

# **The Impact of Ebbing Immigration in Los Angeles: New Insights from an Established Gateway**

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Paper proposed for presentation at the annual meetings of the Population Association of America, March-April 2005, Philadelphia.

## **ABSTRACT**

Los Angeles was once a premier immigrant gateway. In 1990, the state of California was home to 38% of all recent immigrant arrivals in the U.S., half of those living in Los Angeles county alone. But there was a significant slowdown after 1990, and other states and metros have drawn attention as emerging new immigrant destinations (Singer 2004). What has been neglected is the substantial change occurring in established gateway concentrations-on the "backside"-as immigrants spread out to new destinations.

During the 1990s, new arrivals declined by 20% in Los Angeles. More than half million immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and 80s also were lost from California, 5/6 of those from Los Angeles. The paper explores what types of immigrants have departed, in terms of race/ethnicity, age cohorts, and education levels, and it addresses the impact of the changing mix on falling regional poverty rates and rising homeownership.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the post-1965 era of immigration, Los Angeles has been a very popular immigrant gateway through the 1980s (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). It continues to receive many new immigrants but there has been a significant slowdown in new immigrant population growth during the 1990s. As Los Angeles receives a smaller share of the new immigrants in the U.S., other states and metros are emerging as new immigrant gateways (Singer 2004). There has been a lot of attention to immigrants spreading out to new destinations across the U.S. What is neglected is what happens in the established gateways concentrations—on the “backside”—as immigrants spread out to new destinations.

Three main research questions will be addressed in this paper. First, as immigrants have spread across the U.S., what has been the change in California and particularly, Los Angeles? Second, what types of immigrants have departed from Los Angeles and California (in terms of race/ethnicity, age cohorts, and education levels)? Third, what are the consequences for Los Angeles and California, measured in terms of local poverty rates, homeownership, and aggregate education levels?

## II. NEW IMMIGRANT DECLINE IN CALIFORNIA RELATIVE TO OTHER U.S. STATES

Before addressing what has happened in Los Angeles and more broadly California, we first document the shift away of new immigrants from California to the other U.S. states. Table 1 shows each state’s share of the U.S. new immigrant arrivals, those who have come to the U.S. in the past ten years (Myers et al 2004). Of the states with the largest immigrant populations (California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New York), California has taken the largest decline in its share of U.S. new arrivals. Furthermore, the decline for California is so noteworthy because it received more than a third of all new immigrants in 1990 but by 2000, its share of new arrivals declined decisively to less than a quarter (a decline of -12.8%). Most other states increased their share of the new arrivals which indicates a more dispersed pattern of new immigrant settlement.

[insert Table 1 about here]

Secondly, Table 2 shows the new immigrant arrivals’ share of the state total population across the U.S. California is more clearly set apart from all of the other states in this respect because it is the only state that has actually experienced a decline in the new arrivals share of its total population. States that have not been conventionally considered as immigrant gateways are beginning to experience a growing presence of new immigrants. Those states with the largest increases are Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, and Utah. Interestingly, four out of the five states that saw the largest increases are located in the southwest region which is in very close proximity to California.

[insert Table 2 about here]

These trends across the nation point to a new pattern of immigrant settlement with less attraction by California. Now that immigrants have established successful destinations across the nation, with cheaper housing and more jobs, it is unlikely California will resume its dominant attraction.

### III. LOS ANGELES

The slowdown of immigrant population growth in California largely masks the even more dramatic shifts that occurred in specific metro areas. Singer points out “significant flows of the foreign-born are shifting from more traditional areas to places with little history of immigration” (2004). Los Angeles is the prime case of a traditional immigrant region that is now exporting immigrants. Los Angeles experienced tremendous growth in its immigrant population during the 1970s and 1980s (see Table 3). Many speculated that these growth trends would continue into the 1990s and in fact, the immigrant share of the total population continued to increase by 2000. However, there have been some major shifts during the 1990s.

[insert Table 3 about here]

This paper will use the 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 census data to analyze the volume of newly arrived immigrants (those arriving in the past ten years) for each decade as well as the retention of longer settled immigrants. The analysis will take into account more specifically which groups are coming, remaining, or leaving Los Angeles with regard to race, age, and education levels.

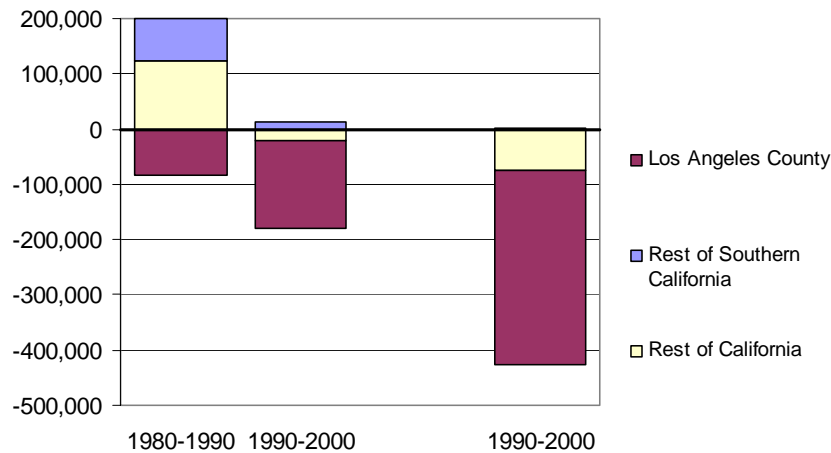
During the 1990s (see Table 3), there was a slowdown in the volume of new immigrants to California while there has been an actual decline in new immigrants to Los Angeles. This is very different from the dramatic increases experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. The new immigrant share of the total foreign born population has decreased for the first time in decades to lower than that observed in 1970. A later section examines how this compositional shift has altered the overall status measures of the foreign born.

The marked decrease in the volume of newcomers was concentrated in Los Angeles, while the rest of the Southern California region and the rest of California actually experienced a small increase in newcomers (see Table 3). There is strong indication that there is a dispersal of California's new immigrants away from Southern California, Los Angeles in particular, to the rest of California and other parts of the country.

With these patterns for new immigrants, are the longer settled immigrants (those who have been here in the U.S. for more than 10 years) continuing to live in Los Angeles or are they also moving to other parts of the country? The following highlights some of the key findings:

- Coupled with the slowdown of new immigrants, the longer settled immigrants rapidly left Los Angeles in the 1990s (for immigrants who arrived both during the 1970s and the 1980s as seen in Table 4).
- From 1990 to 2000, Los Angeles experienced a rapid decline in its longer settled Latino immigrant population while the rest of the region and state experienced growth (see Table 5 and Figure 1). New Latino immigrants are entering Los Angeles and are then opting to relocate to other parts of the region and state as they become longer settled. This pattern is not seen for longer settled Asians who are rapidly leaving Los Angeles and the state as a whole (see Table 6).

**Figure 1: Net Shift in Volume of 1970s and 1980s Immigrants**



- With the loss of many longer settled immigrants, it is important to note that the overall net education levels have actually increased from 1990 to 2000 in Los Angeles (see Table 7). The 5-year migration analysis further shows that the number of educated in-migrants substantially outweighed the educated out-migrants. Therefore, there is a net increase in the overall education levels of Los Angeles during the 1990s.
- Furthermore, the education levels of the 1970s immigrant arrival cohort have markedly increased by 2000, largely due to the coming into adulthood of its 1.5 generation (see Table 8). (Those who are 25 to 34 years of age in 2000 were 5 to 14 years old when they first arrived in the U.S.)

With the increasing education levels of longer settled immigrants, the new immigrants in 2000 are also coming in with higher educational attainment than the new immigrants of the past (see Table 9). And again, the 5-year migration data show that the educational attainment of those immigrants who arrived in the U.S. from 1995 to 2000 is even higher than that observed for the total population.

The rise in education levels could be seen as a signal that Los Angeles and California are better off with these demographic shifts. The poverty rate for the foreign-born population in Los Angeles has tapered-off for the first time in decades. As seen in Table 10, the

poverty rates for the foreign-born population in California indicate an even more encouraging outlook (Myers et al 2004).

Preliminary research shows similar findings for immigrant homeownership. Longer settled immigrants triple their homeownership rates and the falling preponderance of new arrivals is boosting aggregate homeownership rates.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Los Angeles was a popular gateway for new immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s. Recently, a sizeable share of immigrants has opted for different locations when they are newly arrived or departing Los Angeles after being longer settled. The preliminary findings show that the dramatic growth rates of immigrants observed for Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s ceased and even reversed in the 1990s. The previous growth had sustained a youthful and recently settled foreign-born population. In contrast, the ebbing of immigration in the 1990s is coupled to a maturing of the foreign-born population, now longer settled, that has important implications for rising socioeconomic status.

#### REFERENCES

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**Table 1: New Immigrant Arrival Attraction Rates for 50 States and DC, 1990 and 2000**

	State Share of U.S. New Arrivals				State Share of U.S. New Arrivals		
	1990	2000	change		1990	2000	change
Alabama	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	Montana	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Alaska	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	Nebraska	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
Arizona	1.4%	2.4%	1.1%	Nevada	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%
Arkansas	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	New Hampshire	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%
California	37.6%	24.8%	-12.8%	New Jersey	4.4%	4.7%	0.2%
Colorado	0.7%	1.5%	0.9%	New Mexico	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%
Connecticut	1.0%	1.1%	0.1%	New York	13.7%	11.8%	-1.9%
Delaware	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	North Carolina	0.6%	2.0%	1.4%
District of Columbia	0.4%	0.3%	-0.1%	North Dakota	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Florida	7.6%	7.8%	0.2%	Ohio	0.8%	1.1%	0.3%
Georgia	1.0%	2.6%	1.6%	Oklahoma	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%
Hawaii	0.8%	0.5%	-0.2%	Oregon	0.7%	1.1%	0.4%
Idaho	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	Pennsylvania	1.3%	1.6%	0.2%
Illinois	4.3%	5.2%	0.9%	Rhode Island	0.4%	0.3%	-0.1%
Indiana	0.4%	0.7%	0.4%	South Carolina	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%
Iowa	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	South Dakota	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Kansas	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	Tennessee	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%
Kentucky	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	Texas	8.3%	10.1%	1.9%
Louisiana	0.4%	0.3%	-0.1%	Utah	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%
Maine	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	Vermont	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Maryland	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%	Virginia	1.8%	2.0%	0.2%
Massachusetts	2.6%	2.4%	-0.2%	Washington	1.5%	2.2%	0.7%
Michigan	1.1%	1.8%	0.7%	West Virginia	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Minnesota	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%	Wisconsin	0.5%	0.7%	0.2%
Mississippi	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	Wyoming	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Missouri	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	US total	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%

Source: 2000 Summary File 3 and 1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) - Sample data

**Exhibit 2: Share of Each State's Population that is New Immigrant Arrivals, 1990 and 2000**

	New Arrival Share of State Population				New Arrival Share of State Population		
	1990	2000	change		1990	2000	change
Alabama	0.4%	1.0%	0.6%	Montana	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
Alaska	2.0%	2.4%	0.4%	Nebraska	0.7%	2.5%	1.9%
Arizona	3.2%	6.2%	3.0%	Nevada	4.0%	7.0%	3.0%
Arkansas	0.4%	1.5%	1.1%	New Hampshire	0.9%	1.6%	0.7%
California	10.9%	9.7%	-1.3%	New Jersey	5.0%	7.3%	2.3%
Colorado	1.7%	4.7%	2.9%	New Mexico	2.1%	3.2%	1.2%
Connecticut	2.7%	4.2%	1.5%	New York	6.6%	8.2%	1.6%
Delaware	1.1%	2.7%	1.6%	North Carolina	0.8%	3.3%	2.5%
District of Columbia	5.6%	6.6%	1.0%	North Dakota	0.5%	1.0%	0.5%
Florida	5.1%	6.4%	1.3%	Ohio	0.7%	1.3%	0.6%
Georgia	1.4%	4.2%	2.8%	Oklahoma	0.9%	2.0%	1.1%
Hawaii	6.0%	6.0%	0.0%	Oregon	2.1%	4.2%	2.1%
Idaho	1.3%	2.4%	1.1%	Pennsylvania	1.0%	1.7%	0.7%
Illinois	3.2%	5.5%	2.3%	Rhode Island	3.5%	4.0%	0.5%
Indiana	0.6%	1.6%	1.1%	South Carolina	0.5%	1.5%	1.0%
Iowa	0.7%	1.8%	1.1%	South Dakota	0.4%	1.0%	0.6%
Kansas	1.2%	2.8%	1.5%	Tennessee	0.5%	1.6%	1.1%
Kentucky	0.4%	1.2%	0.8%	Texas	4.2%	6.4%	2.2%
Louisiana	0.8%	1.0%	0.1%	Utah	1.5%	4.1%	2.6%
Maine	0.6%	0.8%	0.2%	Vermont	0.6%	1.3%	0.7%
Maryland	3.1%	4.3%	1.2%	Virginia	2.6%	3.8%	1.2%
Massachusetts	3.7%	4.9%	1.2%	Washington	2.6%	4.9%	2.2%
Michigan	1.0%	2.4%	1.4%	West Virginia	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%
Minnesota	1.2%	2.9%	1.7%	Wisconsin	0.8%	1.7%	0.9%
Mississippi	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%	Wyoming	0.5%	0.9%	0.3%
Missouri	0.6%	1.4%	0.8%	US Total			

Source: 2000 Summary File 3 and 1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) - Sample data

**Table 3: New Immigrants, 1970-2000**

<b>Volume of New Immigrants</b>	1970	1980	1990	2000
California	715,831	1,809,840	3,355,194	3,390,057
Southern California	422,973	1,172,840	2,105,394	1,851,668
Los Angeles County	334,253	944,740	1,550,770	1,245,085

<b>Increase in Volume</b>	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
California	152.8%	85.4%	1.0%
Southern California	177.3%	79.5%	-12.1%
Los Angeles County	182.6%	64.1%	-19.7%

<b>New Immigrant Share of Total Foreign Born</b>	1970	1980	1990	2000
California	39.6%	50.7%	52.1%	38.2%
Southern California	42.7%	54.9%	53.3%	36.2%
Los Angeles County	41.8%	57.1%	53.8%	36.0%

Note: New immigrants are defined as those who arrived in the U.S. within the past 10 years.



**Table 4: The Retention of Immigrants who Arrived in the 1970s and 1980s**

	1980	1990	2000
<b>California</b>			
1970s Arrivals	1,809,840	1,848,794	1,668,052
Change from Previous Decade		2.2%	-9.8%
1980s Arrivals		3,355,194	2,927,674
Change from Previous Decade			-12.7%
<b>Southern California</b>			
1970s Arrivals	1,172,840	1,166,834	1,018,986
Change from Previous Decade		-0.5%	-12.7%
1980s Arrivals		2,105,394	1,755,836
Change from Previous Decade			-16.6%
<b>Los Angeles County</b>			
1970s Arrivals	944,740	860,762	700,413
Change from Previous Decade		-8.9%	-18.6%
1980s Arrivals		1,550,770	1,198,207
Change from Previous Decade			-22.7%

**Table 5: Net Retention of 1970s and 1980s Immigrants From Los Angeles**

	1980	1990	2000
<b>Los Angeles County</b>			
1970s Arrivals	944,740	860,762	700,413
Change from Previous Decade		-8.9%	-18.6%
1980s Arrivals		1,550,770	1,198,207
Change from Previous Decade			-22.7%
<b>Rest of Southern California (Less Los Angeles)</b>			
1970s Arrivals	228,100	306,072	318,573
Change from Previous Decade		34.2%	4.1%
1980s Arrivals		554,624	557,629
Change from Previous Decade			0.5%
<b>Rest of California (Less Los Angeles)</b>			
1970s Arrivals	865,100	988,032	967,639
Change from Previous Decade		14.2%	-2.1%
1980s Arrivals		1,804,424	1,729,467
Change from Previous Decade			-4.2%

**Table 6: Net Retention of Asian And Latino Immigrants who Arrived in the 1970s and 1980s**

<b>1970s Immigrant Arrivals</b>	<b>Latinos</b>		<b>Asians</b>	
	<u>1980-1990</u>	<u>1990-2000</u>	<u>1980-1990</u>	<u>1990-2000</u>
Rest of California	73,626	5,034	32,419	-21,894
Rest of Southern California	37,300	18,066	26,366	-4,175
Los Angeles County	-44,526	-119,930	-15,715	-31,311

<b>1980s Immigrant Arrivals</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	<b>Asians</b>
	<u>1990-2000</u>	<u>1990-2000</u>
Rest of California	20,074	-78,468
Rest of Southern California	10,711	-7,556
Los Angeles County	-226,710	-96,848

**Table 7: Educational Attainment of 1970s and 1980s Immigrant Arrivals**

	<b>High School Completion</b>			<b>Bachelors Degree</b>		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
<b>1970s Arrivals</b>						
California	50.1%	50.1%	56.4%	18.8%	18.4%	21.6%
Southern California	46.1%	46.4%	52.6%	16.7%	16.6%	19.2%
Los Angeles	45.8%	44.9%	51.3%	16.7%	15.9%	18.7%
<b>1980s Arrivals</b>						
California		52.5%	52.3%		19.4%	19.2%
Southern California		50.0%	49.7%		17.8%	17.2%
Los Angeles		49.6%	49.5%		17.9%	17.2%

**Educational Attainment of New Immigrants  
who Arrived in the 5 Years Prior to the Census Year**

	<b>High School Completion</b>			<b>Bachelors Degree</b>		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
California	52.5%	53.1%	60.8%	19.9%	20.6%	30.5%
Southern California	49.3%	50.3%	56.4%	17.9%	18.5%	25.0%
Los Angeles	49.0%	50.5%	57.9%	18.1%	19.1%	26.0%

**Table 8: Education Attainment of 1970s Immigrant Arrivals, 1990 to 2000  
With or Without the 25 to 34 year olds in 2000**

	<b>High School Completion</b>		
	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Without</i>
	1990	2000	25-34 year olds 2000
California	50.1%	56.4%	51.5%
Southern California	46.4%	52.6%	47.8%
Los Angeles	44.9%	51.3%	46.5%

	<b>Bachelors Degree</b>		
	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Without</i>
	1990	2000	25-34 year olds 2000
California	18.4%	21.6%	20.3%
Southern California	16.6%	19.2%	18.1%
Los Angeles	15.9%	18.7%	17.5%

**Exhibit 9: Educational Attainment of New Immigrants  
(Those who Arrived in the U.S. in the Past Ten Years)**

	<b>High School Completion</b>			<b>Bachelors Degree</b>		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
California	50.1%	52.5%	56.7%	18.8%	19.4%	25.2%
Southern California	46.1%	50.0%	52.9%	16.7%	17.8%	20.9%
Los Angeles	45.8%	49.6%	53.9%	16.7%	17.9%	21.9%

**Table 10: Percent in Poverty, 1970 to 2000**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
California Total	11.2	11.5	12.4	14.2
Native Born	10.9	10.4	10.3	12.5
Foreign Born	14.7	17.6	19.8	19.1
Southern California Total	10.4	11.9	13.1	15.8
Native Born	10.0	10.3	10.3	13.6
Foreign Born	14.0	18.7	20.5	20.4
Los Angeles County Total	11.1	13.5	15.1	18.1
Native Born	10.7	11.7	12.0	16.0
Foreign Born	14.2	19.6	21.5	21.5