CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Immigration in Connecticut

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Currently, about one out of every ten Connecticut residents was born outside the United States. This proportion is rising in Connecticut as it is nationally. Many of Connecticut's immigrants are the parents of children; these children represent an increasing proportion of Connecticut's future workers and citizens. Importantly, many of these children are citizens while their parents are not. Policies aimed at non-citizens have an impact on these children.

A combination of language barriers, poverty, and policy failures put children in immigrant families at risk for poor education and health outcomes. To ensure the productivity and well-being of Connecticut's next generation, policy makers should address the challenges facing immigrant children and families. This short paper summarizes some of the facts and trends about these children and their families.

Population

As of the 2000 Census[1], 11% (367,967) of Connecticut's total population was born outside the United States—the 13th highest percentage in the nation. An additional 2.7% (90,523) was born in Puerto Rico.[2] Between 1995 and 2025, Connecticut is expected to gain 337,000 people through international migration, doubling the foreign born population (the 12th greatest population increase among the fifty states and Washington DC).[3] These immigrants will help counteract what would otherwise be a serious demographic challenge: Connecticut's aging population. As the baby boomers reach retirement age, the number of residents over age 65 is projected to grow by 44% (an additional 204,000 elderly) between 1995 and 2025. But the impact of these changes will not be nearly as dramatic as they would otherwise be -- or as they will be in some other states[4] -- because immigration will bring children and young working families to Connecticut.

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[1] This report relies on two mains sources of data: the 2000 Census and the 2003 American Community Survey. Data differences between these two sources may reflect methodological or temporal changes.

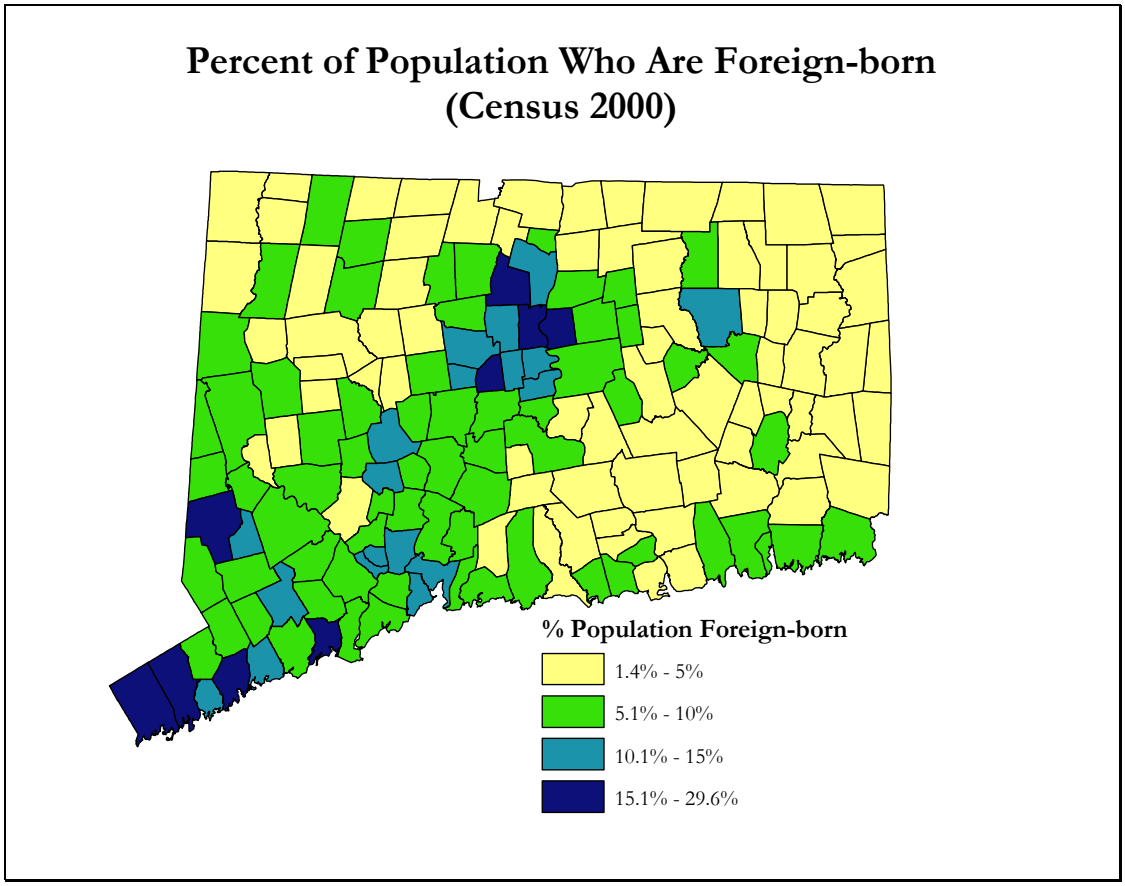
[2] United States Bureau of the Census, *Census 2000*. We have defined "immigrants" as those who are foreign born. Residents born in Puerto Rico, who are United States citizens, will be discussed later in the paper.

[3] United States Bureau of the Census, *Connecticut's Population Projections: 1995-2025*, 1996. http://www.census.gov/population/projections/state/9525rank/ctprsrel.txt.

[4] Although these changes are significant, they are not as dramatic as in many other states (based on relative state rankings). In 1995, the share of Connecticut's population that was elderly was 9th highest in the nation, but by 2025 it will be 38th highest; other states are experiencing greater aging. Similarly, Connecticut's decline in its under 20 population is not as significant as in some other states. In 1995, the share of Connecticut's population that was under age 20 was 6th *lowest* in the nation, but in 2025, Connecticut will be 29th *highest* in the share of its population that is under age 20. United States Bureau of the Census, Population Division, *Connecticut's Population Projections: 1995 to 2025.*

Geography

The foreign born population is not spread evenly across Connecticut, but is concentrated in certain towns, particularly Stamford (30% foreign born), Danbury (27%), Bridgeport (21%), Norwalk (20%), Greenwich (19%), Hartford 19%, New Britain (18%), Bloomfield (18%)[5], and East Hartford (15%). The variation in concentration by city and town is evident in the accompanying map.



Connecticut's immigrants come from around the world, but some countries and regions are particularly well represented. The largest group, 38% (141,141) of foreign born Connecticut residents, come from Europe; 35% (128,267) come from Central and Latin America.

The patterns of immigration from various regions of the world have changed dramatically over the last 20 years. The accompanying table and Figure 1 below show the proportion of

Birth Origin of Connecticut Immigrants: Before and After 1980		
Birth Region	Before 1980	After 1980
North America	72%	28%
Europe	61%	39%
Caribbean	28%	72%
Oceania	27%	73%
Africa	22%	78%
Asia	21%	79%
South America	18%	82%
Central America	16%	84%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF3, Table PCT 20

[5] Because the largest concentration of immigrants in Bloomfield is from Jamaica (an English language speaking country), these immigrants do not face the same language barriers to learning as do immigrants from many other countries.

immigrants from each region, contrasting Connecticut immigrants arriving in the United States prior to 1980 and those arriving between 1980 and March 2000. The majority of Connecticut immigrants born in North America and Europe arrived prior to 1980 (72% and 61%, respectively). By contrast, the vast majority of Connecticut immigrants from the Caribbean, Oceania, Africa, Asia, South America, and Central America have arrived in the United States since 1980.

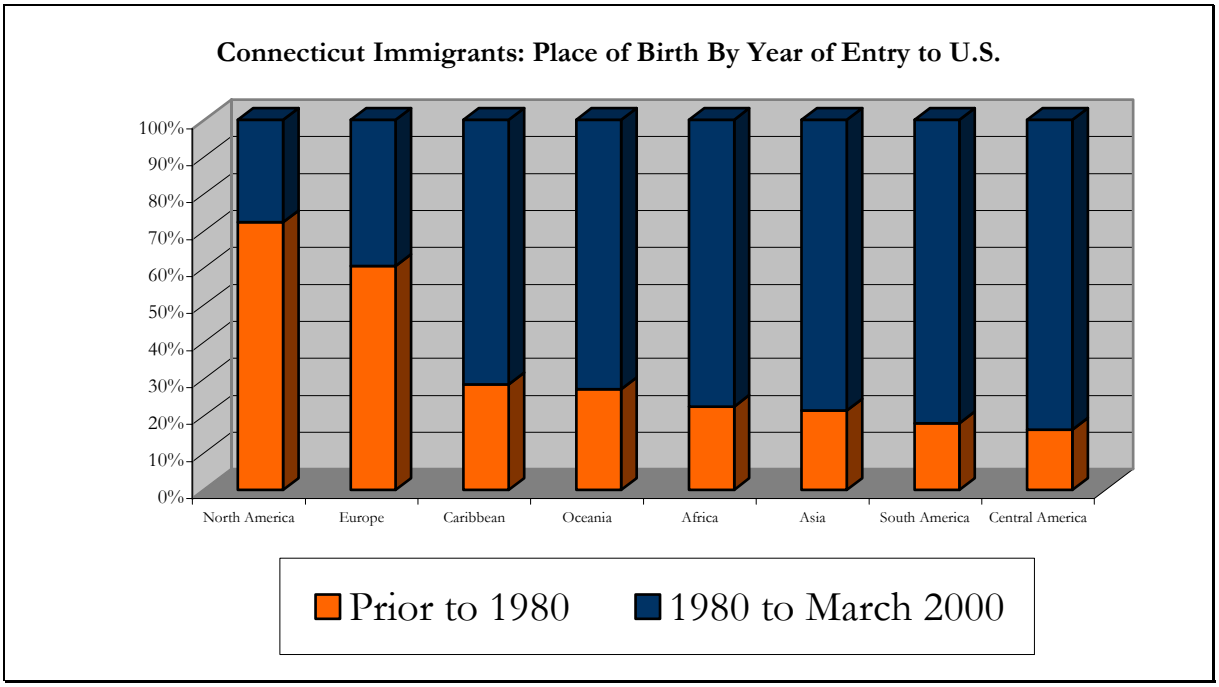


Figure 1

Immigrants of differing nationalities tend to cluster in various Connecticut towns, choosing to live near others from the same home country. In Stamford, the single largest group of foreign born residents is from Guatemala (3,971 people). In Danbury, the single largest group is from Brazil (4,158). In Bloomfield, the single largest group of foreign-born residents is from Jamaica (2,175). The largest groups of foreign-born residents in Greenwich come from Japan (1,181) and the United Kingdom (1,087). The largest immigrant groups in Bridgeport are from Jamaica (4,790) and Portugal (2,177). Hartford's largest immigrant populations come from Jamaica (7,355) and Peru (1,565).

Top Ten Countries of Origin for Foreign-born CT Residents	
Jamaica	26,819
Italy	26,023
Poland	25,507
Canada	19,083
United Kingdom	16,395
India	15,108
Mexico	13,282
Portugal	13,234
China & Taiwan	12,691
Colombia	12,009

Citizenship & Legal Status

Most children of immigrants are citizens—even if their parents are not.[6] In fact, nationwide, 75 percent of all children of immigrants live in what are called "mixed-status" families, in which the

[6] Children born in the United States to foreign born parents are automatically United States citizens, regardless of parental citizenship status.

parents are not citizens but the children are.[7] Because so many families are mixed-status, policies aimed at non-citizens often affect large numbers of children who are United States citizens.

Immigrants in Connecticut are divided into five categories:[8]

- Naturalized citizens;
- Legal permanent residents;
- Refugees and asylees;
- Temporary workers and educational visa holders;
- Undocumented immigrants.

Importantly, these groups are not wholly distinct. Families with parents who are legal permanent residents or even citizens may include a relative who is undocumented. Also, many immigrants change status: some students become legal residents, some permanent residents become naturalized, and some visa holders overstay their visas and become officially undocumented.

As the children of immigrants from each of these groups grow up and become a larger proportion of Connecticut's workforce, the state's future productivity and well-being increasingly will depend on their healthy growth and development. Unfortunately, a combination of barriers involving language, poverty, and policy choices leads the children of immigrants to be at risk for poor health and educational outcomes.

Language

Language barriers are one of the difficulties immigrant families and their children face at school and work. One in ten Connecticut children in K-12 schools live in homes where English is not the primary language. In some towns, the proportion is even greater, including Hartford (52%), New Britain (40%), and Bridgeport (38%)[9].

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[7] Urban Institute, *Immigration -- Issues in Focus*, (2004). In this instance, the Urban Institute defines "mixed families" as those "made up of noncitizen parents and citizen children."
http://www.urban.org/content/IssuesInFocus/immigrationstudies/immigration.htm#findings. Other Urban Institute studies acknowledge that "mixed families" can be defined as families in which either some or all children are citizens. See Randolph Capps, et al, *Health Insurance Coverage of Children in Mixed-Status Immigrant Families*, (Urban Institute, 2003).

[8] For definitions and more information, see Urban Institute, *The New Neighbors.*
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310844_the_new_neighbors.pdf, p.14

[9] Connecticut State Department of Education, *Strategic School Profiles Data*, 2003-2004.

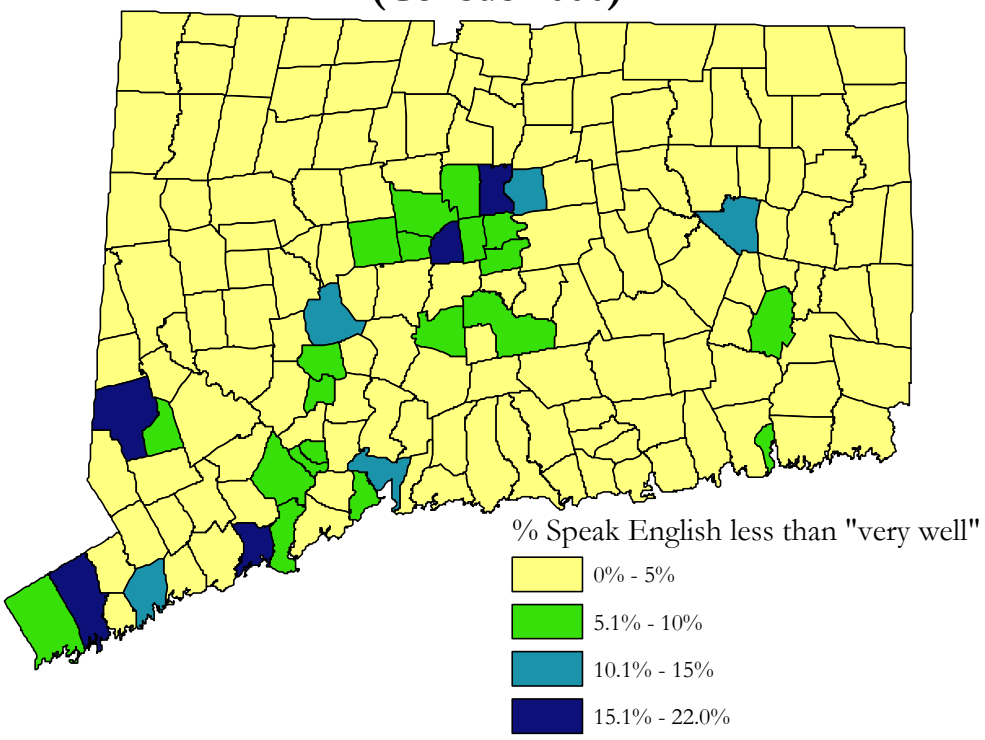
Linguistic Barriers for Connecticut Schoolchildren

School District[1]	% Non-English Home Language (2002-2003)	% Non-English Home Language (2003-2004)
Hartford School District	55%	52%
New Britain School District	40%	40%
Bridgeport School District	37%	38%
Stamford School District	34%	34%
New Haven School District	30%	29%
Norwalk School District	28%	29%
Danbury School District	26%	35%
Meriden School District	26%	27%
Windham School District	25%	26%
The Bridge Academy District	24%	30%
New London School District	24%	24%

Source: SDE, Strategic School Profiles.
Districts presented here are the districts with highest % of non-English home language, from 2002-2003 school year.

Also, some of the households where English is not the primary language are considered "linguistically isolated," meaning that *no* person age 14 or older speaks English as a first language or speaks English "very well." Overall, the United States Census Bureau finds that 4.4% of Connecticut households are linguistically isolated, but in some towns the proportion is higher, such as Hartford (16%) and New Britain (14%). Children in these households may need more specifically targeted help with learning English, since no one in their homes speaks English very well.

Percent of population who speak English less than "very well" (Census 2000)



City/Town	% speaking English less than "very well"
Hartford	22%
Bridgeport	21%
New Britain	20%
Danbury	19%
Stamford	16%
Waterbury	14%
Norwalk	13%
New Haven	12%
Windham	11%
East Hartford	11%
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000, DP-2	

While most immigrant children fare as well as their native-born peers in school,[10] certain subgroups have greater difficulty. In particular, *middle and high school age students with limited English proficiency* and *students who arrive in the United States with significant gaps in their schooling* fare substantially worse than their peers. These problems are compounded by linguistic segregation: students with limited English proficiency increasingly tend to go to schools with concentrated pockets of limited English proficiency (LEP) students. In addition, large numbers of children with LEP attend high-poverty schools that are ill equipped to educate them. These factors in combination create a high risk of poor educational outcomes.[11]

Employment and Poverty

In Connecticut, about the same percentage of foreign born residents are employed as native born residents (63% of immigrants are in the workforce, compared to 64% of native-born residents). Of those who are in the workforce, a greater percentage of immigrants (46.1%) work full-time year round, as compared to native born residents (43.5%).[12]

However, immigrants are more likely to work in low wage jobs. While 9% of Connecticut's full time, year-round workers earned less than $20,000, 15% of Connecticut immigrants earned less than $20,000, while 21% of Puerto Rican-born workers earned less than $20,000.[13]

The result is that many children of immigrants grow up in poverty: 12.3% of Connecticut children with an immigrant parent live below the federal poverty line ($18,850/year for a family of four), as compared to 10.5% of children without an immigrant parent, and 34% of children with a Puerto Rican-born parent. These children and their families have significant needs, but often face barriers (including language barriers, ineligibility, and distrust) that prevent them from receiving benefits and services.

Connecticut's Puerto Rican Population[14]

As of the 2000 Census, 90,500 Connecticut residents were born in Puerto Rico (2.7%). Among all the states, Connecticut has the highest proportion of its population (5.7%) that is of Puerto Rican heritage.[15] This larger proportion (5.7%), includes those who have identified themselves as being of Hispanic – Puerto Rican heritage regardless of their place of birth.

Although children and parents who were born in Puerto Rico are United States citizens, they share many important characteristics with immigrant groups such as cultural differences, language

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[10] Urban Institute, *Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in U.S. Secondary Schools* (2000), p. 8 (available at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/overlooked.pdf)

[11] Urban Institute*: Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in U.S. Secondary Schools* (2000) (available at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/overlooked.pdf).

[12] IPUMS data, American Community Survey, 2003

[13] IPUMS data, American Community Survey, 2003. Low wage earners are those with earnings less than $20,000 year, despite working full-time (at least 35 hours a week), year round (50-52 weeks in the designated calendar year).

[14] Because this paper is first and foremost a study of immigration, data included here for Puerto Ricans focuses on those who have moved to the United States from Puerto Rico. There is also a larger Puerto Rican community, consisting of residents whose ancestors moved to the United States from Puerto Rico, that shares many of the challenges experienced by families that recently have immigrated from Puerto Rico.

[15] While these data are readily available through the Census 2000 Demographic Profiles, they have been emphasized recently through the release of Angelo Falcon's *Atlas of Stateside Puerto Ricans* (Commonwealth of Puerto Rico/Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration, 2004).

difficulties and low wage work.[16] They make up a substantial proportion of the population in many Connecticut cities. Indeed, in some Connecticut cities, the Puerto Rican population far surpasses populations from other nations. In Hartford, for instance, there are 21,547 residents who were born in Puerto Rico; in Bridgeport, 14,309. This population is also disproportionately poor. Among Connecticut residents, 7% of those born in the United States live below the poverty line, as compared with 10% of foreign born and 31% of those born in Puerto Rico.

States with more than 1% of population of Puerto Rican origin

State	% Puerto Rican origin
Connecticut	5.7%
New York	5.5%
New Jersey	4.4%
Massachusetts	3.1%
Florida	3.0%
Hawaii	2.5%
Rhode Island	2.4%
Pennsylvania	1.9%
Delaware	1.8%
Illinois	1.3%

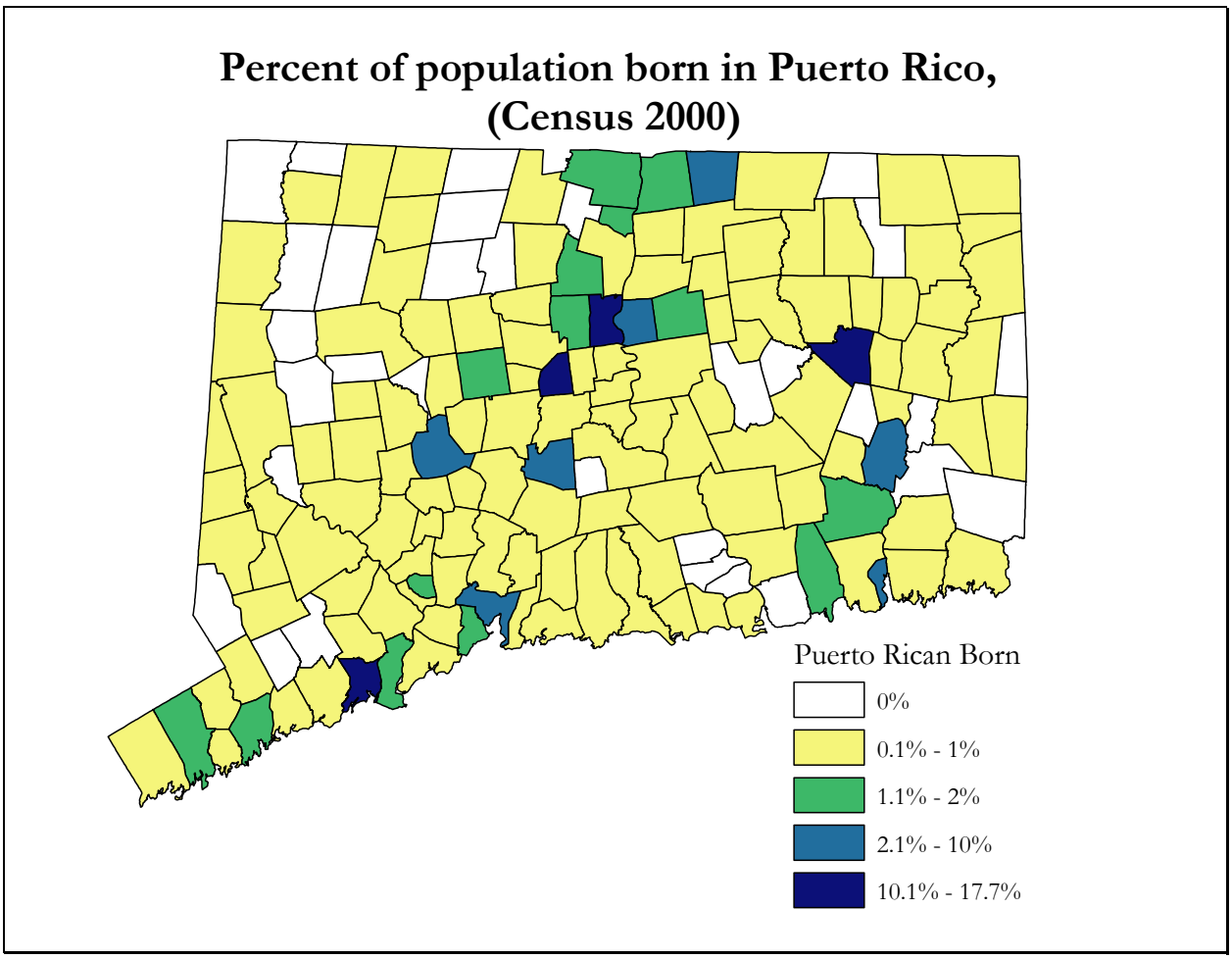
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF1, PCT-11

Percent of Residents Born in Puerto Rico

City/Town	Born in Puerto Rico as % Total
Hartford	17.7%
New Britain	11.0%
Windham	10.6%
Bridgeport	10.3%
Meriden	8.2%
Waterbury	7.9%
New Haven	7.4%
New London	6.7%
Connecticut	2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF3, P21

[16] In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau classifies persons born in Puerto Rico as international migrants and includes them in the "foreign born" population statistics despite their legal status as United States citizens.



Conclusion

Connecticut's influx of international immigrants presents unique opportunity to the state in several ways. First, this more youthful immigrant population can help to offset the potential challenges of Connecticut's aging population by expanding the labor pool, assuring Connecticut's economy an more adequately sized workforce. Second, these workers will expand Connecticut's tax base, a necessity if Connecticut is to have sufficient revenues to support publicly funded services for a growing elderly population, such as health care and housing. Finally, the language skills and cultural competencies of Connecticut's immigrants, along with their established ties to dozens of countries, will be strong competitive assets for the state in this increasingly global economy.

Connecticut's challenge is to assure that these recent immigrants, and their children, receive the supports and education necessary to achieve their full potential.