

# *US Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration & Refugee Services*

*Bridging Refugee  
Youth & Children's  
Services (BRYCS)*

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# USCCB/MRS

- Actively served refugees and immigrants since early 1900s
- 1 of 10 national voluntary agencies contracted by Department of State to resettle refugees
- Currently resettle almost 30% of all refugees through a network of over 100 local non-profit agencies

- One of two voluntary agencies that resettle unaccompanied refugee children (USCCB and LIRS)
- Manage national services to victims of human trafficking
- Developed child welfare services to unaccompanied undocumented children in federal custody
- Provide Technical Assistance on migrating children and child welfare

Our changing  
demographics . . .

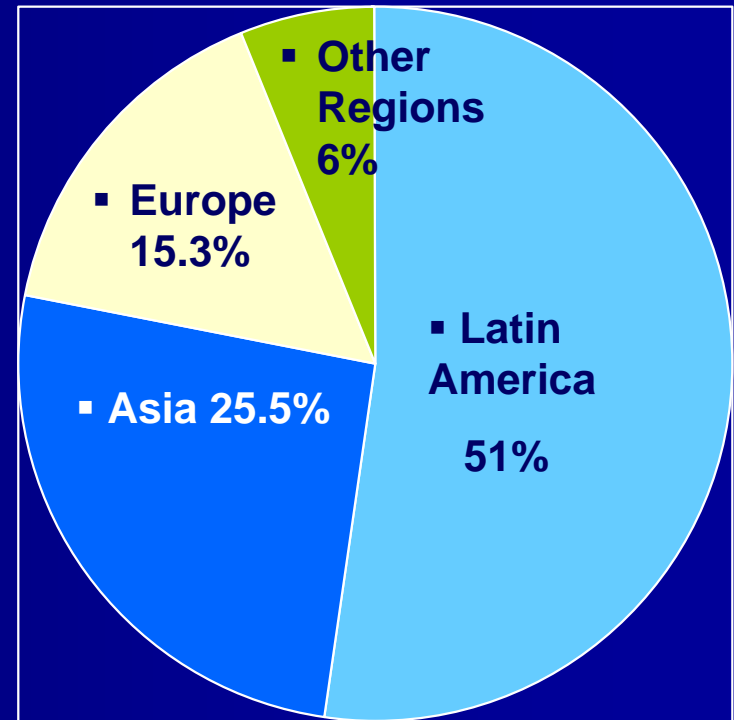
# Refugees and Immigrants in the US

- **Over 30 million** immigrants and refugees live in the US today (highest number in US history).
- Almost **one in four** children in the U.S. today are immigrants or children of immigrants (up from 13% in 1990).

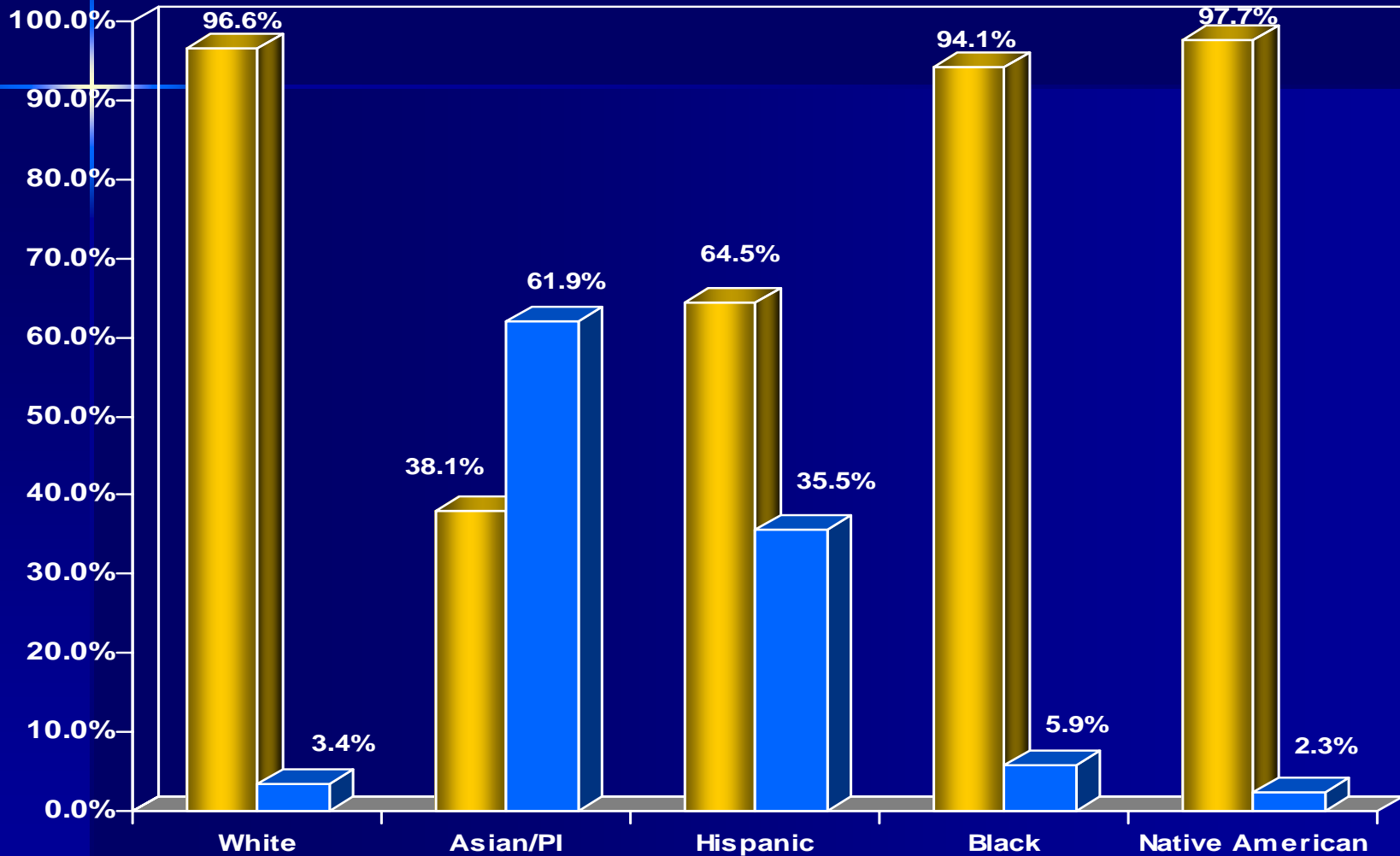


# Where they come from now...

- One half are from Latin America; over one quarter are from Asia.
- 50% come from war-torn and poverty-stricken countries.
- Of almost 9 million children added to US population between 1990-2000, *over half* were Hispanic.



**Figure 2. Estimate of Foreign-Born U.S. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin**



From *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity—A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2001. Data is consistent with the 1990 Census estimates base.

# New Immigrants and Poverty

- Varies greatly by country of origin
- New immigrants from the following countries have a poverty rate of 35% or higher:

El Salvador

Guatemala

Nicaragua

Honduras

Mexico

Dominican Republic

Haiti

Vietnam

Cambodia

Laos

Thailand

Former Soviet Union

- The majority of people originally from these countries came as:
  - refugees (Southeast Asia, Russia, Eastern Europe)
  - were escaping civil war and generalized violence (El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti)
  - have traditionally provided unskilled labor to the US (Mexico, Honduras, Dominican Republic).
- These twelve groups account for over 50% of all foreign-born immigrants in the United States

# Immigrants from these same countries...

- Tend to have less formal education
- Tend to work at low-status and low-paying entry-level jobs
- Are less likely to speak English upon arrival
- Are more likely to have one parent or household member who is not a US citizen
- Have less access to government services and benefits

## ALL RISK FACTORS FOR POVERTY...

Child welfare involvement is often related to poverty, cultural differences in childrearing, misunderstandings & miscommunications, as well as to family conflict

# Definitions

## ■ Legal immigrant

- Usually comes with guarantee of employment or to join family members

## ■ Refugee /Asylee

- Fleeing persecution
- Usually unplanned; often have long, difficult journey; may have lost family members, had physical/emotional trauma
- Legal immigrant with special status

## ■ Undocumented

- May enter country without legal immigration status or overstay visa. May be fleeing poverty, conditions of war, gangs, etc.
- Unaccompanied children in federal custody can enter specialized programs

## Definitions, cont'd

- Victim of Human Trafficking
- "T" and "U" Visas
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)
  - Enables undocumented children who were abused, neglected, or abandoned to petition for lawful permanent resident status, provided they came under the protection of a state court
- Unaccompanied/Separated Child
- Temporary Protective Status/Deferred Enforced Departure
  - Due to conditions of war or other devastation in country of origin, grants legal status until those conditions improve

*85% of all children in non-citizen families are in MIXED STATUS families*

# Migration and Child Welfare

- Changing face of America
- Federal Legislation
  - CPS/ CW System Mandates
  - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
  - Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)
  - Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
  - Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)
  - “T” and “U” Visas, Asylum
- Standards of care, CFSRs - criteria include cultural competency

## Migration and Child Welfare, cont'd

- Safety, permanency, and well-being for ALL children in the U.S.
- Progress:
  - USCCB and LIRS events: NCWAB in 2004, Roundtables/Discussions at OCAN and CWLA Conferences in 2005 and 2006
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation: Convening and resulting publication in 2005
  - CWLA: Seminal journal issue 2005
  - American Humane Association: Roundtable in July 2006, seminal journal issue

# *Challenges...*

- Cultural differences
  - Family structure
  - Communication
  - Childrearing practices: supervision, discipline
- Diversity of languages spoken, need for trained interpreters
- Literacy

## Challenges, cont'd

- Immigration status – importance of timely application for relief
- Access to benefits may be limited, lack of awareness of benefits available
- Parents, other family may be in different country
- Recruiting ethnically/linguistically similar foster homes
- Licensing relative caregivers

# *Promising Practices...*

## ■ Immigration and Language Guidelines for Child Welfare Staff – NYC ACS

- Children’s Services Sub-Committee on Immigration and Language Access
- Handbook on Immigration and Language Access
- Language Card
- Director of Immigrant Issues
- Training
- Local orders and laws on “non-cooperation” and language access

## Promising Practices, cont'd

- System for screening and applying for immigration relief – L.A.'s SIJS Unit
- Partnerships between public child welfare agencies and experienced CBOs – St. Louis, Missouri; Falls Church, VA
- Training: Culturally competent assessment, services, foster families
- Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Programs

## Promising Practices, cont'd

- Easing licensing requirements for relative caregivers
- MOU's with Foreign Consulates, International Social Services (ISS) for home studies
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
  - enables battered women and their children to obtain legal status

# Questions for Cases:

1. What challenges would you find especially difficult?
2. What would you suggest in this case?
3. Would any of the “promising practices” listed earlier be helpful here?
4. What steps might you take in your own agency to improve services to immigrants?

# *Technical Assistance Resources....*

**202-541-5412/3354 / [www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org)**

## ■ **Web site and Clearinghouse:**

- Monthly updates, What's New, Spotlight Articles
- Promising Practices – Creative solutions to problems
- Publications – Culture-specific and Toolkits

## ■ **One-on-One Consultations:**

- Experts available by telephone, email to provide practical advice & resources

## ■ **On-Site Trainings**

# Contact Information

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