

Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

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Access to Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families: Research-to-Policy Resources

Young children in immigrant families, almost all of whom are U.S. citizens born in this country, are an increasing large group of the nation's population. [In 2015](#) there were an estimated 5,760,000 children age 5 or younger with at least one immigrant parent, about one-quarter of the total 23 million children of the same age nationally. This number doubled in the 25 years since the 1990 Census and accounts for all the net growth in the young child population since then.

[Based on data from the 2011-2013 American Community Surveys](#), about 4.7 million children in immigrant families are age 4 or younger, ages when child care and early education services may be sought. Overall, about 43 percent of children ages 3 and 4 from immigrant families are enrolled in early education programs, compared with 47 percent of children from native families, with both figures varying substantially by state.

Research has documented the positive effects of high quality early care and education experiences for young children's development and learning, especially for children living in poverty. Overall, children in immigrant families are more likely than children of native parents to face [risks to their development and learning](#), as they are more likely to live in poverty and with parents who have low educational attainment.

Children and their parents in immigrant families may [especially benefit from early care and education experiences](#). Early education programs can support children's language development in both the home language and English, and may be equipped to help identify and address the specific stresses and trauma that may be associated with immigration. Involvement in early care and education also has the potential to assist families in accessing community resources and services and in learning about and adapting to institutions, practices, and cultural patterns in the United States.



Immigrant families encounter [challenges in accessing early care and education](#) for their children. Language barriers limit some families' access to information about early education benefits and opportunities for their children. Some challenges are specific to families in which one or both parents is not legally in the United States, making their children ineligible for certain early education programs. However, even when children are themselves eligible due to their U.S. citizenship, concerns regarding immigration enforcement may keep families from accessing these programs. Personal, family, and cultural beliefs about the care of young children outside of the family may also be a factor in some cases.

This Research-to-Policy Resource List focuses on resources in the Research Connections collection published in 2010 or later that focus on access to early care and education for children in immigrant families. The resources on this list are organized into the following categories: research reviews, research based on large-scale national datasets, and research based on smaller-scale, in-depth, and/or localized (state- or community-level) studies. These resources provide information on immigrant status as a factor in access to early care and education, on the benefits that early education experiences offer children in immigrant families, as well as on barriers to access and strategies to address those barriers.

Research Reviews

Gottfried, M. A., & Kim, H. (2015). [Formal versus informal prekindergarten care and school readiness for children in immigrant families: A synthesis review](#). *Educational Research Review*, 16, 85-101.

Karoly, L. A., & Gonzalez, G. C. (2011). [Early care and education for children in immigrant families](#). *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 71-101.

Moinolmolki, N., Gaviria-Loaiza, J. & Han, M. (2017). [Immigrant families and early childhood programs: Addressing the new challenges in the 21st century](#). *Advances in Early Education and Day Care*, 20, 117-142.

Research Based On Large-Scale National Datasets

Immigrant Status as a Factor in ECE Access and Participation

Greenberg, J., & Kahn, J. M. (2011). [The influence of immigration status on early childhood education and care enrollment](#). *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 9(1), 20-35.

Johnson, A., D., Padilla, C. M., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2017). [Predictors of public early care and education use among children of low-income immigrants](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 73, 24-36.

Kahn, J. M., & Greenberg, J. (2010). [Factors predicting early childhood education and care use by immigrant families](#). *Social Science Research*, 39(4), 642-651.

Miller, P., Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R., & Koury, A. (2014). [Immigrant families' use of early childcare: Predictors of care type](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 484-498.

Impact of ECE Access and Arrangements on Outcomes for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Children

Johnson, A. D., Han, W., Rhum, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2014). [Child care subsidies and the school readiness of children of immigrants](#). *Child Development*, 85(6), 2140-2150.

Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R., Collins, M. A., & Miller, P. (2015). [Center-based preschool and school readiness skills of children from immigrant families](#). *Early Education and Development*, 26(4), 549-573.

Research Based on Smaller-Scale, In-Depth, and/or Localized (State- or Community-Level) Data

ECE Participation of Children in Immigrant Families

Hughes, S. (2011). [Investing in a bright future for all of Colorado's kids: The importance of providing early childhood care and education to children in immigrant families](#). Denver, CO: Colorado Children's Campaign.

Santhiveeran, J. (2010). [Who uses formal, early child care in California?: A comparative study of children from immigrant and non-immigrant families](#). *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 27(2), 151-160.

Child Care Decision-Making in Immigrant Families

Ha, Y., & Ybarra, M. (2014). [The role of parental immigration status in Latino families' child care selection](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 47, Part 3, 342-351.

Vesely, C. K. (2013). [Low-income African and Latina immigrant mothers' selection of early childhood care and education \(ECCE\): Considering the complexity of cultural and structural influences](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(3), 470-486.

Ward, H. D., Erin Oldham, L., & Atkins, J. A. (2011). [New Americans: Child care decision-making of refugee and immigrant parents of English language learners](#). Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service.

Barriers to ECE Access for Children in Immigrant Families

Adams, G., & McDaniel, M. (2012). [Access to the Illinois Preschool for All initiative: Insights from five lower-incidence immigrant groups in northern Cook County](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Greenberg, E., Adams, G., & Michie, M. (2016). [Barriers to preschool participation for low-income children on immigrants in Silicon Valley: Part II](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Gross, J., & Ntagengwa, C. (2016). [Challenges in accessing early childhood education and care for children in refugee families in Massachusetts](#). Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Strategies for Supporting Access to ECE

Adams, G., & McDaniel, M. (2012). [Untapped potential: Partnering with community-based organizations to support participation of lower-incidence immigrant communities in the Illinois Preschool for All initiative](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Gelatt, J., Adams, G., & Huerta, S. (2014). [Supporting immigrant families' access to prekindergarten](#). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Morland, L., Ives, N., McNeely, C., & Allen, C. (2016). [Providing a Head Start: Improving access to early childhood education for refugees](#). Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

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