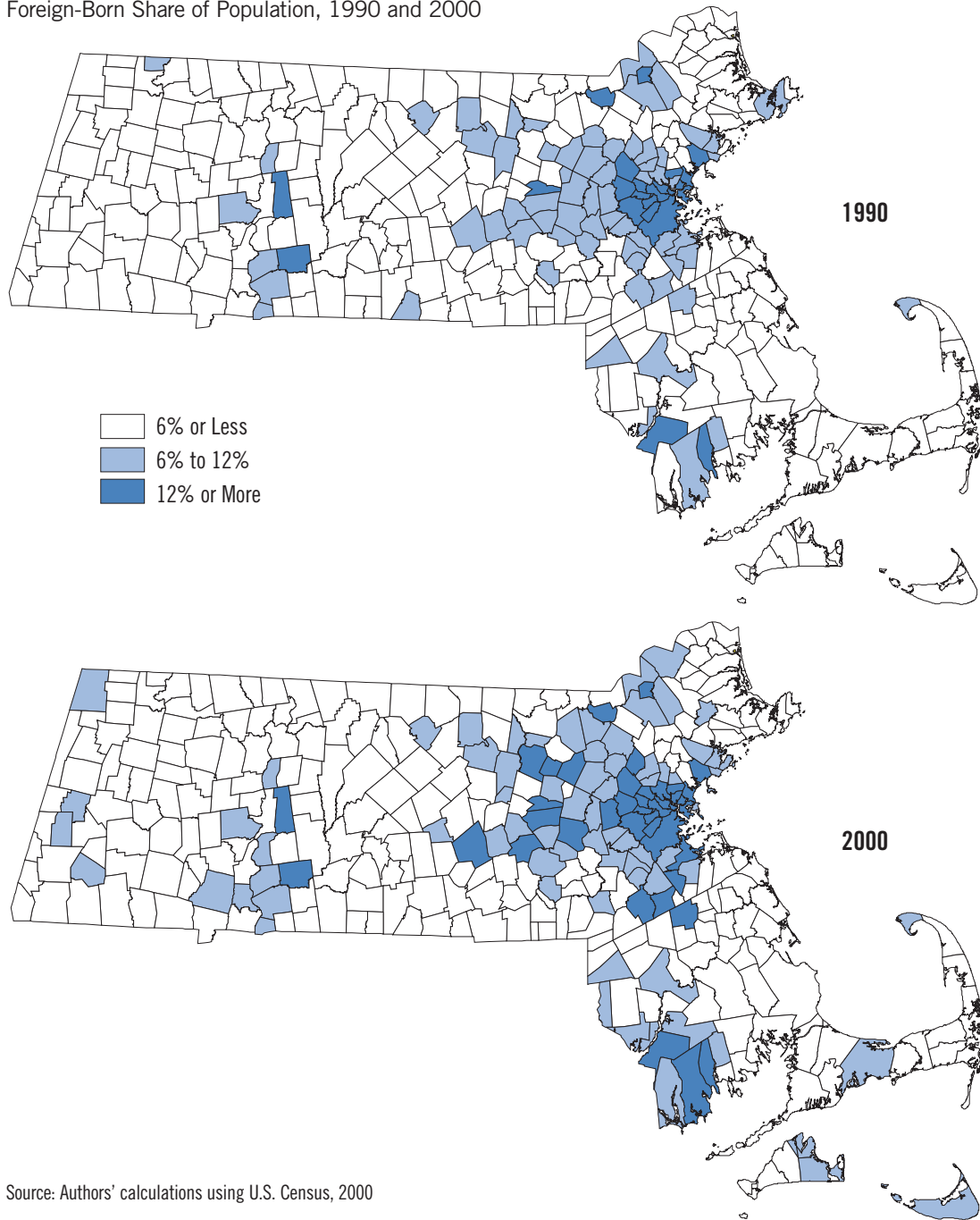
Distribution of Education, Language, and New Literacy Challenges in the Massachusetts Adult Immigrant Population, 2000

GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENT OF 20-64 YEAR OLDS
Lacks high school diploma/GED	191,502	29.1%
Limited English-speaking skills	136,890	20.8%
Both lacks a high school diploma and has limited English-speaking skills	83,231	12.6%
Unduplicated count of Education and Language Challenges	245,161	37.3%
• Lacks diploma but no Language Challenge	108,271	16.5%
• Lacks diploma and has Language Challenge	83,231	12.6%
• Has a diploma but has limited English-speaking skills	53,659	8.2%
Estimated number of immigrants with at least a high school diploma and no Language Challenge who lack level three literacy skills	221,986	33.7%
Total number of immigrants with a Language, Education, or New Literacy Challenge	467,147	71.0%

Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000; International Adult Literacy Survey

FIGURE ES7:

Foreign-Born Share of Population, 1990 and 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

who did not speak English well or at all were high school dropouts, compared with only 8 percent of young immigrants who only spoke English. (Many of these high school dropouts did not attend school in the United States.) In addition, those young immigrants who only spoke English were more than 4 times as likely as those with limited English skills to be enrolled in college.

Thirty-nine percent of young immigrants who only spoke English are college students, compared with only 9 percent of those who did not speak English well or at all. Because the limited ability to speak English often combines with limited schooling, these young immigrants will face formidable challenges to success in the Massachusetts economy.

The Geography of Immigrants in Massachusetts

While immigrants live in all parts of the state, the immigrant population is concentrated in the Greater Boston, Northeast, and Southeast regions of the state (Figure ES7). There is also a large concentration in the Springfield/Chicopee area. In 2000, nearly one-quarter of all the state's immigrants lived in Suffolk County, even though the county accounted for only 11 percent of the state's population. Immigrants tend to live in many of the state's large urban centers, such as Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, New Bedford, and Springfield, and the state's larger cities have become completely dependent on immigrants to spur their population growth. In the 1990s, the state's 23 largest cities grew by only 45,000 people but welcomed 210,000 new immigrants.

About 1 of 4 residents in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, and Malden are immigrants. Chelsea has the largest share of immigrants in the state. Thirty-six percent of its residents are foreign born and the number of immigrants living in the city more than doubled in the 1990s. Lawrence and Somerville follow Chelsea as the cities with the highest fraction of immigrants, although their

ALL OF THE TOP TEN IMMIGRANT CITIES ARE IN EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS.

growth rates in the 1990s were much less than that of Chelsea. Of the ten cities with the highest share of immigrants, Chelsea, Malden, and Everett added new immigrants over the last decade at the fastest rate. All of the top ten immigrant cities are in Eastern Massachusetts.

The majority of the immigrants who live in the state's large cities speak a language other than English at home. In 19 of the 20 largest cities, three-quarters of the immigrants spoke a language other than English at home. The ability of these urban immigrants to speak English varied considerably across cities. In 11 of the 20 largest cities, at

least 1 out of every 4 immigrants has limited English-speaking skills. And, in four cities—New Bedford, Fall River, Lawrence, and Lynn—1 in 3 immigrants has limited English-speaking skills.

Chelsea and Lawrence have the greatest shares of residents with limited English-speaking skills in the state. In Chelsea, 14 percent of the city's population does not speak English well or at all. Lawrence follows Chelsea with 12 percent of its residents with limited English-speaking skills. In the City of Boston, 7 percent of the residents have limited English-speaking skills (Figure ES8). Immigrants bring a rich mix of skills and resources to a community, and expanding opportunities for immigrants to learn to speak English well must be at the top of the economic development agenda of the state's urban leaders.

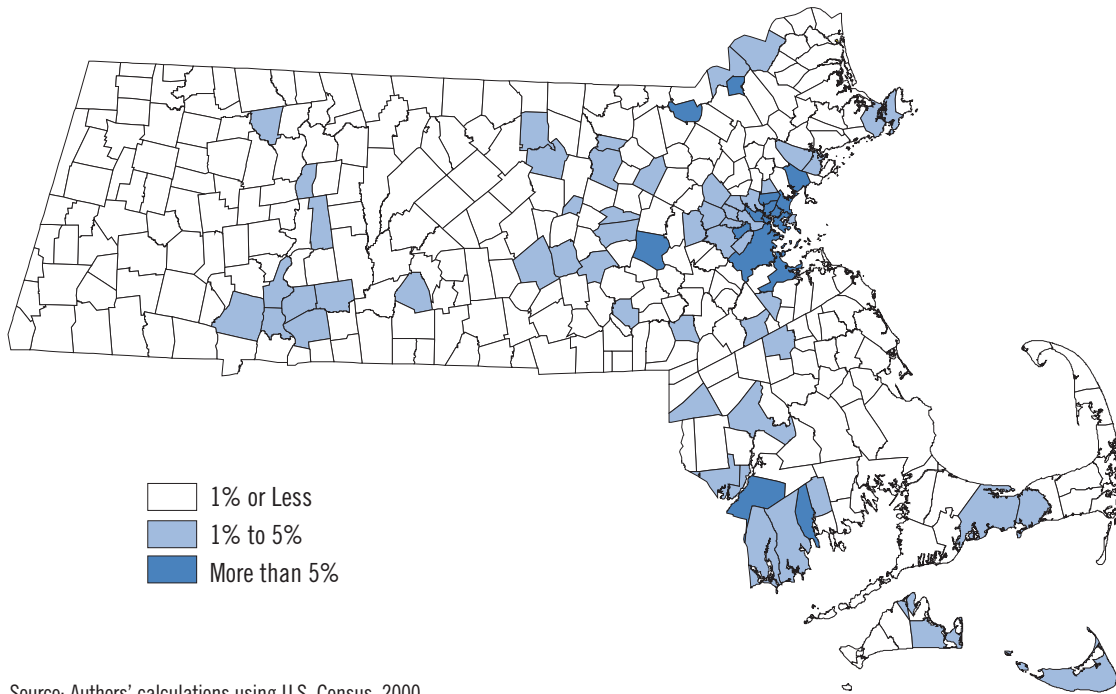
Building Capacity: Teaching Immigrants to Speak English

There are a variety of ways that immigrants can learn to speak English. Public money through the Department of Education supports a diverse network of community programs. These classes have accomplished some success in teaching immigrants to speak English. Previous MassINC research found that more hours of instruction translates into more learning, and a primary goal must be to get students to stay in class for more hours.¹⁰ The average number of hours of instruction that students receive has increased from 97 hours in 1998 to 128 hours in 2004. This increase is clearly a big improvement, but at the same time, the averages can conceal the fact that too many students still drop out too soon.

In addition, the state's ESOL classes reach only a small fraction of the immigrants in need of English instruction. They serve about 18,000 immigrants per year with 20,000 people on waiting lists, and in recent years, the waiting lists have grown considerably. The waiting lists are the longest in urban centers where the need is most critical. Moreover, from 2000 to 2004, during the

FIGURE ES8:

Foreign-Born Population with Limited English Skills as Share of Total Population, 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using U.S. Census, 2000

economic downturn, state funding for Adult Basic Education classes, which includes ESOL classes, declined from \$30.2 to \$27.8 million. During this time, federal funding has remained roughly the same. Additional public investment in adult English language classes is needed, but the dollars should be targeted to the urban areas with the greatest need and also targeted to programs that can document positive outcomes and that are closely integrated with the state's workforce development priorities.

Given the dependence of the state's labor force on immigrants, public investors, private foundations and nonprofits should tie investments in education and workforce programs to the needs of employers and to the skills required in the workplace. Labor unions, the Massachusetts Department of Education, and the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development have played a key role in initiating some efforts in this direction, and more should be done. More workplace-based language classes should be supported,

and the link between English classes and workforce development programs should be strengthened because there is evidence that the combination of basic skills and job training are associated with greater earnings gains.¹¹

An increased focus on workplace literacy programs could help address the challenge of improving immigrants' English language skills while also boosting their job performance and employment success. The Workforce Training Fund should continue supporting English language classes. In general, preference should be given for programs in which employers are involved in program design. There are greater economic payoffs to workers when employers are involved in literacy training. Employer involvement would also have a ripple effect in terms of employers becoming more knowledgeable about the publicly funded education and workforce programs. Moreover, employers would develop confidence about whether classes meet their needs as well as the needs of their employees. Employers who are willing to

offset some of the costs of workplace-based language classes should receive priority for state workforce and economic development funds.

In order to stretch limited dollars to serve more clients, the state should experiment with charging a sliding fee for ESOL students, particularly those in higher-level classes. The state should pilot such a program. Those students who can afford to at least partly pay for instruction will contribute, and more students overall can potentially benefit from the state's ESOL classes. Community colleges should expand classes that combine English instruction with technology or business-related instruction, especially targeted at immigrant entrepreneurs or immigrants ready to transition to college-level work.

THE STATE SHOULD EXPERIMENT WITH CHARGING A SLIDING FEE FOR ESOL STUDENTS.

As taxpayers invest in ESOL classes, it is important to ask: What does the state get for the money it spends? A standards-based approach that measures learning gains will better help us measure outcomes, and introducing a basic skills credential can be part of the solution. This credential would measure a person's English-speaking and literacy skills. It gives the student a specific goal while also helping employers to evaluate the skills of potential employees. Further, it would also help to measure the outcomes of specific adult basic education classes and workforce development programs. The state should systematically track the "return on investment" of publicly supported programs, including the learning gains, increases in enrollment in postsecondary education, and increases in earnings and other employment gains.

There are important ways in which the state can reform and expand ESOL classes, but meeting the challenges that we have identified will require more than simply increased government

spending on ESOL classes. Previous MassINC research, *Getting the Job Done*, called for increasing the capacity of ESOL programs to serve more students, but government cannot solve this problem alone.¹² Addressing this challenge also requires bringing to scale efforts to teach English. Foundations should encourage and fund, perhaps in partnership with the state, innovation grants that develop new ways to bring such efforts to scale. For instance, while there have been some demonstration efforts that use technology, we have not really figured out how to best leverage technology to dramatically expand the number of students. There have also been some new public-private partnerships, such as Literacy Works and SkillWorks, that operate locally to expand class offerings by mobilizing public, private, and community leaders to prioritize literacy efforts.¹³ Although there are currently a large number of English language classes outside of the publicly funded classes, we believe there is room for more private entrepreneurship. There is likely a viable market for more English language classes. Some companies are already offering private classes, but there are likely additional opportunities for expanding market-based English classes, especially in our cities.

Concluding Thoughts

Immigrants have changed and will continue to change the face of Massachusetts. They are a critical and growing part of our communities and our workforce. They work in all sectors of the economy, including many of the state's key industries. Many of the most successful growth sectors of the economy—life sciences, health care, and software—have prospered, in part, because of the immigrant leadership and workforce. Increasingly, our state's future economic health is linked to the immigrants who live here and the new immigrants entering our state. However, the state faces a serious economic challenge: The skills demanded for the new jobs in the Massachusetts econo-

my continue to increase. Yet, more and more of our principal source of labor—foreign immigrants—has limited education and/or limited English-speaking skills.

Like their native-born peers, the economic cost for those immigrants who lack an education is steep. Our economy continues to sort workers based on their educational level and literacy skills. As the skill requirements of jobs increase, the options for success have narrowed. The number of high-paying jobs for high school dropouts and even for high school graduates with no post-secondary schooling has declined considerably. While our state attracts many highly educated immigrants, it is also true that immigrants are more than three times as likely as native-born adults to lack a high school diploma.

Many immigrants face an additional challenge: The need to speak English proficiently. The ability to speak English proficiently has become another fault line, dividing those who enjoy economic success from those who do not. On average, an immigrant college graduate who speaks English well earns about \$20,000 less than an immigrant college graduate who only speaks English. Thus, the ability to speak English is critical, even for those immigrants with a strong educational background. The Massachusetts economy demands both a high level of education and strong English-speaking skills.

In addition, the likelihood of an immigrant becoming a U.S. citizen is strongly associated with that person's educational attainment and ability to speak English. Previous national research also finds that strong literacy skills are related to the civic behavior of immigrants.¹⁴ Immigrants with strong literacy skills are more actively involved in their communities, including volunteering, taking part in civic affairs, and voting.

In 2000, more than 1 out of 5 immigrants had limited English-speaking skills. As an increasing number of immigrants are coming from countries where English is not their primary language,

the numbers of immigrants with limited English-speaking skills are growing. From 1980 to 2000, the number of immigrants who either did not speak English at all or did not speak it well increased by nearly 92,000 people.

Immigrants with limited English skills are clustered in the state's larger cities. In some cities, such as Lawrence and New Bedford, a substantial portion of the city's overall population does not speak English at all or does not speak it well. Local leaders must make expanded opportunities for immigrants to learn to speak English and gain additional schooling a central element of their economic development strategies. Teaching immigrants English benefits both the individual and the community. In addition, public and private leaders should consider adjusting existing state grant and aid programs to compensate those urban areas most highly impacted by immigrants.

There are also a growing number of undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts, estimated to be somewhere between 100,000 and 175,000 people.¹⁵ Many of them have lived in Massachusetts for a long time, and some children have essentially lived their whole lives here. While the sociodemographic characteristics of undocumented immigrants are unknown, past evidence suggests that many of them are likely young, and have

INCREASINGLY, OUR STATE'S FUTURE ECONOMIC HEALTH IS LINKED TO IMMIGRANTS.

limited education and limited English-speaking skills. At the same time, their ability to access jobs, educational, health, and workforce development services are limited. These are no longer only issues for the border states to be concerned about. While immigration policy is largely formulated at the federal level, state leaders should actively engage in federal immigration policy debates.

As the state economy's fortunes are increasingly linked to the education and skills of immi-

grants entering our state, everyone has a stake in addressing the challenges uncovered in this research. Government alone cannot solve this problem. Finding effective solutions poses a challenge to state and local leaders in the public, pri-

vate, and nonprofit sectors to initiate new models to increase the state's capacity to teach English to immigrants. The long-term civic and economic health of our state depends on our success in meeting this challenge.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The data in this report primarily come from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, the 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) from the Census long form, and the monthly Current Population Surveys of the U.S. Census Bureau. It includes both legal and undocumented immigrants. A “foreign immigrant” is defined as someone born outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia and who was not born to American parents abroad. People born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are considered to be immigrants. Since English is not the primary language of many people from these territories, they often face the same challenges that immigrants face. However, in our analyses of counties and cities, we primarily rely on the Census Bureau's definition of an immigrant, which excludes people born in U.S. territories.
- 2 Our analysis of the ability of immigrants to speak English is based on data collected with the long-form of the U.S. Census. There are five categories that are used to record a person's self-reported ability to speak English—only speaks English at home and speaks English very well, well, not well, or not at all. We include people who do not speak English at all or do not speak it well (the bottom two categories) as those who have limited English-speaking skills. This estimate is conservative because many of the people who say they speak English well (the middle category) do not speak English well by objective measures.
- 3 These estimates assume that the migration behavior of native-born people is independent of the number of new immigrants.
- 4 Cape Verde became independent from Portugal in 1975. As a result, when completing Census forms some immigrants from Cape Verde likely reported Portugal as their place of birth while others likely reported Cape Verde. Unfortunately, there is no way to know the exact counts for each nation.
- 5 For these estimates, we constructed a set of multivariate models using the natural log of the annual earnings of 20-64 year old employed immigrants during 1999 as the dependent variable. All of the coefficients for the educational attainment variables were significant at the .01 level. More details about the regression analyses are available in the full report.
- 6 We use a family income that is four times the poverty line as a proxy for a middle-class living standard. The actual income needed to achieve this standard depends on the number of people in the family. For a two-person family, the income would be at least \$44,856, which is at the 43rd percentile of all families. The incomes required range from the 40th to the 58th percentile and are squarely within the middle class.
- 7 The literacy skills are based on the National Adult Literacy Survey. The National Governors Association and other literacy analysts use the Level 3 proficiency as the minimum criterion needed for success in today's economy. This research uses the findings from the International Adult Literacy Survey as the basis for the state estimate. It also uses a Level 3 proficiency as the criterion. See Appendix B in the full report for more information about the methodology.
- 8 The numbers in this report and those in *New Skills for a New Economy* are not strictly comparable. In *New Skills*, we include all working-age adults—immigrants and native-born. In this estimate, we include only adult immigrants. In addition, the methods in the two reports differ slightly. In this report, we focus on all 20-64 year-old immigrants regardless of their labor market status. In *New Skills*, we focused on 16-64 year-old people who were mostly connected to the labor market. In *New Skills*, we defined the Language Challenge as those adults who did not speak English at all, did not speak English well, or spoke English well. In this research, we deliberately limit our focus to those with the most limited language skills and thus define the Language Challenge to include immigrant adults who do not speak English at all or who do not speak it well.

- 9 This is a conservative estimate of the number of immigrants who face a Language Challenge. These numbers are based on self-reported assessment of one's ability to speak English, and other research documents that many of the people who say they speak English "well" do not actually speak it well by objective measures.
- 10 See Chapter 6 of *New Skills for a New Economy* for a detailed analysis of the effect of increased hours of instruction.
- 11 See the MassINC white paper *Getting the Job Done: Advancing the New Skills Agenda*, 2003.
- 12 Michael Stoll, Steven Raphael, et al. *The Impact of Participation in Employment and Training Programs on the Earnings and Employment of Low-Income Adults: An Evaluation of Massachusetts Workforce Development Programs*. Commonwealth Corporation, November 2003.
- 13 Literacy Works is a collaboration among MassINC, the Commonwealth Corporation, and the Massachusetts Department of Education. Currently, it is located in Lawrence and Hampden County. SkillWorks is a mutli-funder initiative and the largest workforce development program in Boston's history. An example of a program funded by SkillWorks is the Hotel Career Center, a partnership between the Hilton Hotels, International Institute, and the Vietnamese American Civic Association that helps limited English speaking workers advance in the hotel industry.
- 14 Andrew Sum, Irwin Kirsch, and Kentaro Yamamoto. *A Human Capital Concern: The Literacy Proficiency of U.S. Immigrants*. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., 2004.
- 15 Jeffrey Passel, "Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures," The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., 2004.

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