

# A SNAPSHOT OF CHILDREN ON THE SAN DIEGO-MEXICO BORDER



Photo: © David Bacon

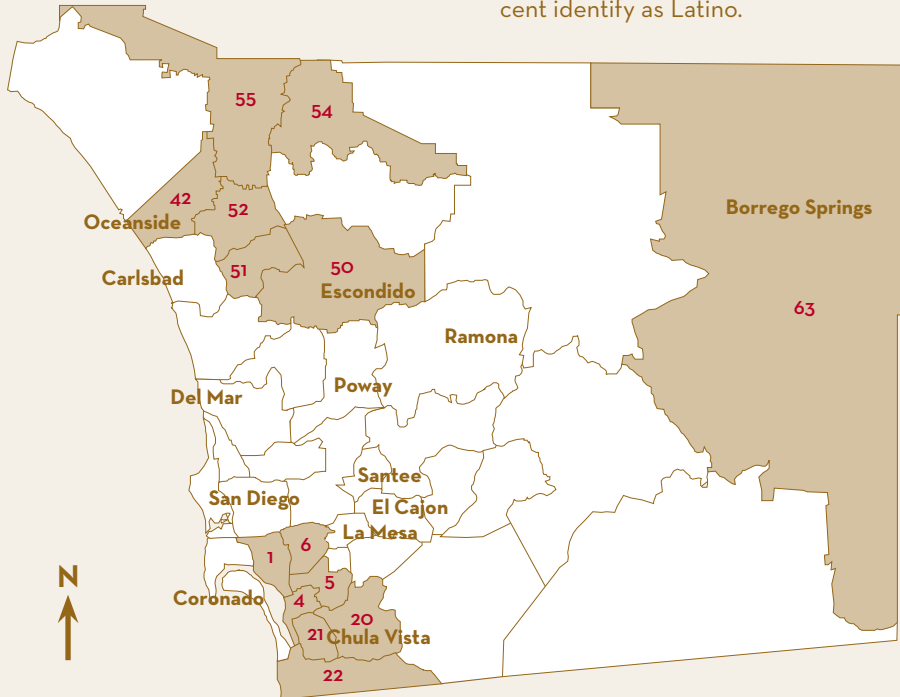


California has a land and ocean border and is home to immigrants from around the world, yet 44 percent of its foreign-born population come from Mexico. Of the two California counties that border Mexico—San Diego and Imperial—San Diego County has a land border that is two-thirds the length of Imperial County’s but a Mexican immigrant population that is nearly seven times larger.

Unlike many counties in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas that border Mexico, San Diego County has a much larger, more ethnically and economically diverse population. Many issues that commonly affect border communities are not as readily evident in San Diego County because they are masked by its large, urban population. Yet there are significant disparities between communities with high concentrations of Mexican immigrants and Latinos and those with lower concentrations within the county.

The majority of San Diego County residents were born in the United States, with only 22 percent born outside the country. Yet almost half of foreign-born residents (292,749) are from Mexico, and 6 percent of the 2,813,833 children under 18 were born in Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Due to San Diego County’s geographic location, it may come as no surprise that 23 percent (634,982) of residents are of Mexican descent and 27 percent identify as Latino.

## San Diego County



The highest concentrations of Mexican immigrants and Latinos are in 14 communities within San Diego County—not just along its physical border with Mexico. They are in the City of San Diego, the south suburban area, the north coast area and the eastern area. Although only one of these communities—Imperial Beach-San Ysidro—actually borders Mexico, they collectively will be referred as “Border communities” in this report, due to their high concentration of residents from Mexico and who identify as Latino. Among the county’s 41 Sub-Regional Areas (clusters of U.S. Census tracts grouped together by San Diego County officials),

<sup>1</sup> Children Now analysis of data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2001 California Health Interview Survey.

### Border Communities in San Diego County

- |                                   |                                 |                         |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Central San Diego               | 21 Western Chula Vista          | 51 San Marcos           |
| 4 National City                   | 22 Imperial Beach-San Ysidro    | 52 Vista                |
| 5 Southeast San Diego             | 42 Oceanside                    | 54 Pauma                |
| 6 Mid-City                        | 50 Escondido-North County Metro | 55 Fallbrook            |
| 20 Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater |                                 | 63 Anza-Borrego Springs |

Border communities are defined as those in which the percentage of persons born in Mexico and the percentage of Latinos exceeds the county averages.<sup>2</sup> Almost three times as many Latinos, and more than four times as many Mexican immigrants, live in Border communities compared to other communities in the county.

Border communities differ in several ways from other communities in the county. For example, Border communities are home to more than three times as many children (ages 0-17) who identify as Latino than the county's remaining communities. The table below includes demographic data on Border communities in San Diego County.

### Border Communities' Demographics

Communities (SRAs)*	All Residents				Children Under 18		
	Born in Mexico	Latino	White	Total	Latino	White	Total
Imperial Beach-San Ysidro**	25%	60%	21%	123,912	72%	12%	37,407
National City	25%	60%	14%	54,000	74%	6%	16,345
Western Chula Vista†	22%	57%	30%	108,777	71%	17%	30,355
Pauma	19%	38%	39%	7,097	47%	27%	2,388
Anza-Borrego Springs	18%	32%	66%	3,203	66%	34%	604
Escondido-North County Metro††	18%	37%	54%	146,597	50%	40%	43,209
Central San Diego	17%	37%	47%	155,822	69%	17%	28,432
Southeastern San Diego	17%	40%	12%	156,269	48%	7%	52,500
Vista	17%	38%	52%	95,740	52%	38%	27,518
Mid-City	16%	37%	32%	168,125	52%	13%	47,453
San Marcos	16%	32%	58%	68,420	48%	43%	18,271
Fallbrook	13%	30%	65%	43,954	44%	51%	11,746
Oceanside	13%	32%	51%	151,543	44%	37%	42,585
Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater‡	12%	37%	37%	74,386	44%	28%	21,951
<b>14 Border Communities</b>	<b>18%</b> <b>(239,387)</b>	<b>41%</b> <b>(556,040)</b>	<b>38%</b> <b>(519,740)</b>	<b>1,357,845</b>	<b>55%</b> <b>(209,454)</b>	<b>24%</b> <b>(89,855)</b>	<b>380,764</b>
<b>27 Other Communities</b>	<b>4%</b> <b>(53,362)</b>	<b>13%</b> <b>(194,951)</b>	<b>70%</b> <b>(1,024,744)</b>	<b>1,455,988</b>	<b>19%</b> <b>(64,884)</b>	<b>61%</b> <b>(208,041)</b>	<b>339,987</b>
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>10%</b> <b>(292,749)</b>	<b>27%</b> <b>(750,991)</b>	<b>55%</b> <b>(1,544,484)</b>	<b>2,813,833</b>	<b>38%</b> <b>(274,338)</b>	<b>41%</b> <b>(297,896)</b>	<b>720,751</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>12%</b> <b>(3,928,701)</b>	<b>32%</b> <b>(10,966,556)</b>	<b>47%</b> <b>(15,816,790)</b>	<b>33,871,648</b>	<b>37%</b> <b>(4,050,825)</b>	<b>20%</b> <b>(3,222,858)</b>	<b>9,249,829</b>

\* These communities are census tracts grouped into Sub-Regional Areas (SRAs). SRAs are clusters of U.S. Census Bureau tracts grouped together by San Diego County officials. To learn more about SRA boundaries, please visit [www.sandag.cog.ca.us](http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us).

\*\* This SRA is known as "South Bay," but, to clarify its boundaries, it will be referred as the Imperial Beach-San Ysidro community.

† This SRA is known as "Chula Vista," but, to clarify its boundaries, it will be referred as the Western Chula Vista community.

†† This SRA is known as "Escondido," but, to clarify its boundaries, it will be referred as the Escondido-North County Metro community.

‡ This SRA is known as "Sweetwater," but it also includes eastern Chula Vista, so it will be referred as the Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater community.

<sup>2</sup> The countywide average percent of Latinos is 27 percent and the countywide average percent of persons born in Mexico is 10 percent. Each border community identified in this report exceeded those averages. There was one SRA (Lemon Grove) in which the percentage of Latinos was higher than the countywide average but the percentage of persons born in Mexico was lower than the countywide average.

## Children In Poverty

In San Diego County in 2000, almost four times as many Latino children lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty level than white children. (In 2000, the federal poverty level for a family of two adults and two children was \$17,463.)<sup>3</sup> Border communities were home to more than twice the percentage of children in poverty, regardless of race and ethnicity, than other communities in the county.

### Children (ages 0-17) in Poverty

	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	24%	30%	9%
Other Communities	10%	19%	7%
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>9%</b>

Note: Poverty status was not known for every child. These percentages were calculated using only data for children whose poverty status (whether they were living in poverty or not) was known. Poverty status was not known for 14,184 children, including 6,329 Latino and 4,629 white children.

## Median Annual Household Income

Based on the 2000 Census, the average of the median annual household income in Border communities was \$12,678 less than the average of the median annual household income in other San Diego County communities. To illustrate this disparity, two Border communities (National City and Mid-City) had the lowest median annual household incomes in the county (less than \$30,000), while four non-Border communities (San Dieguito, Jamul, Del Mar and Poway) had the highest median annual household incomes (more than \$70,000).<sup>4</sup> The median annual household income for the entire state (\$47,493) was higher than the average for Border communities and slightly higher than the countywide annual median. Countywide, the median annual household income for Latinos (\$34,555) was lower than for whites (\$52,089). A similar disparity existed at the state level.

## Children Living With Two Parents

Of Latino children who lived in households with one or more parents (either through birth, marriage or adoption) in 2000, a lower proportion lived with two parents in Border communities (67%) than in all other communities in the county (73%).

### Own Children (ages 0-17) Who Are Living With Two Parents

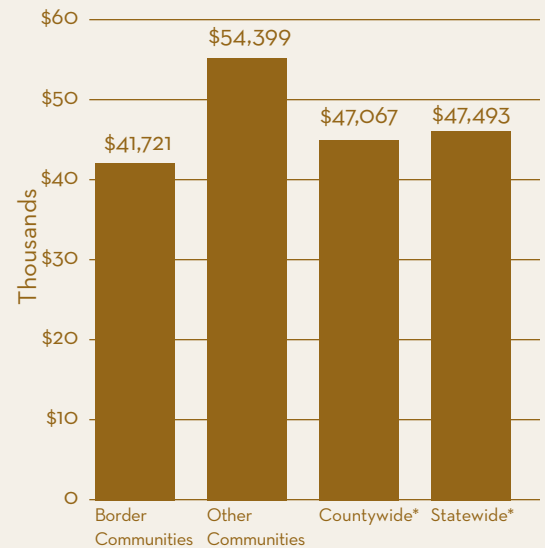
	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	68% (238,822)	67% (128,076)	76% (64,636)
Other Communities	78% (251,345)	73% (43,600)	79% (159,617)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>73% (490,167)</b>	<b>68% (171,676)</b>	<b>78% (224,253)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>72% (6,171,561)</b>	<b>70% (2,579,567)</b>	<b>77% (2,372,379)</b>

Note: The U.S. Census Bureau's label "own children" consists of sons or daughters by birth, marriage (a stepchild) or adoption of householders, who are under 18 years of age and have never been married.

<sup>3</sup> To determine poverty status, the U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of monetary income thresholds that vary by family size and composition, according to a directive set by the Office of Management and Budget. Poverty thresholds are adjusted annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, but do not take into account geographical differences. Income is measured before taxes and does not include capital gains and non-cash benefits. These data are estimates.

<sup>4</sup> The two Border communities' median annual household incomes were \$29,490 (National City) and \$29,750 (Mid-City). The four other communities' median annual household incomes were \$71,437 (San Dieguito); \$77,118 (Jamul); \$75,056 (Del Mar); and \$77,314 (Poway).

### Average of Median Annual Household Income, in 1999 dollars



\*Note: The countywide and statewide figures reported in this chart are medians, while the other two figures reported are averages of medians.

### Children With Own Parents Not in the Labor Force

Of children who lived in households with one or more parents (either through birth, marriage or adoption) in 2000, 19 percent of Latino children had no parent in the labor force compared to 6 percent of white children. In Border communities, the percentage of all children with no parent in the labor force was twice that of the other communities in the county. Also, the percentage of Latino children whose parents were not in the labor force was much higher in Border communities than in the other communities in the county.

### Own Children Whose Parents Are Not in the Labor Force

	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	16% (58,006)	21% (40,514)	6% (5,525)
Other Communities	8% (24,820)	13% (7,952)	5% (10,403)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>12% (82,826)</b>	<b>19% (48,466)</b>	<b>6% (15,928)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>15% (1,273,470)</b>	<b>21% (772,134)</b>	<b>7% (207,926)</b>

Note: The U.S. Census Bureau's label "own children" consists of sons or daughters by birth, marriage (a stepchild) or adoption of householders, who are under 18 years of age and have never been married.

"Alejandra recently graduated from the [Head Start] Parent Intern Program. She has learned how to speak English and helps her sons with their school homework. She is particularly proud of how her sons have dominated the English language, their socialization skills and basic education."- Jaime Rodríguez, MAAC Project staff in San Marcos

### Children (ages 5-17) Who Speak Spanish At Home

	All
Border Communities	45% (123,806)
Other Communities	11% (28,314)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>29% (152,120)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>32% (2,188,434)</b>

### Children's Language Abilities

Many more children speak Spanish at home in Border communities than in the rest of the county. Many Latino children who live in Border communities speak English, as well as Spanish.

### Children (ages 5-17) Who Speak Only English, or Speak English Proficiently in Addition to Another Language

	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	92% (254,536)	87% (130,156)	99% (66,007)
Other Communities	98% (243,717)	94% (42,476)	99% (153,835)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>95% (498,253)</b>	<b>89% (172,632)</b>	<b>99% (219,842)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>94% (6,376,398)</b>	<b>89% (2,549,792)</b>	<b>99% (2,413,173)</b>

In the 2004-05 school year, 23 percent of children enrolled in San Diego County public schools were designated English language learners (ELLs). As the table below shows, two-thirds of school districts whose boundaries overlapped with Border communities served a larger proportion of ELLs than the county average. Two school districts in those communities (National Elementary and San Ysidro Elementary) served student bodies that were more than 60 percent ELLs, and one (San Diego Unified) served as many as 37,000 ELLs.

### English Language Learners in K-12 Public Schools by School District

Communities (SRAs)	Corresponding School District*	Number of ELLs	Percent
Part of Pauma, Fallbrook, Oceanside and Vista	Bonsall Union Elementary	512	29%
Anza-Borrego Springs	Borrego Springs Unified	194	40%
Part of Western Chula Vista, Imperial Beach-San Ysidro and Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater	Chula Vista Elementary**	8,747	33%
Escondido-North County Metro	Escondido Union Elementary	8,625	43%
Escondido-North County Metro	Escondido Union High	1,569	18%
Part of Fallbrook and Oceanside	Fallbrook Union Elementary**	1,664	28%
All of Fallbrook and part of Oceanside, Pauma and Vista	Fallbrook Union High**	664	21%
Part of Anza-Borrego Springs	Julian Union Elementary**	38	2%
Part of Anza-Borrego Springs	Julian Union High**	610	20%
Part of Anza-Borrego Springs	Mountain Empire Unified**	323	18%
National City	National Elementary	3,953	62%
Part of Oceanside	Oceanside Unified**	5,907	27%
All of Central San Diego and part of Mid-City and Southeast San Diego	San Diego Unified**	37,076	28%
San Marcos	San Marcos Unified	4,076	26%
Escondido-North County Metro	San Pasqual Union Elementary	85	15%
Imperial Beach-San Ysidro	San Ysidro Elementary	3,411	66%
Imperial Beach-San Ysidro	South Bay Union Elementary	3,792	43%
All of Western Chula Vista and parts of Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater and Imperial Beach-San Ysidro	Sweetwater Union High**	10,858	27%
Fallbrook	Vallecitos Elementary	106	33%
Part of Escondido-North County Metro and Pauma	Valley Center-Pauma Unified**	1,004	21%
Vista	Vista Unified	6,707	25%
Part of Anza-Borrego Springs	Warner Unified**	15	5%
<b>Countywide</b>	--	<b>116,872</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	--	<b>1,591,525</b>	<b>23%</b>

\* The school district boundaries do not match the Sub-Regional Area (SRA) boundaries. Given data constraints, each SRA that overlapped with school district boundaries is listed. For a visual presentation of how the boundaries overlap, please visit [www.sandag.cog.ca.us](http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us).

\*\* The boundary of this school district includes portions of both Border communities and other communities.

Source: California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, "English Learners, Instructional Settings and Services (with District Data)," 2004-05, <<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>> (February 1, 2006).

### High School Graduates Who Met College Entrance Requirements

In the 2003-04 school year, six of the nine school districts that overlapped Border communities reported lower percentages of high school graduates who met college entrance requirements for the state’s four-year university systems than the county average. In Border communities—and across the county and state—lower percentages of Latino graduates met the requirements than whites. In four of the school districts that overlapped Border communities, the percentage of white graduates who met the requirements was at least double that of Latino graduates.

#### High School Graduates Who Met College Entrance Requirements (UC or CSU)

Communities (SRA)	Primary Corresponding School District*	All	Latino	White
Central San Diego; Southeastern San Diego; Mid-City	San Diego Unified	39%	25%	47%
Eastern Chula Vista-Sweetwater; National City; Western Chula Vista; Imperial Beach-San Ysidro	Sweetwater Union High	28%	22%	35%
Oceanside	Oceanside Unified	25%	17%	33%
Escondido-North County Metro	Escondido Union High	28%	16%	35%
San Marcos	San Marcos Unified	39%	24%	45%
Vista	Vista Unified	27%	18%	46%
Pauma	Valley Center-Pauma Unified	34%	20%	48%
Fallbrook	Fallbrook Union High	26%	12%	34%
Anza- Borrego Springs	Borrego Springs Unified	46%	43%	58%
<b>County</b>	--	<b>37%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	--	<b>34%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>40%</b>

\* The school district boundaries do not match the Sub-Regional Area (SRA) boundaries. Given data constraints, each SRA is listed with the corresponding school district that overlapped most with its boundaries. For a visual presentation of how the boundaries overlap, please visit [www.sandag.cog.ca.us](http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us).

Source: California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, “# Grads and Grads with UC/CSU Required Courses (with district data)”, 2003-04, <<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>> (February 1, 2006).

“I am the first one in my family to go to college and I often felt like I was all on my own. Some of my friends say they would like to go to college too, but I know they won’t. They either don’t know what to do or just don’t see themselves there. Our community needs to be better informed about opportunities for college, for jobs and. . . to believe in themselves.”

- Rocio, age 17, Escondido resident

### Live Births

In 2004, the majority of live births in Border communities were Latino babies (61%), while only 24 percent of births in the rest of the county were Latino. Countywide, almost 4,000 more Latino babies were born than white babies.

#### Live Births as a Percentage of All Births by Ethnicity

	Latino	White
Border Communities	61% (15,467)	24% (5,983)
Other Communities	24% (4,310)	55% (9,803)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>46% (19,777)</b>	<b>37% (15,786)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>51% (275,188)</b>	<b>30% (158,992)</b>

Note: These data were available by zip code, not by Sub-Regional Areas (SRAs). Estimates were made using aggregations of data by zip code. Infant mortality rates were not available by SRA in the county due to the small population.

Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Maternal, Child & Family Health Services analysis of State of California, Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files, 2004.

## Teen Birth Rate

In 2004, the teen birth rates for all females, ages 15-19, were much higher in Border communities than in the rest of the county, with 50 births per 1,000 compared to 18 per 1,000. Teen birth rates in Border communities and in the rest of the county's communities were also higher for Latinos than whites. For example, the teen birth rate in the Escondido-North County Metro region was 91 per 1,000 for Latinos compared to 16 per 1,000 for whites; in the Vista region, the rate was 85 per 1,000 for Latinos compared to 12 per 1,000 for whites.

### Teen Birth Rate (per 1000 females, ages 15-19)

	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	50	72	19
Other Communities	18	43	9
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>17</b>

Note: These data were available by zip code, not by Sub-Regional Areas (SRAs). Estimates were made using aggregations of data by zip code.

Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Maternal, Child & Family Health Services analysis of State of California, Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files, 2004.

## Low Birthweight Babies

Infants born at low birthweight, defined as less than five and a half pounds, have higher mortality rates and are at increased risk of long-term disability and impaired development.<sup>9</sup> Low rates of low birthweight babies are generally considered a positive indicator of young children's well-being. In 2004, the percentage of low birthweight babies was lower overall in Border communities, with the percentage of Latino low birthweight babies below that of white babies.

### Low Birthweight Babies

	All	Latino	White
Border Communities	6.4% (1714)	5.7% (874)	6.0% (359)
Other Communities	6.5% (1239)	6.1% (262)	6.4% (625)
<b>Countywide</b>	<b>6.5% (2953)</b>	<b>5.7% (1136)</b>	<b>6.2% (984)</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>6.7% (36,481)</b>	<b>6.1% (16,797)</b>	<b>6.3% (10,023)</b>

Note: These data were available by zip code, not by Sub-Regional Areas (SRAs). Estimates were made using aggregations of data by zip code. Low birthweight is under 2,500 grams, or five and a half pounds.

Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Maternal, Child & Family Health Services analysis of State of California, Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files, 2004, "Table 2-8. Live Births by Birthweight, Weeks of Gestation, and by Race/Ethnic Group of Mother, California, 2004 (By Place of Residence), <<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/hisp/chs/ohir/tables/datafiles/vsofca/0208.xls>> (May 15, 2006).2004.

5 T.J. Mathews, F. Menacker, and M.F. MacDorman, "Infant mortality statistics from the 2000 period linked birth/infant death data set," *National Vital Statistics Reports* Vol. 50, No. 12 (2002), <[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/nvsr50\\_12.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/nvsr50_12.pdf)>; and M. Hack, N.K. Klein, and H.G. Taylor, "Long-term developmental outcomes of low birth weight infants," *The Future of Children: Low Birth Weight*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1995), p. 19-34, <[http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info.htm?doc\\_id=79872](http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info.htm?doc_id=79872)>, as cited in Child Trends, Child Trends DataBank, "Low and Very Low Birthweight Infants," <<http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/57LowBirthweight.cfm>> (June 5, 2006).



Photo: © Jonathan Payne

### Recommendations

#### Family Economic Success

Given the disparities between the average of the median annual household income and percent of children living in poverty in Border communities compared to other communities, decision-makers need to:

- Invest in programs that contribute to family asset-building, including culturally competent employment, income tax credits, individual development accounts, financial education, credit counseling and first-time homebuyer services.
- Support hard-working parents and those seeking stable employment by investing in child care programs to serve low-income families. Ensure that services are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of working families, including providing care during nontraditional hours.
- Maintain California's commitment to programs that invest in immigrant families, such as the California Food Assistance Program, which provides food stamps for qualified working immigrant families.

#### Education

Lower percentages of high school graduates, particularly Latino graduates, in Border communities met the state's college entrance requirements than graduates in other parts of the county. To improve the quality of children's education, particularly in a region with such high numbers of English language learners and bilingual students, decision-makers need to:

- Ensure all students in need receive quality instruction from staff who are trained and qualified to teach English language learners, and all schools foster cultural competency among staff and students.
- Strengthen outreach to families about the benefits of early childhood programs, the value of core academics, such as math and science, and how to navigate K-12 and higher education systems. Encourage parents to play an active role in their children's formal education. Both can help reduce the achievement gap.
- Create more opportunities, such as after school programs, mentorships and other research-based efforts, for students to improve their school success so more high school students graduate and meet the entrance requirements for the University of California and California State University.

#### Health

Border communities are home to 40,000 more children under 17 than other parts of the county. They also have higher teen birth rates and lower rates of low birthweight babies. Given the high concentration of children and high birth rates, decision-makers need to:

- Ensure that every child—especially those born to new parents—has access to affordable health and dental insurance. Enact policies that ease family health and dental insurance enrollment and retention.
- Promote initiatives to improve translation services and cultural competence among health care providers across the state in the public and private sectors.

#### Notes

The term "Latino" refers to those who identified as Hispanic on the 2000 Census, and the term "white" refers to those who identified as non-Hispanic white.

All data were based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 Census, unless otherwise noted. 2000 Census data were used because the sample size was large enough to allow for analysis beyond the county level. 2000 Census data by Sub-Regional Areas were compiled by San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). All other 2000 Census data were compiled by Children Now using American FactFinder's online tools at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

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Children Now is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization working to raise children's well-being to the top of the national policy agenda. The organization focuses on ensuring quality health care, a solid education and a positive media environment for all children. Children Now's strategic approach creates awareness of children's needs, develops effective policy solutions and engages those who can make change happen.

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