

Policy Brief

American Indian Children in Los Angeles, California & the U.S.

January 2004

Introduction:

This policy brief is the second in a series on American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) children in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. This brief compares this group with AIAN children in California and the United States, and with other children in these three geographic units. According to the 2000 Census, there were about 140,000 American Indian and Alaska Natives, 111,000 to 115,000 excluding Latin American Indians (LAI).¹ Even with the lower figure, Los Angeles County is home to the largest urbanized AIAN populations in the country. The problems facing this community have been documented elsewhere (Champagne et al. 1996; Ong and Houston 2002) and are being examined by a parallel project on the socioeconomic status of AIAN adults. This project focuses on the children. As members of a socioeconomically disadvantaged population, AIAN children face a number of challenges. Understanding demographic patterns and trends is crucial to developing public policies and programs for American Indian and Alaska Native children.

This brief examines census data on demographic characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, gender, household and family composition), income and poverty, housing conditions, and use of public assistance. The brief uses aggregate, group-specific data from the 2000 Census for Los Angeles, California and the United States. All data and statistics for AIANs excludes Latin American Indians. This policy brief contains an appendix on data. Major findings include:

- AIANs are a relatively young population.
- AIAN children are geographically dispersed.
- Nearly one-in-four live below the poverty line.
- Only about one-half live in two-parent households.
- AIAN children are more likely to encounter poor housing conditions.
- A disproportionately high percent face educational barriers and health problems.

Population Size and Composition:

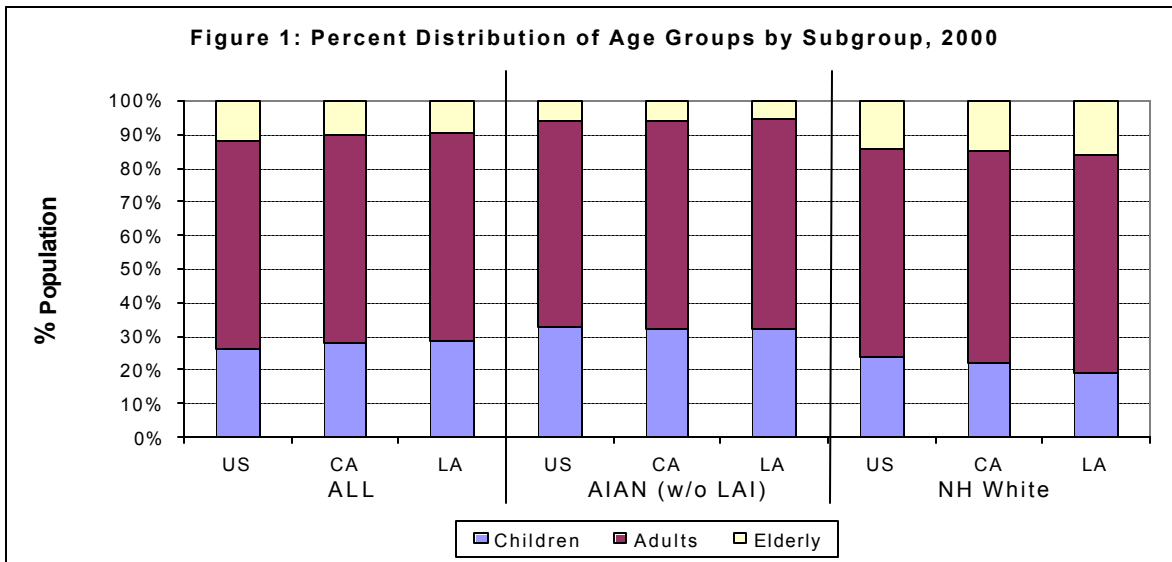
Table 1 provides the official 2000 count for the top 5 states, metropolitan areas and cities with the largest American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) population. California and Los Angeles metropolitan area (which is coterminous with LA County) are on the top of the state and regional lists, and the city of Los Angeles is second to New York City. About a seventh of all AIANs reside in California. The Los Angeles region is home to about 3 percent of the nation's 3.7 million AIANs.

Figure 1 provides the break down of the American Indian and Alaska Native population (without LAIs) by the three major age groups for the U.S., California and Los Angeles County. Our main reference groups are the total and non-Hispanic white (NHW) population. In general, children comprise a higher percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives than the general and NHW populations.

Table 1: Top 5 States, MSAs, and Cities for AIAN Population in 2000

| Rank | State | Total | AIAN | AIAN% |
|------|-------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| 1 | California | 33,871,648 | 564,269 | 1.7% |
| 2 | Oklahoma | 3,450,654 | 390,830 | 11.3% |
| 3 | Arizona | 5,130,632 | 287,543 | 5.6% |
| 4 | Texas | 20,851,820 | 198,884 | 1.0% |
| 5 | New Mexico | 1,819,046 | 189,509 | 10.4% |
| Rank | MSA | Total | AIAN | AIAN% |
| 1 | Los Angeles | 9,519,338 | 115,311 | 1.2% |
| 2 | Phoenix-Mesa AR | 3,251,876 | 88,380 | 2.7% |
| 3 | Tulsa, OK | 803,325 | 85,867 | 10.7% |
| 4 | New York, NY | 9,314,235 | 71,971 | .8% |
| 5 | Oklahoma City, OK | 1,083,346 | 71,493 | 6.6% |
| Rank | City | Total | AIAN | AIAN% |
| 1 | New York, NY | 8,008,278 | 65,238 | 0.8% |
| 2 | Los Angeles, CA | 3,694,820 | 41,866 | 1.1% |
| 3 | Phoenix, AZ | 1,321,045 | 33,498 | 2.5% |
| 4 | Tulsa, OK | 393,049 | 30,053 | 7.6% |
| 5 | Oklahoma City, OK | 506,132 | 28,692 | 5.7% |

Source: Census Bureau, 2000 SF2. The AIAN count is based on the combined count, which includes both single-race and multi-race AIANs, but excludes Latin American Indians.



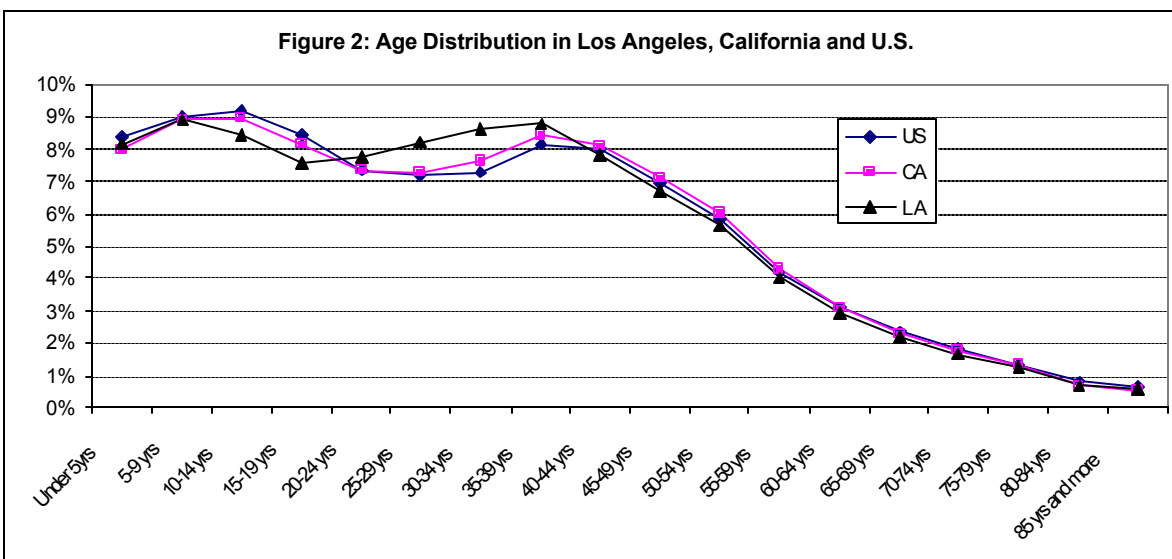
This proportion is identical across the geographical levels. Figure 2 plots the age distribution by 5-year age groups in the U.S., California and Los Angeles County, respectively. The lines show two distinctive bulges, one related to the post World War II baby boom, and the other includes children, many of whom are a part of the baby-boom echo. The relative size of the latter population bulge is slightly smaller in Los Angeles.

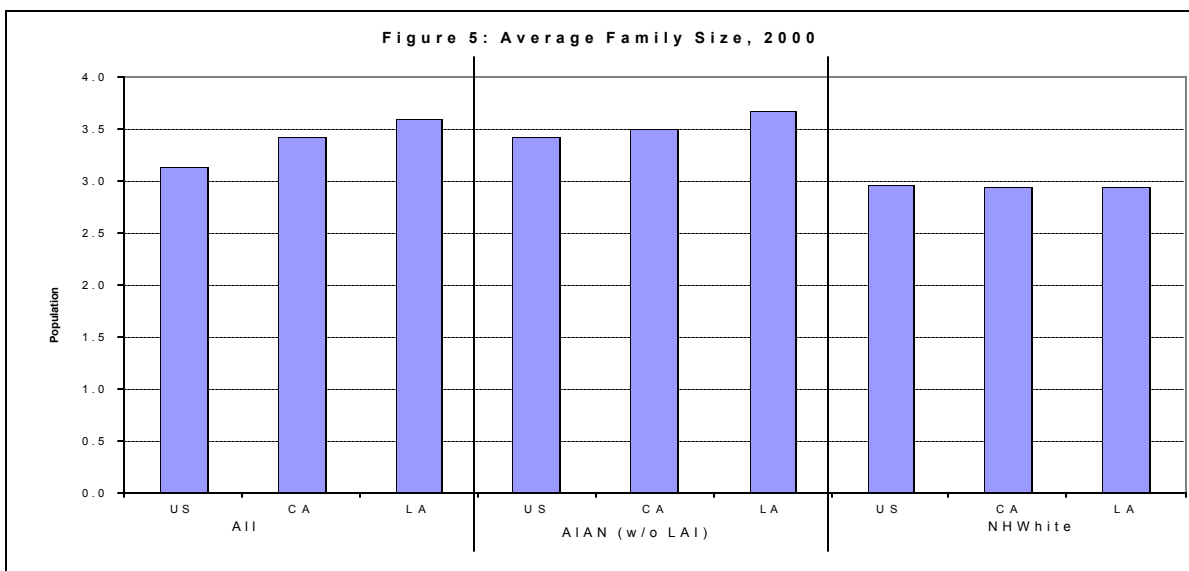
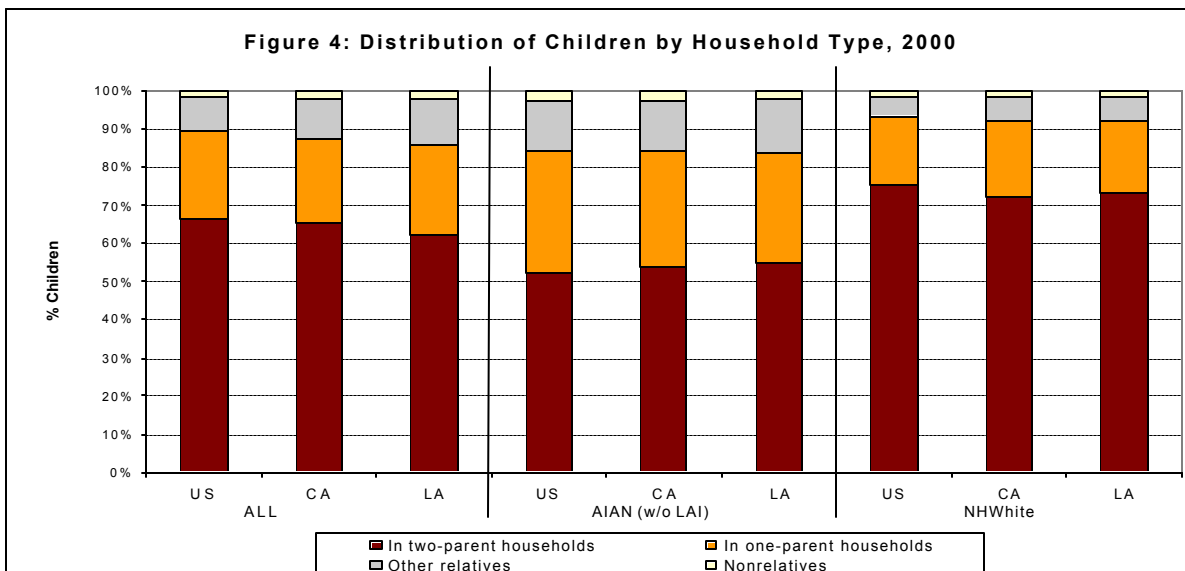
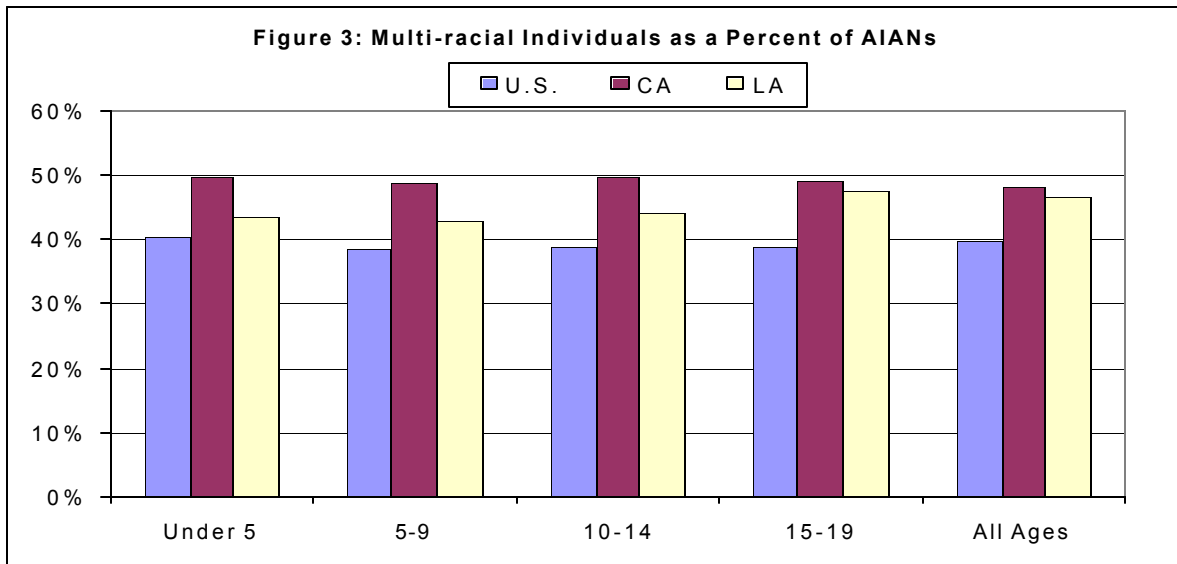
Figure 3 reports the percent of AIANs (without Latin American Indians) who are of multi-racial background. Nationally, approximately, two in five AIANs reported two or more races, and this proportion holds for AIAN children. The proportion comprised of multi-racial AIANs is higher in California, with approximately half falling into this category, with a slightly higher proportion for children. In-

terestingly, the proportion for Los Angeles falls between that for the U.S. and California, and there is a more noticeable variation by age in the region. The multi-racial percentage increases with age among AIAN children in Los Angeles. The high multi-racial rate for AIAN children means that they are more likely to encounter multi-cultural identity issues at home and in schools.

Household and Family Characteristics:

Figure 4 provides the breakdown of American Indian and Alaska Native children (without LAIs) by four household types: 1) residing in two-parent households, 2) residing in one-parent households, 3) residing with other relatives, and 4) residing in other types of households. Important is the fact that AIAN children are less likely to live with both parents than those of the reference groups. Only





one of every two AIAN children lives with two parents, while three of every ten AIAN children resides in single-parent households.

Figure 5 presents the statistics on average family size. It indicates that AIAN children tend to live in larger family units relative to the other comparison groups, a pattern that holds for all three geographical levels. There is difference in the size across the geographical levels. AIANs in Los Angeles tend to have larger families than the other AIANs as well as non-Hispanic whites. The family size of AIANs in Los Angeles is large when compared to the average for the total population in Los Angeles, which is influenced by the large numbers of Latinos tending to have large families.

Census data indicate that AIAN children are more likely to live in poor quality housing. Table 2 reports the distribution of children by housing tenure, that is, by whether the household resides in a home they own or in a rental unit. Nationally, AIAN children are about twice as likely to live in rental units than NH white children. In California and Los Angeles, over half of AIAN children lived in rental units. In other words, AIANs are less likely to live in homes owned by their parents. Moreover, the average value of AIAN homes is lower than for all other homeowners, particularly NH white homeowners. Relative to NH whites, AIAN children are also more likely to live in crowded housing with fewer basic amenities. These results are not surprising given their overall lower economic status, which is discussed in the next section.

Table 2: Housing Indicators for Children, 2000

| | ALL | AIAN | NHWhite |
|---------------------------|-----|------|---------|
| US | | | |
| % Home Rented | 33% | 43% | 22% |
| % Overcrowding | 4% | 6% | 0% |
| % w/o Telephone | 4% | 10% | 2% |
| % w/o Plumbing Facilities | 1% | 4% | 1% |
| CA | | | |
| % Home Rented | 46% | 50% | 31% |
| % Overcrowding | 14% | 10% | 2% |
| % w/o Telephone | 2% | 5% | 1% |
| % w/o Plumbing Facilities | 1% | 2% | 1% |
| LA | | | |
| % Home Rented | 54% | 55% | 32% |
| % Overcrowding | 23% | 23% | 3% |
| % w/o Telephone | 3% | 6% | 1% |
| % w/o Plumbing Facilities | 2% | 2% | 1% |

Source: Census Bureau, 2000 5% PUMS for CA and LA
Census Bureau, 2000 1% PUMS for US
Note: Greater than 2.0 occupants per room was considered to be overcrowded

Poverty Rate:

Figure 6 provides the child poverty rate by subpopulation group. The federal poverty line (FPL) was established in the 1960s at an income level approximately three times the cost of a basic food basket for a family. The data for this report are for income in the year prior to the 2000 census. For 1999, the federal poverty line for a family of four was \$16,700. Although the poverty line is adjusted for inflation, it is not adjusted to take into account regional variations in the cost of living. For relatively expensive areas such as Los Angeles, the FPL underestimates the problem posed by poverty.

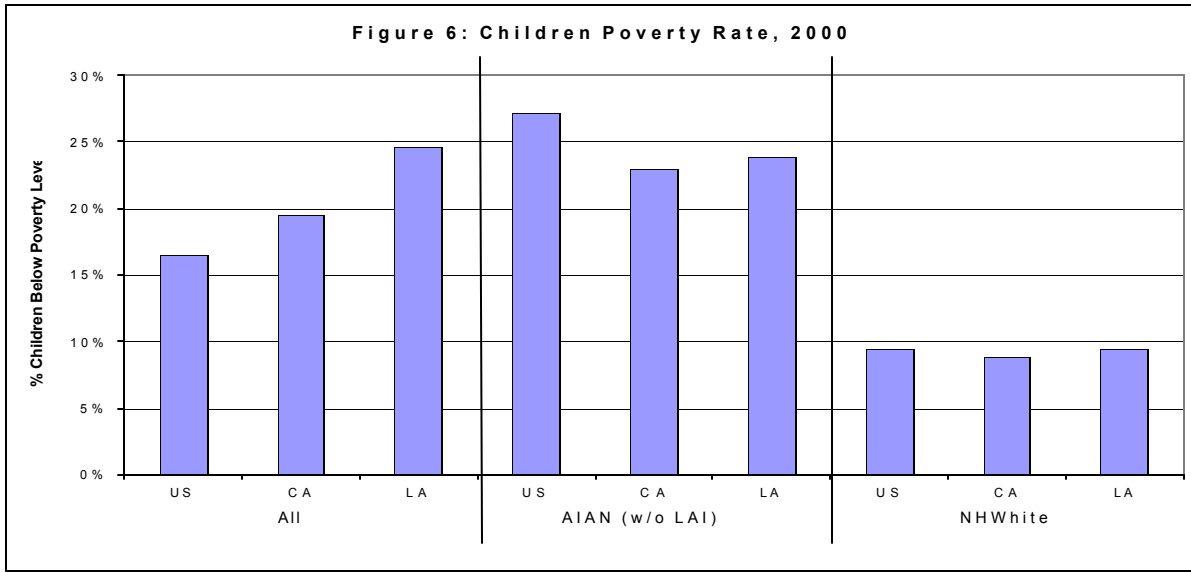
Despite the limitations of the poverty index, the statistics show a consistently troubling figure for AIAN children. Figure 6 provides the poverty rate for those under the age of 18. The statistics reveal a consistently troubling picture for AIAN children. An unacceptably high proportion of AIAN children live in families with very limited income. Nationally, about a fourth of single-race AIAN children fall below the poverty line. While the rate is slightly lower in California and Los Angeles, they are over twice as likely to fall below the poverty line as NH white children.

Table 3: Distribution by FPL Categories for Children, 2000

| | Under 1.49 | 1.5 - 2.9 | 3 - 4.9 | Over 5 |
|-----------|------------|-----------|---------|--------|
| US | | | | |
| Total | 28% | 30% | 24% | 18% |
| AIAN | 43% | 33% | 17% | 8% |
| NHWhite | 17% | 30% | 30% | 23% |
| CA | | | | |
| Total | 32% | 28% | 21% | 19% |
| AIAN | 37% | 31% | 20% | 12% |
| NHWhite | 15% | 23% | 28% | 34% |
| LA | | | | |
| Total | 40% | 29% | 17% | 15% |
| AIAN | 41% | 31% | 17% | 11% |
| NHWhite | 15% | 21% | 25% | 39% |

Source: Census Bureau, 2000 5% PUMS for CA and LA
Census Bureau, 2000 1% PUMS for US

The flip side of the disproportionate high concentration at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder is a relative absence at the other end. Table 3 reports the distribution of children by multiples of the FPL. Those below 1.5 of the FPL are considered to be poor, and those at or above 5 times the FPL are at least upper middle class. For a family of four, 1.5 times the FPL is equal to \$25,050 and 5 times the FPL is equal to \$83,500. While the percent of AIAN children in the poorest category is only marginally higher than for all children, the percent of AIAN children at the other end is noticeably smaller than for all children. The disparity is even greater relative to NH white children.

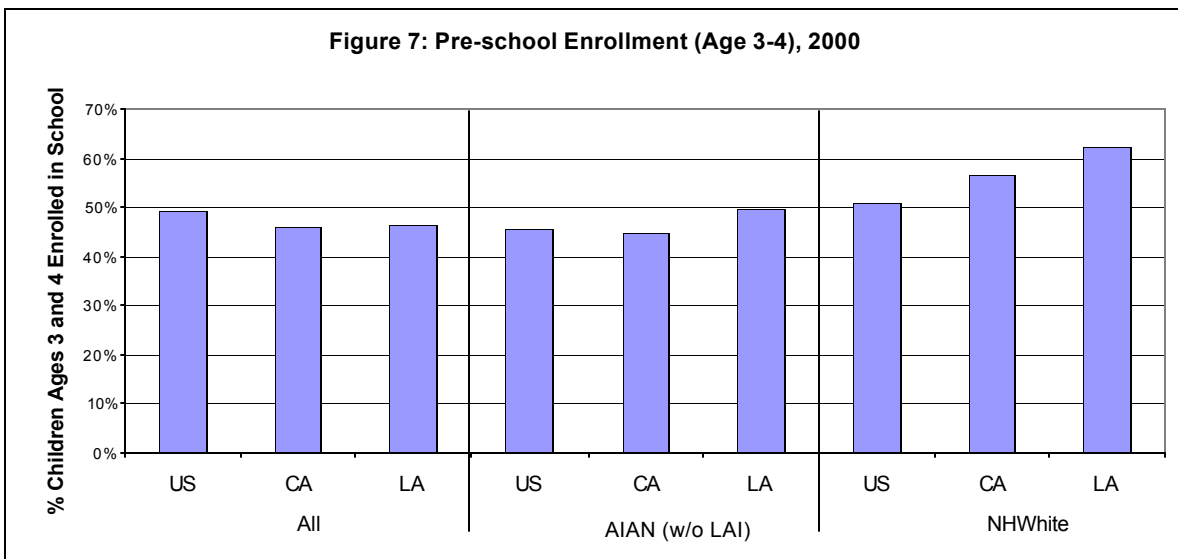


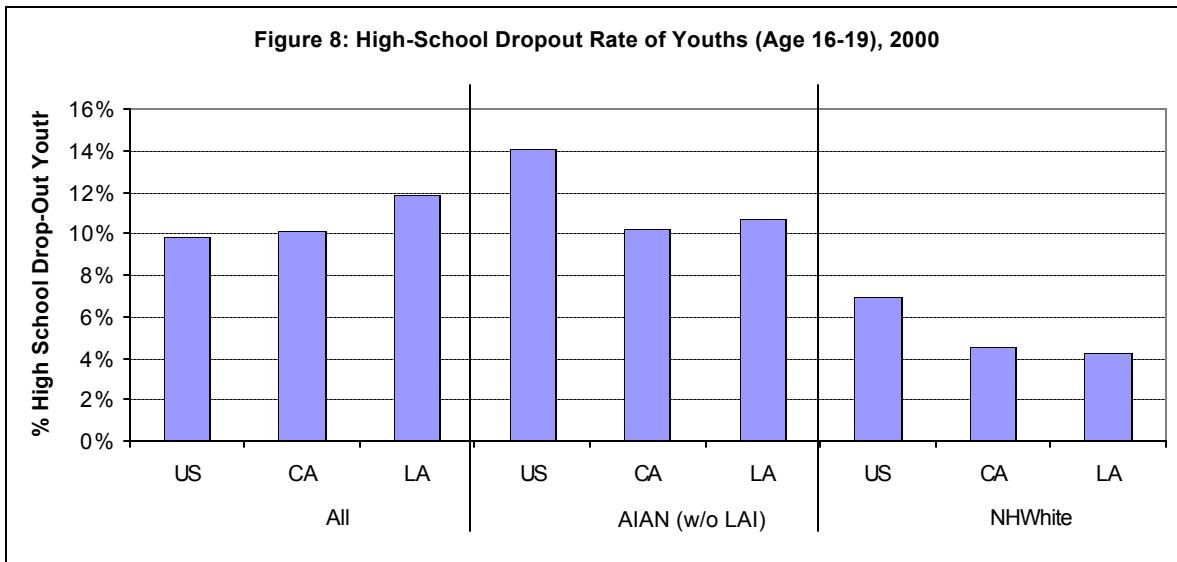
School & Health Indicators:

This section focuses on three key indicators related to schooling. The first is enrollment in pre-school programs. One of the keys to success in K-12 schooling is participation in early childhood programs. This is especially important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The second indicator is the dropout rate as measured by non-completion of high school by older teenagers. In today’s economy, not having at least a high-school education severely limits employment opportunities. The third indicator is the proportion of children with disabilities, many of whom require special educational programs.

Figure 7 provides information on the percent of American Indian and Alaska Native 3-and-4-year-old children (without LAIs) who are enrolled in school. This serves as a proxy of the proportion attending pre-school. At the national level, attendance rates for AIAN children are lower than for all children and NHW children. In this region, AIAN children fare better than all children but still lag behind NHW children.

Figure 8 provides statistics on the percent of American Indian youth (without LAIs) ages 16 to 19 not enrolled in school and who are not high-school graduates. This is a measure of the proportion of the age group that can be



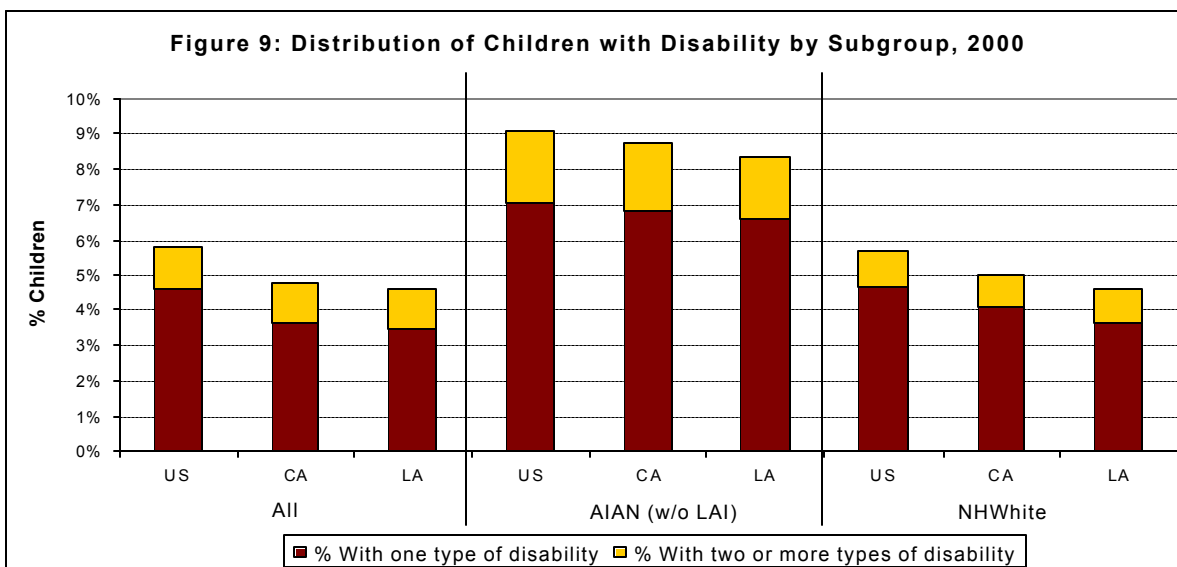


considered high-school dropouts. The dropout rate for AIAN youths is considerably higher than for the entire United States. In Los Angeles, AIAN youth are two and half times as likely to drop out than NHW youths, but less than the total population. It should be noted that the dropout rate for all youth in Los Angeles is pushed up by the presence of a disproportionate number of immigrants.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of children ages 5 to 15 with one disability and two or more disabilities (sensory, physical, or problem with self-care). The rates for AIAN children are noticeably higher than for the comparison groups at all three geographic levels, indicating that AIAN students have a greater need for special education. In Los Angeles, the rate for AIANs is nearly two times higher than for all NH white children.

Concluding Remarks:

Although American Indian and Alaskan Natives were the first Americans, they are often among the most forgotten in the nation’s, our state’s and this region’s social priorities. AIAN children face persistent economic and educational hardships. Serving this community presents unique challenges, in part because the geographic dispersion of AIANs makes it difficult to serve this community. The relatively small overall size of the AIAN population hinders the reach of their political voice. Despite these barriers, as a society we have an obligation to work with AIANs to formulate better and more appropriate public policies. Understanding and respecting the diverse cultures and experiences of AIANs must be an integral part of programs to address and alleviate the challenges facing indigenous people.



Notes:

¹ The higher count is from SF2, which is based on the 100% count. The estimated number of AIAN without LAI from SF4, which is based on the long-form sample, is about 111,000.

Appendix: Data Sources and Data Issues

This policy brief draws from several data sources. Aggregated data come from , Summary Files for the 2000 Census. Because AIANs constitute a relatively small population, our approach is to rely on statistics based on the largest underlying sample. Whenever possible, tabulations are based on the 100% population counts. Detailed demographic and socioeconomic data are obtained from the "long form" survey based on a 1-in-6 sample of the population. Unfortunately, aggregated data are limited by the way the Census reported the information, which is not always sufficient for the analysis. The final data alternative from the Census used in this policy brief is individual-level and household-level data from the Public Use Micro Samples (PUMS), which contain a 5% sample of the population. For American Indians and Alaskan Natives, this small sample rate limits the level of detail of the analysis.

There are problems when census data are used to examine changes over time. The single most significant difference is the collection of self-reported race. Prior to 2000, individuals were instructed to select only a single answer from a list of racial categories. The 2000 Census allowed people to check as many categories as appropriate. Given this change, caution should be taken when comparing statistics across decades. The 2000 statistics are for the combined single- and multi-race AIANs. Generally, the socioeconomic status of single-race AIANs is lower than the socioeconomic status of multi-race AIANs.

This policy brief uses 2000 data specific for AIANs indigenous to the U.S. The AIAN category includes Indians from other parts of the Americas. The 2000 AIAN statistics are adjusted by excluding Latin American Indians, most of whom are not indigenous to the U.S.

This policy brief utilizes two comparison groups, the total population and the non-Hispanic white population. Geographic differences in the statistics for the total population are influenced by the composition of the population, particularly the number of immigrants. Los Angeles has a large number of Latinos, who tend to have a disproportionately large number of working poor immigrants. Statistics for NH whites provide a more comparable benchmark to evaluate the socioeconomic status of AIANs.

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Policy Brief: The Status of American Indian Children in Los Angeles

American Indian Children's Council

American Indian tribes, as autonomous sovereign nations, have a unique legal standing in this country. With that status in mind, members of various tribes have come together to work with representatives of public and private agencies to represent the interests of American Indian children and youth in this region. The Los Angeles American Indian Children's Council was created in February 1998 by the Children's Planning Council of Los Angeles, and works with the Council, the County Board of Supervisors and County Departments to produce positive results for children, youth and their families. The AICC, by planning and coordinating programs and resources designed to enhance their quality of life, supported by strong cultural and spiritual traditions and tribal relationships, works to ensure a better life for future generations.

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Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center

The Center was founded in 1988 with a \$5 million endowment from Ralph and Goldy Lewis with the mission of promoting the study of regional policy issues, with special reference to Southern California. The Center seeks to enhance the understanding of the problems of the environment, urban design, housing, community and neighborhood dynamics, transportation and economic development. It supports interdisciplinary activities, involving faculty members and graduate students from many schools and departments at UCLA. The Center fosters linkages with researchers at other California universities and research institutes, and with civic, community and governmental organizations. The Center is supported by its endowment, other private donors and foundations, and research grants from a variety of agencies.

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