

**CIVICALLY ENGAGING IMMIGRANT
BOOMERS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY:
How Do We Do It?**



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

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- Linda Wong, Vice President of Civic Engagement,
Communications and Administration

Residence of Foreign-Born Population in Los Angeles County



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BACKGROUND

A tidal wave of "baby boomers"-the post-World War II generation born between 1946 and 1964-is looming on the horizon. Made up of an estimated 78 million people, the crest of this huge wave turned 60 in 2006. Represented by such luminaries as past and current presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, singer Linda Ronstadt and director Steven Spielberg, baby boomers have lived through some of the most turbulent times and significant milestones in modern U.S. and world history-

1954: The U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* declares that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.

1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, sparking an arrest and the Montgomery boycott.

1960: John F. Kennedy is elected President.

1963: Martin Luther King gives his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. JFK is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

1964: The Beatles arrive in America.

1968: Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated. North Vietnam launches the Tet Offensive.

1969: The Woodstock festival is held in upstate New York. Neil Armstrong lands on the moon.

1970: Four Kent State University students are killed by National Guardsmen during an anti-Vietnam war demonstration.

1972: Burglars break into the Democratic Party headquarters at Watergate.

1973: The military draft ends.

1974: President Nixon resigns.

1975: The U.S. leaves Vietnam.

1980: IBM introduces the personal computer.

1985: Live Aid rock concerts raise over \$100 million for Africa to combat hunger. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduces *perestroika*, economic reform, to his country.

1989: The Berlin Wall is torn down, signaling the reunification of East and West Germany and the end of the Cold War.¹

Recognizing the tremendous impact this generation could exert once more, Atlantic Philanthropies, a national foundation, unveiled the Community Experience Partnership (CEP) in the summer of 2006. With the tagline, "in the 60's, they changed the world, in their 60's, they just may do it again," the Partnership is intended to re-engage this generation of adults who, in many respects, changed the social and political landscape of this country.

Representing the largest, healthiest and best educated group of older adults in history, boomers are expected to transform the second stage of life. Retirement may not consist solely of days playing golf or traveling around the world. Instead, boomers may look for new challenges and a meaning in life that can positively impact others.²

Anticipating this possibility-and actively encouraging it-Atlantic Philanthropies sought out community foundations that could help unleash the potential of millions of people who were now entering their sixties. By launching the Community Experience Partnership, the foundation aims to mobilize the skills, talents and experience of baby boomers for community good. In so doing, it hopes to change public perceptions of older adults-from a deficit-based model of people who need help to an asset-based model of human and social capital that has much to offer the community.

¹KCET, "The Boomer Century: 1946-2046," March 28, 2007. See also www.pbs.org/boomercentury.

²Perry, Suzanne, "Turning the 'Me Generation' into the 'We Generation'", *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 8, 2007. See also Doxey, John, "Civic Engagement in the Age Boom: An Untapped Resource", *Aging Today* (July-August 2006).

Atlantic Philanthropies invited the California Community Foundation (CCF) and 29 other community foundations across the country to participate in a community assessment of local civic engagement resources and opportunities. "Civic engagement" is defined broadly to include volunteerism, learning and work. The assessment will help to develop a knowledge base of organizations, programs, policies and strategies that can engage older adults and expand their roles in the civic, social and economic life of their communities. At the same time, the assessment would identify the major barriers to civic engagement for this segment of the population and potential ways to overcome them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The community assessment seeks to explore the cultural dimensions of civic engagement and learn how civic traditions from the home countries of immigrants affect their participation in the civic life of Los Angeles communities. With this knowledge, a civic engagement strategy can be developed that taps into these traditions and practices to expand their roles in the communities where they live and work. To pursue this investigation, the California Community Foundation developed some questions to guide the assessment:

- What civic traditions or practices exist in the home countries of immigrants?
- What organizations or institutions did they belong to? What kinds of values did they transmit about civic involvement and how were they put into practice?
- When immigrants settle in Los Angeles, do they bring these traditions with them? In what forms do they exist? Are they recognized by the mainstream?
- How can they be adapted locally to facilitate community problem-solving?
- What barriers to civic engagement exist and how might they be overcome?

The assessment also investigates the civic engagement landscape in Los Angeles County. And another set of questions was developed for this purpose:

- Which organizations currently engage mature adults in volunteerism, lifelong learning and/or employment?
- What outreach and recruitment strategies do they employ to reach out to immigrant boomers?
- What civic engagement opportunities are available to immigrant boomers?
- What language capacity do organizations have to engage immigrant boomers?
- What challenges do organizations encounter in trying to reach out to immigrant boomers? And how might they be overcome?

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

CCF completed an analysis that included:

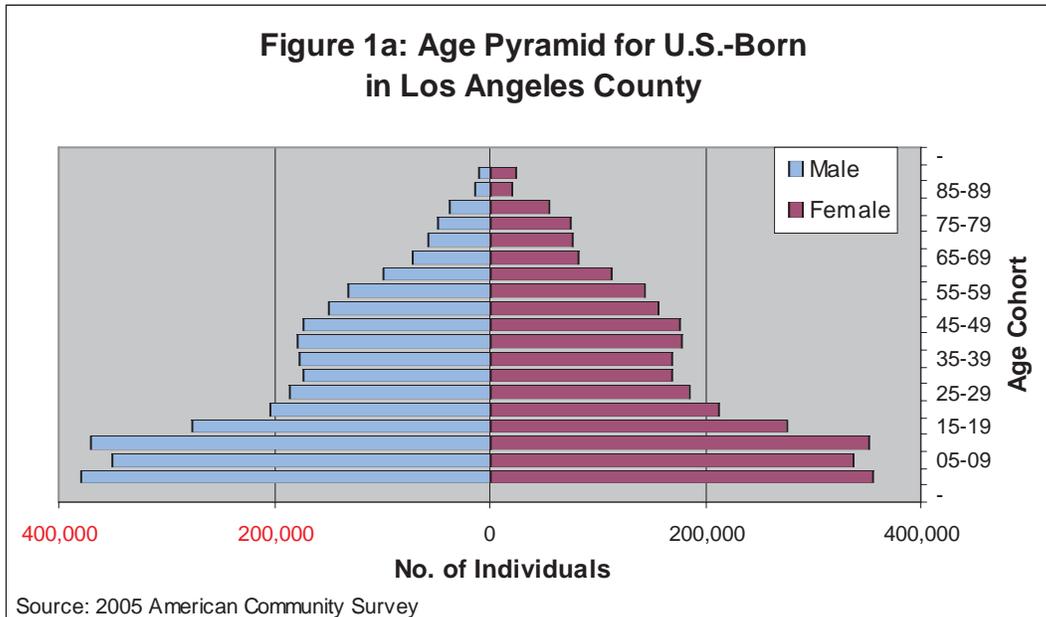
- Demographic research
- 19 immigrant focus groups representing a cross-section of nationalities -

Mexican	Japanese	Cambodian
Salvadoran	Filipino	Russian
Chinese	Thai	Armenian
Tongan	Korean	
- Two focus groups with organizations providing volunteer, learning and employment opportunities
- 14 key informant interviews
- An inventory of selected organizations offering civic engagement activities

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

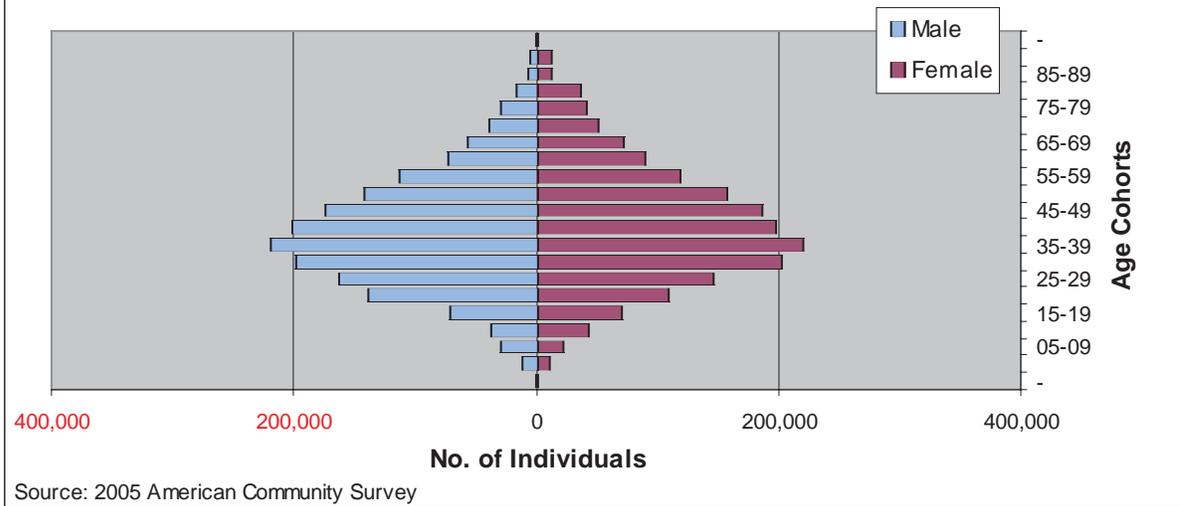
Age. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, Los Angeles County has about 9.8 million resi-

dents. The age pyramid for U.S.- and foreign-born individuals breaks out as follows:



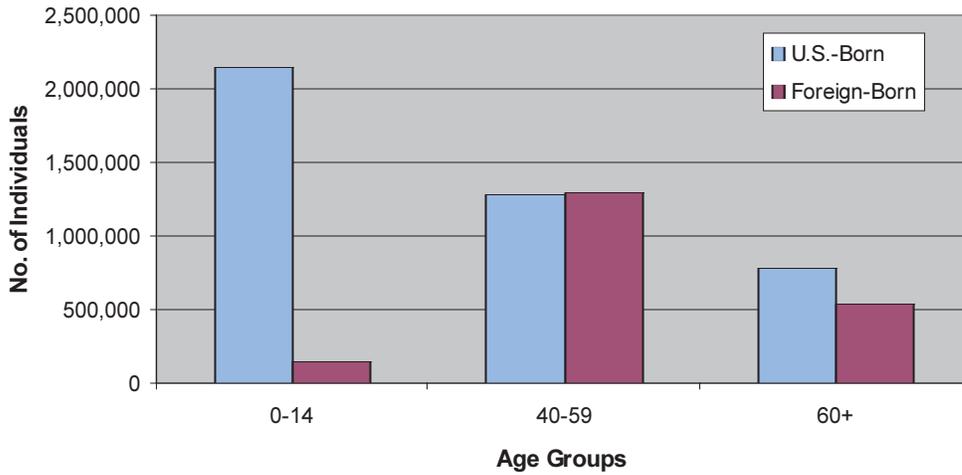
Age Cohort	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
00-04	380,645	355,134	735,779	12%
05-09	351,485	336,353	687,838	11%
10-14	370,902	351,234	722,136	12%
15-19	276,810	274,539	551,349	9%
20-24	204,921	212,448	417,369	7%
25-29	185,701	185,364	371,065	6%
30-34	173,654	168,373	342,027	6%
35-39	177,867	168,766	346,633	6%
40-44	179,473	177,405	356,878	6%
45-49	173,434	175,344	348,778	6%
50-54	150,498	156,465	306,963	5%
55-59	132,674	142,812	275,486	4%
60-64	98,760	111,372	210,132	3%
65-69	72,153	80,683	152,836	2%
70-74	58,132	75,737	133,869	2%
75-79	48,342	73,494	121,836	2%
80-84	38,862	54,664	93,526	2%
85-89	14,234	19,602	33,836	1%
90+	10,380	22,721	33,101	1%
Total	3,098,927	3,142,510	6,241,437	100%

Figure 1b: Age Pyramid for Foreign-Born in Los Angeles County



Age Cohort	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
00-04	12,204	10,624	22,828	1%
05-09	29,596	22,440	52,036	1%
10-14	38,458	42,035	80,493	2%
15-19	71,776	69,513	141,289	4%
20-24	138,880	109,116	247,996	7%
25-29	163,810	146,302	310,112	9%
30-34	199,178	201,689	400,867	11%
35-39	220,093	219,188	439,281	12%
40-44	202,299	197,646	399,945	11%
45-49	175,236	185,985	361,221	10%
50-54	142,186	157,137	299,323	8%
55-59	112,972	118,979	231,951	7%
60-64	73,626	89,198	162,824	5%
65-69	57,290	71,511	128,801	4%
70-74	40,018	50,311	90,329	3%
75-79	29,397	41,594	70,991	2%
80-84	16,521	36,092	52,613	1%
85-89	6,641	11,688	18,329	1%
90+	5,804	11,317	17,121	1%
Total	1,735,985	1,792,365	3,528,350	100%

Fig. 1c: Selected Age Group Comparisons between U.S.- and Foreign-Born in Los Angeles County



Source: 2005 American Community Survey

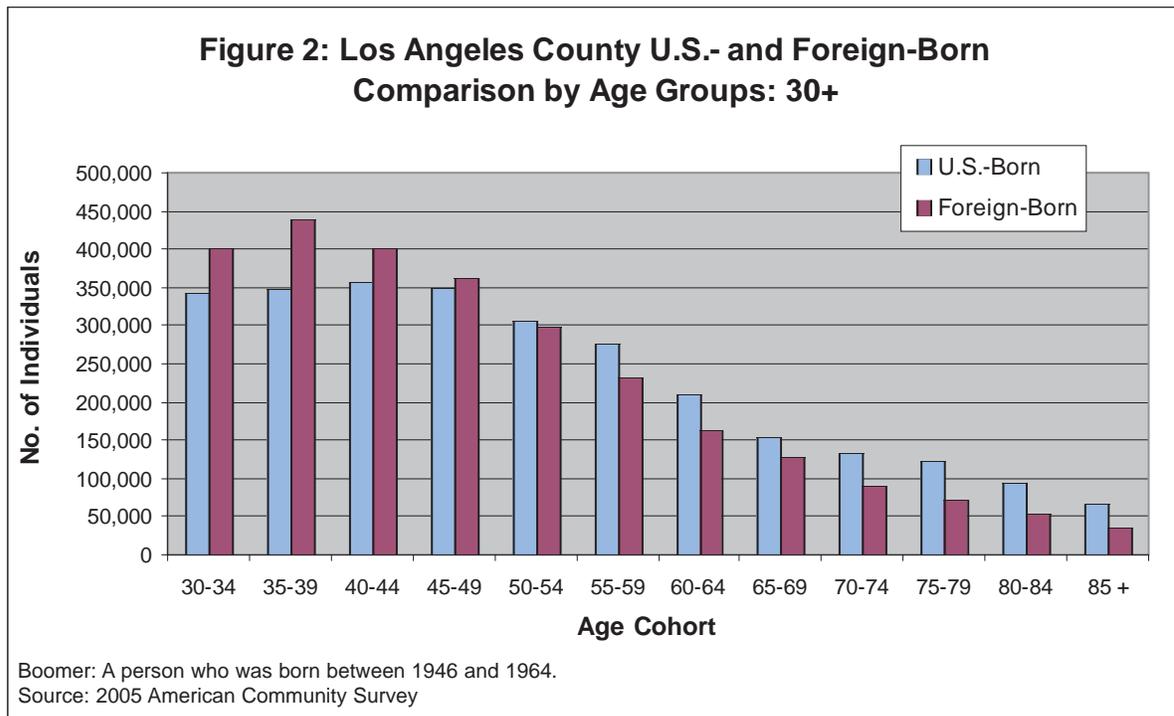
Age Cohort	U.S.-Born (millions)	%	Foreign-Born (millions)	%
0-14	2,145,753	34%	155,357	4%
40+	2,067,241	33%	1,833,448	52%
40-59	1,288,105	21%	1,292,440	37%
60+	779,136	12%	541,008	15%
Total County Population	6,241,437		3,528,350	

Three important findings emerge from this age profile:

(1) Proportionally, the foreign-born population has a larger share of the 40+ age group, 52 percent compared to 33 percent for U.S.-born.

(2) Proportionally, the foreign-born has a larger share of adults in the 40-59 age group than their U.S.-born counterparts, 37 percent to 21 percent, respectively.

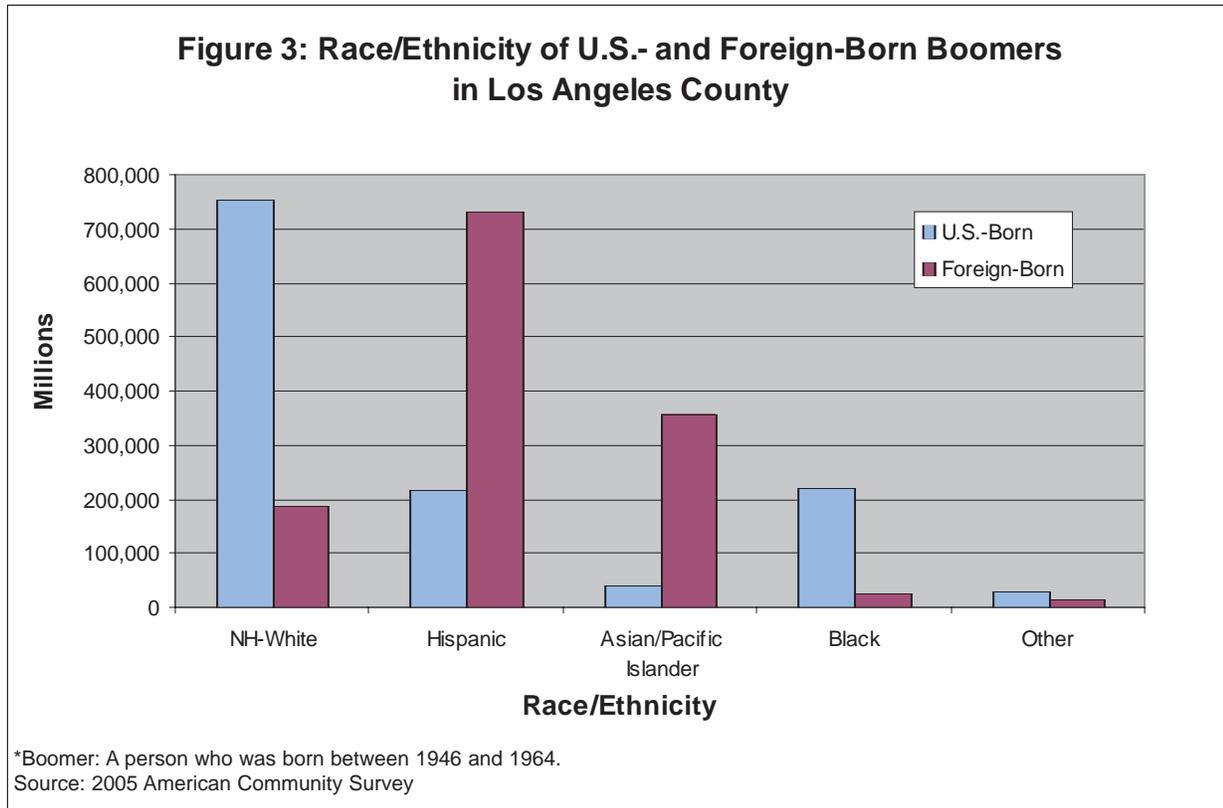
(3) In aggregate, foreign-born adults outnumber the U.S.-born in the 30-49 age group (see Figure 2 below). While this is a snapshot in time, the numbers call for close scrutiny over time to determine whether this is the start of a significant trend.



Age Cohort	U.S.-Born	Percentage	Foreign-Born	Percentage	Total
30-34	342,027	46%	400,867	54%	742,894
35-39	346,633	44%	439,281	56%	785,914
40-44	356,878	47%	399,945	53%	756,824
45-49	348,778	49%	361,221	51%	710,000
50-54	306,963	51%	299,323	49%	606,287
55-59	275,486	54%	231,951	46%	507,438
60-64	210,132	56%	162,824	44%	372,957
65-69	152,836	54%	128,801	46%	281,638
70-74	133,869	60%	90,329	40%	224,199
75-79	121,836	63%	70,991	37%	192,828
80-84	93,526	64%	52,613	36%	146,140
85 +	66,937	65%	35,450	35%	102,388
Total	2,755,901	51%	2,673,597	49%	5,429,504

Race and Ethnicity. Among non-Hispanic whites in the 40-60 age group, U.S.-born adults far outnumber the foreign-born, 80 percent to 20 percent, respectively. Similarly with Blacks, only 10 percent of this age group is foreign-born. However, the reverse is true for Latinos

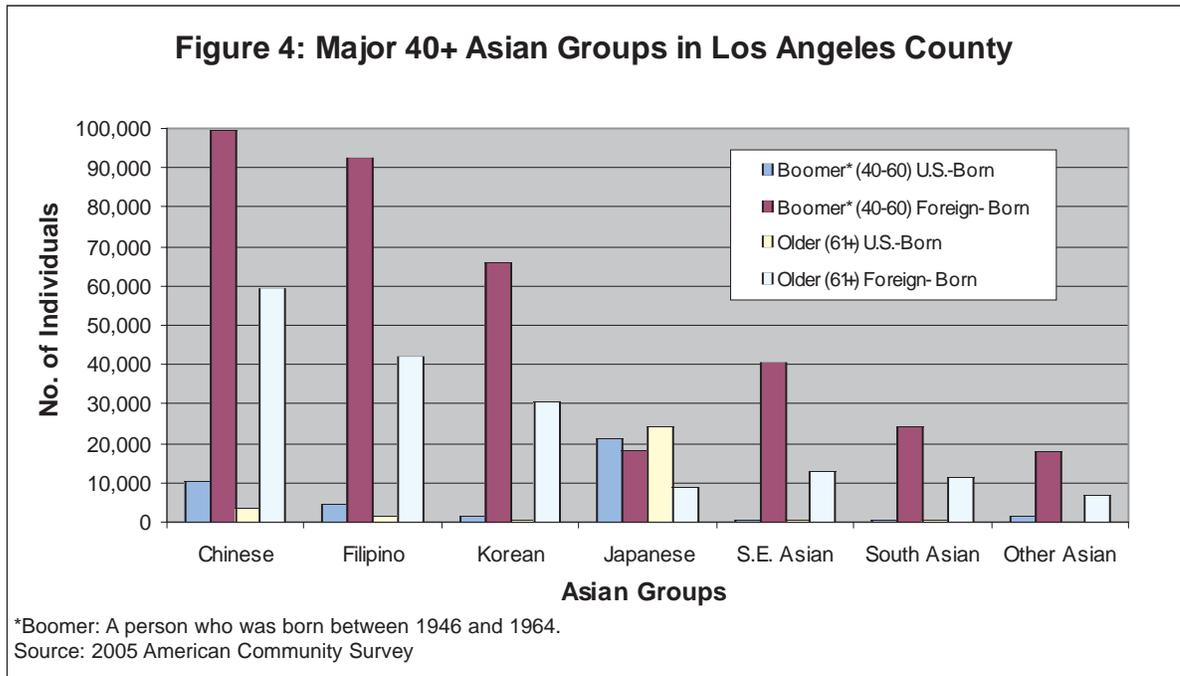
and Asian-Pacific Islanders. Over three-fourths of Latinos ages 40-60 are foreign-born; and 90 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders in the same age group were born outside the United States.



Race/Ethnicity	Boomer* (40-60)				Total	%
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%		
NH-White	752,901	80%	187,983	20%	940,884	36%
Hispanic	216,155	23%	732,971	77%	949,126	37%
Asian/Pacific Islander	40,791	10%	358,501	90%	399,292	15%
Black	221,083	90%	25,289	10%	246,372	10%
Other	28,931	64%	15,940	36%	44,871	2%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,545	100%

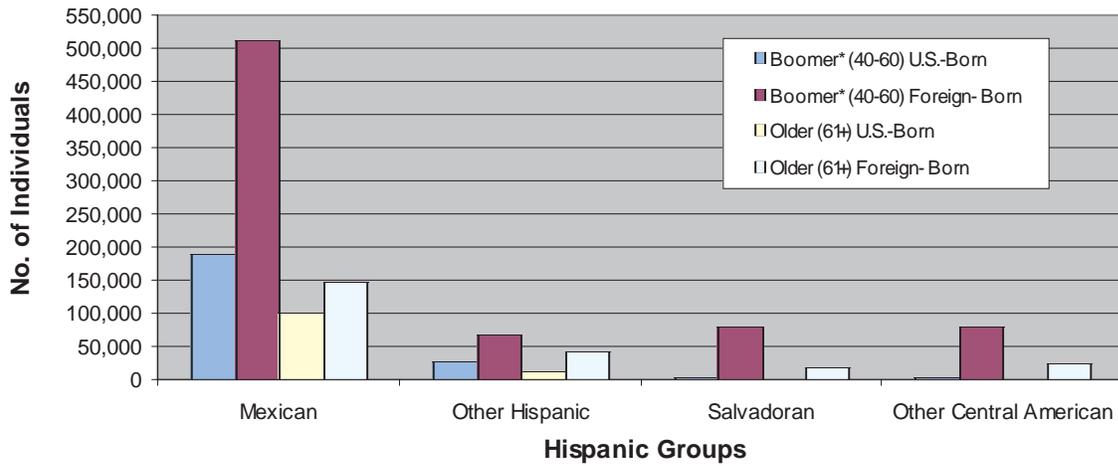
Among foreign-born Asian-Pacific Islanders who are 40-60, the largest ethnic subgroups are Chinese, Filipino and Korean. For those who are 61 and older, the largest subgroups are also Chinese, Filipino and Korean. Among foreign-born Latinos in the 40-60 age

category, Mexicans and Salvadorans are the largest subgroups; and Mexicans make up the largest share of Latinos who are 61 and older.



Asian Groups	Boomer* (40-60)					Older (61+)					Total	%		
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%			Subtotal	%
Chinese	10,328	9%	99,377	91%	109,705	64%	3,564	6%	59,313	93%	62,877	36%	172,582	29%
Filipino	4,637	5%	92,381	95%	97,018	69%	1,278	3%	42,241	97%	43,519	31%	140,537	23%
Korean	1,571	2%	65,639	98%	67,210	68%	573	2%	30,925	98%	31,498	32%	98,708	16%
Japanese	21,351	54%	18,285	46%	39,636	54%	24,337	73%	9,006	27%	33,343	46%	72,979	12%
S.E. Asian	672	2%	40,486	98%	41,158	75%	701	5%	12,861	95%	13,562	25%	54,720	9%
South Asian	608	2%	24,273	98%	24,881	78%	294	3%	11,341	97%	11,635	32%	36,516	6%
Other Asian	1,624	8%	18,060	92%	19,684	73%	130	2%	7,088	98%	7,218	27%	26,902	5%
Total	40,791	10%	358,501	90%	399,292	66%	30,877	15%	172,775	85%	203,652	34%	602,944	100%

Figure 5: Major 40+ Hispanic Groups in Los Angeles County



*Boomer: A person who was born between 1946 and 1964.
Source: 2005 American Community Survey

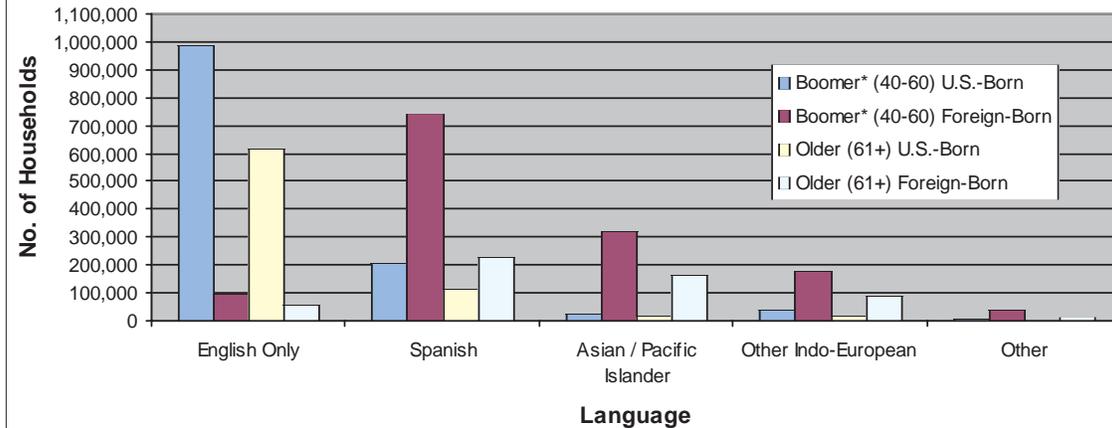
Hispanic Groups	Boomer* (40-60)				Older (61+)				Total		%			
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%		Subtotal	%	
Mexican	187,972	27%	512,985	73%	700,957	74%	98,659	40%	146,340	60%	244,999	26%	945,956	73%
Other Hispanic	25,686	28%	67,115	72%	92,801	65%	10,641	21%	39,948	79%	50,589	35%	143,390	11%
Salvadoran	2,026	3%	78,315	97%	80,341	81%	653	4%	17,992	96%	18,645	19%	98,986	8%
Other Central American	3,476	4%	79,381	96%	82,857	76%	1,321	5%	24,792	95%	26,113	24%	108,970	8%
Total	219,160	23%	737,796	77%	956,956	74%	111,274	33%	229,072	67%	340,346	26%	1,297,302	100%



Language. Not surprisingly, among the U.S.-born, the overwhelming majority speak only English. Among immigrant boomers, the most common language spo-

ken in the household is Spanish, followed by various Asian languages.

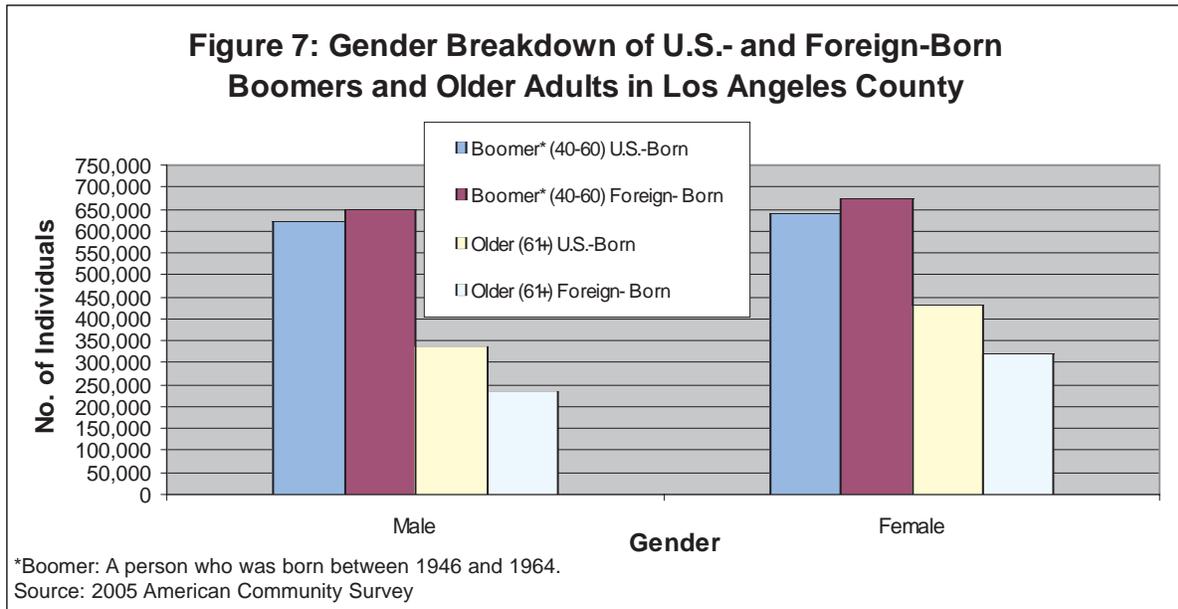
Figure 6: Language Spoken in U.S.- and Foreign-Born Boomer and Older Adult Households in Los Angeles County



*Boomer: A person who was born between 1946 and 1964.
Source: 2005 American Community Survey

Language	Boomer* (40-60)						Older (61+)						Total	%
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%		
English Only	987,404	91%	94,040	9%	1,081,444	61.5%	618,454	91%	57,618	9%	676,072	37.5%	1,757,516	45%
Spanish	204,551	22%	739,844	78%	944,395	73.5%	110,192	32%	229,018	68%	339,210	27%	1,283,605	33%
Asian / Pacific Islander	26,727	8%	317,848	92%	344,575	66%	18,244	10%	160,829	90%	179,073	34%	523,648	13%
Other Indo-European	36,087	21%	136,869	79%	172,956	62%	18,121	17%	91,109	83%	109,230	38%	282,186	7%
Other	5,092	14%	32,083	86%	37,175	69%	2,096	13%	14,463	87%	16,559	31%	53,734	2%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,545	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,144	34%	3,900,689	100%

Gender. In the boomer age group, women outnumber men, regardless of where they were born. This is also true for individuals who are 61 and older.

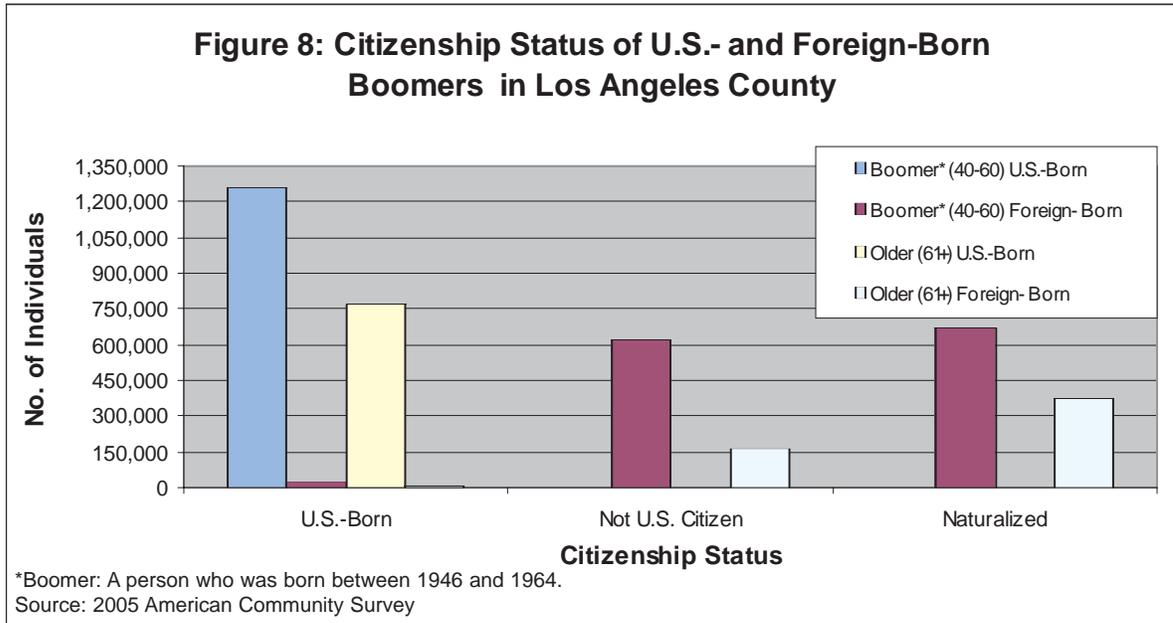


Gender	Boomer* (40-60)					Older (61+)					Total	%		
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%			Subtotal	%
Male	621,048	49%	647,724	51%	1,268,772	69%	337,167	59%	232,993	41%	570,160	31%	1,838,932	47%
Female	638,813	49%	672,960	51%	1,311,773	64%	429,940	57%	320,044	43%	749,984	36%	2,061,757	53%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,545	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,144	34%	3,900,689	100%



Citizenship Status. A majority of immigrants in the 40-60 age group are naturalized citizens. Among immi-

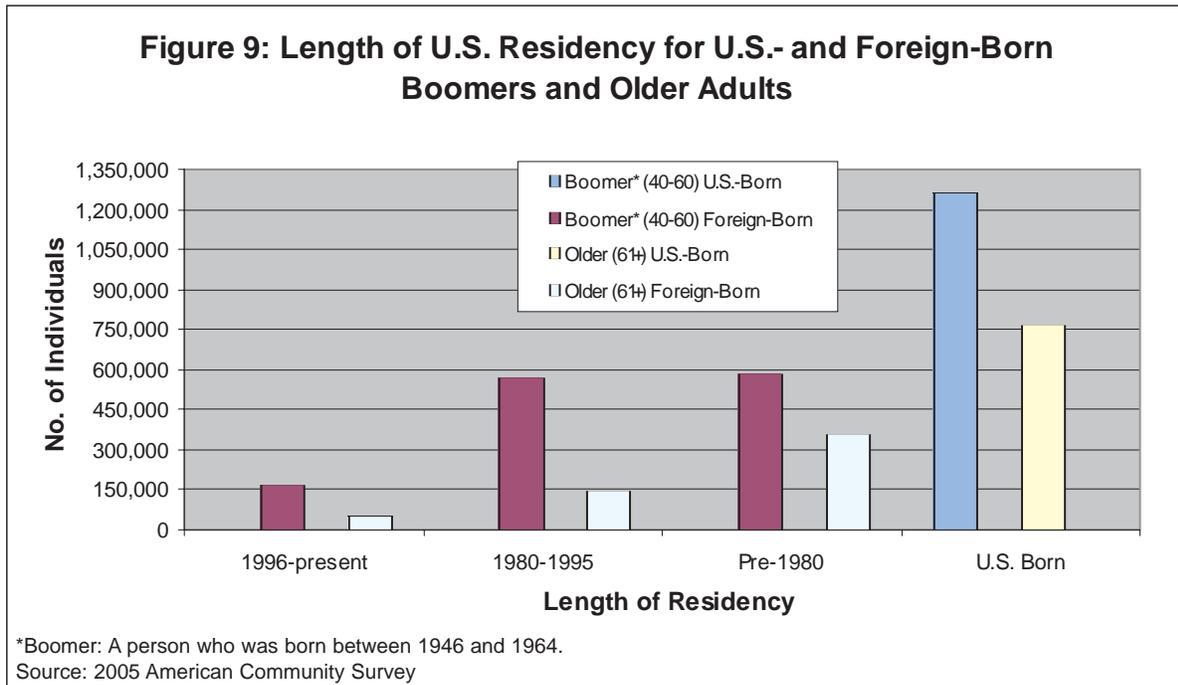
grants who are 61 years of age and older, however, over two-thirds are naturalized.



Citizenship Status	Boomer* (40-60)				Older (61+)				Total	%				
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%			Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%
U.S.-Born	1,259,861	98%	28,244	2%	1,288,106	62%	767,107	98%	12,029	2%	779,136	38%	2,067,241	53%
Not U.S. Citizen	0	0%	619,023	100%	619,023	79%	0	0%	166,239	100%	166,239	21%	785,262	20%
Naturalized	0	0%	673,417	100%	673,417	64%	0	0%	374,769	100%	374,769	36%	1,048,186	27%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,546	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,144	34%	3,900,689	100%

Length of U.S. Residency. Of the 1.3 million immigrant boomers, about 582,000, or 44 percent, have lived in the U.S. for over 27 years (entering this country before 1980). Another 569,000, or 43 percent, entered the country between 1980 and 1995. And the remaining 170,000, or 13 percent, have less than 11 years of

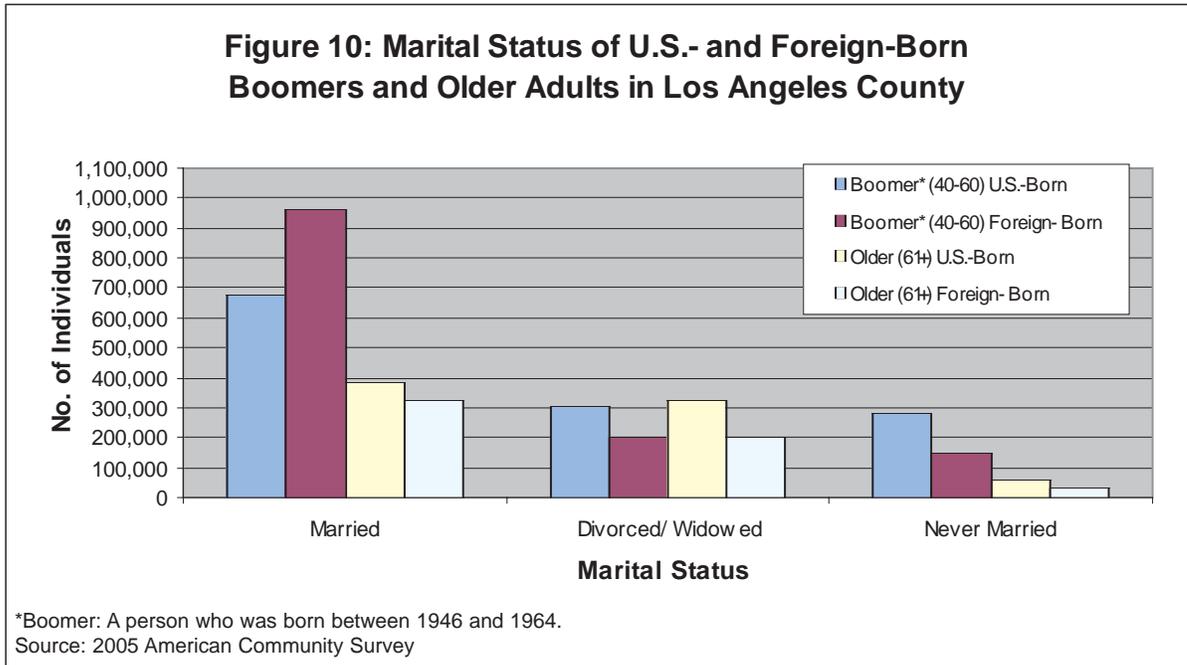
residency in this country. In other words, most immigrant boomers have established roots in the communities where they live. Similarly for immigrants who are 61 and older, over two-thirds migrated to the U.S. before 1980.



Length of Residency	Boomer* (40-60)				Older (61+)				Total	%
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%		
1996-present	0	0%	169,684	77%	0	0%	51,873	23%	221,557	7%
1980-1995	0	0%	569,085	79%	0	0%	146,832	21%	715,917	18%
Pre-1980	0	0%	581,915	62%	0	0%	354,332	38%	936,247	24%
U.S. Born	1,259,861	62%	0	0%	767,107	38%	0	0%	2,026,968	51%
Total	1,259,861	32%	1,320,684	34%	767,107	20%	553,037	14%	3,900,689	100%



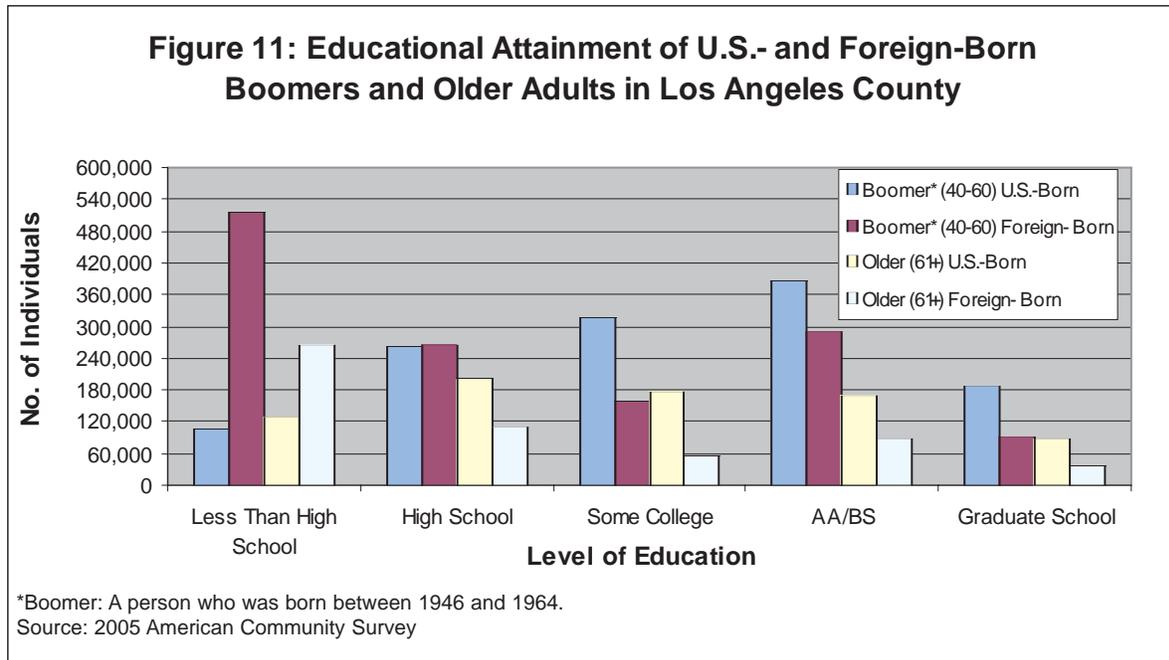
Marital Status. In comparing immigrant boomers with natives are married; fewer are divorced or widowed; and fewer are single.



Marital Status	Boomer* (40-60)				Older (61+)				Total	%				
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%			Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%
Married	673,801	41%	964,932	59%	1,638,733	70%	386,636	55%	322,343	45%	708,979	30%	2,347,712	60%
Divorced/ Widowed	307,179	60%	203,137	40%	510,316	50%	323,626	62%	199,327	38%	522,953	50%	1,033,269	27%
Never Married	278,881	65%	152,615	35%	431,497	83%	56,845	64%	31,367	36%	88,212	17%	519,708	13%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,545	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,144	34%	3,900,689	100%

Educational Attainment. Regardless of age, immigrants have less formal education than their U.S.-born counterparts. Nearly 40 percent of immigrant boomers have less than a high school education, compared to 8 percent of the U.S.-born in this age cohort.

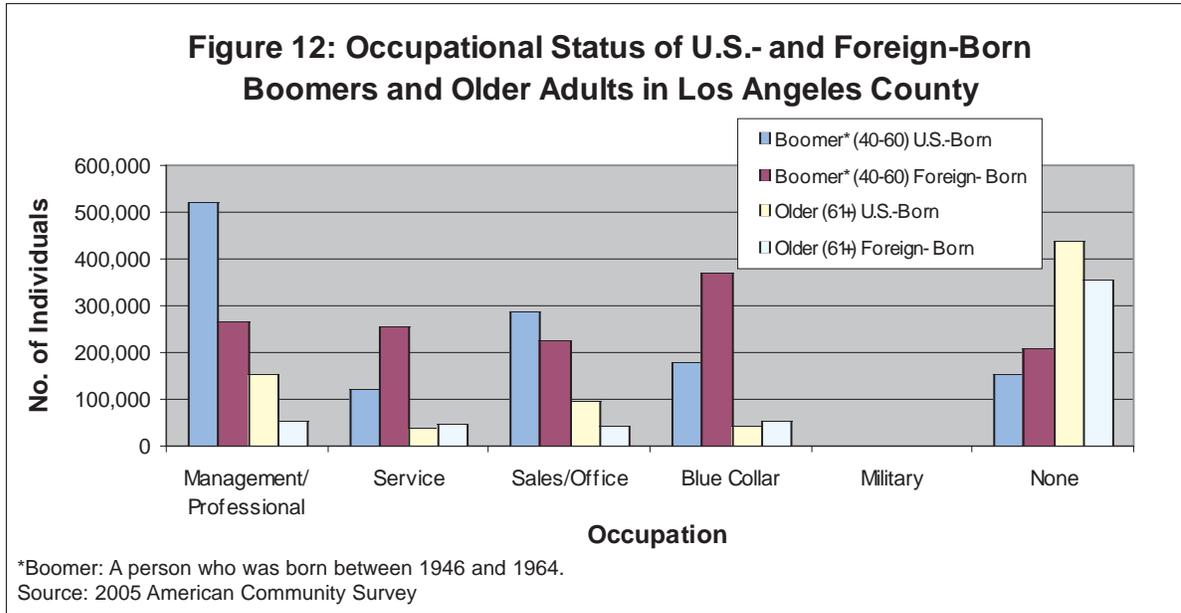
Likewise, for those who are 61 and older, 48 percent of immigrants did not graduate from high school, in contrast to only 17 percent of the U.S.-born.



Level of Education	Boomer* (40-60)						Older (61+)						Total	%
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%		
Less Than High School	107,046	17%	515,042	83%	622,088	61%	128,681	33%	265,514	67%	394,195	39%	1,016,283	26%
High School	261,912	50%	266,291	50%	528,203	63%	203,488	65%	109,014	35%	312,502	37%	840,705	22%
Some College	317,992	67%	156,778	33%	474,770	67%	177,747	77%	54,055	23%	231,802	33%	706,572	18%
AA/BS	386,981	57%	289,372	43%	676,353	72%	168,925	66%	88,010	34%	256,935	28%	933,288	24%
Graduate School	185,930	67%	93,201	33%	279,131	69%	88,266	71%	36,444	29%	124,710	31%	403,841	10%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,547	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,145	34%	3,900,689	100%

Job Status. This lack of education is reflected in their occupational status, with foreign-born boomers disproportionately concentrated in blue collar and service

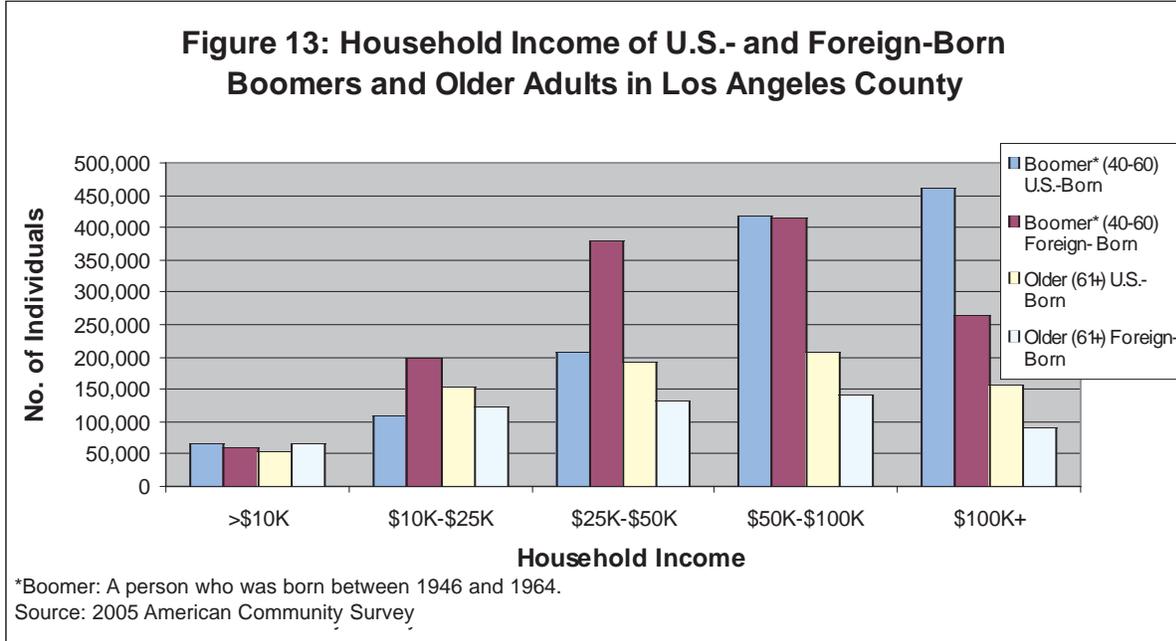
jobs, in contrast to management/professional and sales/office occupations.



Occupation	Boomer* (40-60)				Older (61+)				Total	%				
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%			Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%
Management/Professional	521,612	66%	264,943	34%	786,556	79%	152,672	74%	54,612	26%	207,284	21%	993,839	25%
Service	118,891	32%	252,513	68%	371,404	82%	35,551	43%	46,713	57%	82,264	18%	453,668	12%
Sales/Office	285,730	56%	223,687	44%	509,417	79%	97,594	70%	41,673	30%	139,267	21%	648,684	16.5%
Blue Collar	177,127	32%	372,326	68%	549,453	85%	42,247	44%	54,733	56%	96,980	15%	646,433	16.5%
Military	671	100%	0	0%	671	87%	0	0%	96	100%	96	13%	767	>1%
None	155,830	43%	207,215	57%	363,045	31%	439,043	55%	355,210	45%	794,253	69%	1,157,298	30%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,547	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,145	34%	3,900,689	100%

Household Income. Compared to U.S.-born boomers, immigrant boomers are generally poorer, especially in households with incomes between \$10,000 and

\$50,000 a year. For the 61 and older age group, immigrant households earning less than \$10,000 outnumber their U.S.-born counterparts.



Household Income	Boomer* (40-60)					Older (61+)					Total	%		
	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%	Subtotal	%	U.S.-Born	%	Foreign-Born	%			Subtotal	%
>\$10K	65,398	52%	59,841	48%	125,239	51%	54,846	45%	67,058	55%	121,904	49%	247,143	36%
\$10K-\$25K	107,618	35%	199,818	65%	307,436	53%	152,911	56%	122,089	46%	275,000	47%	582,436	15%
\$25K-\$50K	208,784	36%	378,671	64%	587,455	65%	192,246	59%	132,026	41%	324,272	35%	911,727	23%
\$50K-\$100K	417,206	50%	416,798	50%	834,004	70%	208,992	60%	140,818	40%	349,810	30%	1,183,814	31%
\$100K+	460,855	63%	265,556	77%	726,411	75%	158,112	63%	91,046	37%	249,158	25%	975,569	25%
Total	1,259,861	49%	1,320,684	51%	2,580,547	66%	767,107	58%	553,037	42%	1,320,145	34%	3,900,689	100%



FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Participant Profile. A total of 175 individuals participated in the focus groups, representing a broad cross-section of ages and nationalities in Los Angeles County.

- Participants included: Mexicans, Salvadorans, Russians, Armenians, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Japanese, Cambodians, Thais and Tongans
- 76% were women
- 35% were 59 or younger; 49% were between 60 and 75 years of age; and 17% were 75 and older
- 52% had arrived in the U.S. before 1985 and developed roots in the community
- 46% lived with their spouses; a third lived alone; and the rest lived with relatives, usually adult children

In the Home Country

When immigrants lived in their home countries, their lives revolved around family, religion, school and community. Religious institutions, youth and school support groups, hometown associations and other groups were mentioned as their primary organizational affiliations. However, many of these were informal rather than formal groupings.

Examples of civic engagement activities varied widely, but the most common focused on:

- Caring for family members or relatives
- Church activities
- School-related activities, such as tutoring, fundraising and school maintenance
- Fundraising for disaster relief and other purposes
- Helping neighbors, the sick or the elderly
- Community improvement projects

Immigrants belonged to a variety of organizations, with religious institutions playing an important role in the lives of many respondents. Cambodian immigrants said that Buddhist temples provided many services for rural villagers—education, jobs and counseling, to name a few. They also raised money from members to underwrite construction projects and help with members' funeral expenses. Tongans noted that Christian mis-

sionaries and the churches they established developed many organizational offshoots—youth and choir groups, Sunday school, cultural groups, men's and women's associations. Some Filipinos belonged to Catholic-affiliated service organizations like Knights of Columbus or Legion of Mary, as well as the church itself.

Many also belonged to youth groups or student alumni associations and participated in school-related activities. Cambodian respondents, for example, said that school support groups helped to repair school classrooms and playgrounds or assisted with school events. Others mentioned organizations similar to parent teacher associations that raised funds to support students and the schools in their community.

Respondents from Mexico, Japan, Korea, Tonga and the Philippines frequently mentioned hometown and village associations as well. Korean respondents described village associations that were organized by housewives who brought together other women to work on various community projects. They would maintain the village, harvest crops, repair flood damage, help the elderly and organize social events and activities. Japanese focus group members described county-level hometown associations. "It's like a neighborhood council with elected volunteer leadership," said one respondent, "the leaders met regularly to decide what needed to be done in the village." "Everyone in the village was expected to participate," said another. Common activities included street cleaning and fire safety education. Villagers also looked out for one another. In the Mexican focus group, one respondent described how her hometown would organize Christmas posadas and other festivities to preserve cultural traditions for their children. Tongans also had village associations that addressed community needs—working on beautification projects, water supply issues and other community-wide tasks.

The prevalence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) varied widely. Cambodians said that the NGO infrastructure in their home country was very weak and everything depended upon informal groups. Tongans made similar comments. Outside of church-related affiliations, most Tongans came together informally for activities like weaving, gardening or harvesting crops. Some Thai and Japanese respondents said that as young adults, they would join their fellow students in group projects to plant flowers at train stations, clean



the streets during school breaks or teach children gardening skills. Filipinos, on the other hand, cited many service organizations that are familiar to us—Rotary and Lions clubs and the Kiwanis, among others.

Russian respondents noted that religious institutions had no role in their lives in the former Soviet Union. In fact, the government at that time actively discouraged all forms of religious worship. Membership in organizations like trade unions, professional associations and communist youth leagues was mandatory; so affiliations with these kinds of groups were not very meaningful. However, in the large apartment complexes where many people lived, informal "clubs" emerged. Originally designed to engage children in sports and recreational activities, they expanded to include adults as well. These clubs provided venues for residents who had specific interests in literature, cinema or other topics to come together for intellectual stimulation and social interaction.

Certain cultural traditions encouraged collaboration and mutual aid. Saving circles, cooperative farming practices and communal sharing of resources were the most common examples given.

Saving and lending circles were common practices in many countries. Respondents from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Tonga, Cambodia, Mexico and the Philippines were familiar with the concept, and some participated in the circles. They consisted of people who came together and regularly contributed money that went into a common "pot". They determined the frequency of the contributions and the payouts and how the funds could be used—as savings for the recipients or as loans for business development and other purposes.

Cambodian respondents said this practice was widespread because of the absence of a formal banking system in their country. Koreans added that the saving circles also served as networks for social gatherings. Chinese participants described a related practice in which a person would act as a "co-signer" for another individual in his or her place of employment. If that person failed to meet his or her financial obligations, the "co-signer" would step in to pay the debt.

For immigrants who came from rural areas, cooperative farming practices were commonplace. Filipino respondents said that village members often pitched

in to help each other, whether it was to plant and harvest crops or build homes. A Mexican respondent described how the residents in her home town operated a land co-op in which members worked together to grow, harvest and sell their crops. They used this co-op model to develop a food and sewing co-op as well; and profits from the sale of food items and clothing would pay their living expenses. Anything left over would be donated to the local orphanage.

Tongan respondents noted that cooperation and communalism were deeply embedded in their culture. They were "born to help each other," said one. "It's a way of life." Moreover, it is "shameful" to give "leftovers". "One must help with the best one has to offer." Japanese respondents made similar comments. Villages and small towns had community "bulletin boards" with local news. Residents were "expected" to sign up for civic projects and to let their neighbors know about them. One Japanese respondent said that in his old fishing village, residents organized a volunteer rescue team for fishermen whose boats caught fire or ran aground. When someone died, villagers prepared meals for surviving family members. Filipinos and Mexicans shared similar practices, holding "wakes" in memory of the deceased. One Mexican respondent added that her village also celebrated the arrival of new life. When an expectant mother was close to giving birth, villagers would prepare meals or donate food items for the expectant parents. "People knew their neighbors," she said. "It's not like this country (the United States) where neighbors don't know or talk to each other."

Volunteerism and philanthropy occurred frequently in informal settings.

Across cultures and different countries, respondents said that they helped immediate and extended family members—looking after siblings, taking care of ailing parents or grandparents, and providing various forms of support for other relatives. They also helped their neighbors, the elderly, sick or disabled with grocery shopping, house cleaning, cooking and other chores. As young adults, they helped their friends in small ways, sharing their lunches or school supplies. Many of these activities occurred outside of formal organizational settings.

Respondents also said that if they had the means, they would donate money or offer food, clothing and other

items to people in need; or they opened their home to someone who was going through a difficult period in his or her life. When natural disasters struck, they came together to raise funds for disaster relief. A Thai respondent recalled that doctors and nurses would provide free medical exams and medicines to the rural poor. Cambodians commented that at cultural festivals, money was often raised to build schools, repair temples, buy food and clothing or help an orphanage.

In Los Angeles Communities

For immigrants, living in Los Angeles is a major challenge on many fronts. Language barriers, lack of information, the absence of affordable mass transit, financial insecurity and personal health and caregiver issues were the main barriers to civic engagement.

Language Barriers. Even though a majority of the respondents had lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, they did not have the English language skills to comfortably navigate mainstream institutions. As a consequence, they felt they could not take advantage of volunteer opportunities that were available. On the other hand, if there were nonprofits that had multilingual, culturally competent staff serving older adults, they were often eager to participate, whether the activities were social, recreational or volunteer in nature. Many identified closely with the nonprofit service providers that had helped them. To give something back for the services they received, some respondents volunteered in various capacities - as telephone hotline volunteers, tai chi instructors, teachers of traditional music or health education advocates.

Lack of Transportation. Getting around Los Angeles was identified as another major barrier. Half of the respondents relied on buses and other forms of public transportation. Since the county is spread out geographically, they often spent an hour or more on the road to travel from their home to their destination.

Lack of Money. In addition, finances were cited as a major cause for their inability to participate in the civic life of their community. Younger immigrants, in particular, talked about the continuing need to work as a result of high housing costs. Older respondents complained as well and emphasized the importance of affordable senior housing to defray their living expenses.

Personal Health and Caregiving Issues. Concerns about health and family support also emerged as major challenges in dramatic, unexpected ways. One of the Thai respondents passed away just a few days after her focus group was held. She died alone at age 65. No one knew what had happened because she had no relatives. The nonprofit executive who arranged the focus group learned of her passing only after making a series of phone calls that went unanswered.

In another focus group, a Chinese woman described her battle with breast and bone cancer, the burden of caring for an aging parent, and how a physician suggested that she volunteer as a way of coping with her illness. Other women talked about similar caregiver challenges. After a focus group at a service agency, an employee described how the husband of one respondent had given her an ultimatum after learning about his mother-in-law's Alzheimer's-she had to choose between her husband or her mother. The respondent decided to help her mother, because "she had a mother long before she had a husband." In making that choice, however, she was abandoned by her husband; and she was left alone to bear the financial and emotional burden of supporting her ailing mother and family.

What these stories illustrate are the issues that all too often affect older adults-social isolation, personal health problems and the stresses of caregiving-complicated by the difficult cultural adjustments that all immigrants must make. One researcher described the acculturation process in a philanthropic context for Asian immigrants (Chao, 2001). However, it could apply to the immigrant experience as well. The first stage is "survival", reflecting the struggles of the early years in which immigrants share emotional, financial and informational resources to transition to a new country. The second is the "help" stage, in which immigrants have achieved some degree of financial and emotional stability and can help others in greater need. The third is the "invest" stage, in which they have formed a long-term attachment to this country and acquired a level of confidence that enables them to engage in philanthropic or volunteer activities. For some, however, the "survival" stage may be a long one; and others may never leave this stage during their adult lifetimes.

Many immigrant boomers and older adults try to maintain their social and organizational relationships through their churches, ethnic and cultural institutions, nonprofit and older adult serving groups.

Armenian respondents commented that regardless of where they settled, they tried to establish community institutions such as churches and cultural centers. These organizations provided the social hubs and support systems that facilitated their transition as immigrants to a new country. Limited English language skills also led many to ethnic-based nonprofits that had bilingual, bicultural staff who could address their needs. Even after their problems were resolved, immigrants would maintain their relationships with the service providers and participate in other programmatic offerings. For older immigrants, in particular, these opportunities for social interaction became an important means of overcoming the isolation they felt as spouses, friends and others passed away.

Key themes emerged from the focus groups:

- the prevalence of informal civic engagement
- the importance of social networks
- the role of religious institutions in transmitting social values
- the central importance of family and extension of this concept to neighborhood and community

As described earlier in this report, volunteerism in the immigrants' home countries often occurred informally. "Civic engagement" consisted of help in various forms for their extended family members, neighbors and others in the community. Visiting the sick and elderly, helping them with household chores or grocery shopping, or harvesting crops for neighboring farmers were seen as normal activities-something they were expected to do.

Recognizing informal volunteerism is critical, because it identifies socially-beneficial behaviors that are not typically captured in mainstream civic engagement activities. Traditionally, volunteerism has focused on what is done within or on behalf of organizations, whether it is volunteering for a nonprofit, for one's church or a civic association. However, civic engagement also occurs on an informal level. In this context, social networks play an important role. Immigrants are more likely to respond when family members, friends,

neighbors, coworkers and others they trust ask them to help or give them information about volunteer opportunities. By acknowledging informal volunteerism, we expand the opportunities to engage people in civic life.

In addition, religion and religious institutions were influential in shaping their values and outlook on life. Thai respondents noted that Buddhism emphasizes compassion and service to others, and local temples often provided assistance to the poor. Many individuals cited the role of their church or temple in helping people. Some Korean respondents said their church encouraged members to provide emotional as well as financial support. One person described how her church exhorted members to go door-to-door, encouraging residents to stop smoking and develop healthy eating habits.

Interviews with aging experts and staff from nonprofit organizations indicated that family plays a central role in the lives of first generation immigrants. One nonprofit staff person suggested that a civic engagement framework could be centered on this notion and expanded geographically to include the neighborhoods where immigrants live. A professor of applied gerontology observed that older immigrants may already be involved in some form of volunteer service and that a support system could be developed around it to strengthen, sustain and expand their involvement.

Effective outreach and engagement of immigrant boomers entail an understanding of their social and organizational networks. Tapping into these relationships is key to developing effective civic engagement strategies.

Organizations that have successfully worked with immigrant communities find that the most effective communications tools are community-focused and in the languages that immigrants speak-multilingual church bulletins, community and ethnic newspapers, and written materials translated into different languages. Finding the neighborhoods where they live and the venues where they congregate-in churches, schools, markets, health and multi-service centers-represents an important first step in bridging the organizational and cultural divides that separate immigrants from the larger community. Without exception, organizations found that immigrants were the most effective in reaching out to their friends and peers. Several noted that a majority of their volunteers came from

referrals; so the volunteers were encouraged to share their experiences with others.

Immigrants were interested in a range of issues, including:

- providing information about community resources
- helping older adults
- helping children
- developing healthy life styles
- preserving cultural traditions
- addressing community needs (e.g., consumer fraud, environmental health, education, neighborhood improvement)
- assisting immigrants with the naturalization process
- translating forms and correspondence from public agencies

Nonprofits with volunteer recruitment and management experience identified several issues that were important in retaining volunteers:

- Matching the volunteer's interests, skills and availability with appropriate opportunities
- Addressing transportation barriers with bus vouchers, carpooling, mileage reimbursements and other incentives
- Providing professional volunteer management resources
- Providing volunteers with systematic training, mentoring and oversight
- Providing staff and volunteers with diversity training to encourage more interaction and the resolution of cultural and linguistic differences
- Recognizing volunteers for their contributions and developing their leadership skills

NEXT STEPS

Interviews and discussions with older adult-serving organizations, aging experts and others surfaced a number of issues for consideration in the next phase of work. These include:

■ **Income security:** The need for financial literacy, financial planning and effective money management will grow over time, as well as the need for skills upgrading and part-time employment, as retirement benefits shrink and social safety nets become more frayed.

■ **Healthy living and long-term health care:** Dramatic steps are needed to improve the health and life styles of boomers, both immigrant and U.S.-born. Medicare and Medicaid may be scaled back as costs outpace the contributions into these systems. Moreover, there is no public financing for long-term care, nursing home care or caregiving.

■ **Age segregation:** Aging experts and service providers agree that older adults seem to be more alert and engaged when they interact with younger people, whether in a classroom setting or in the work place. As assumptions are challenged about the viability of age-oriented senior housing and age-specific services and organizations, it seems that at a minimum, older adults should be given a choice in matters that affect their physical, social and emotional well-being. Some senior centers have already transformed themselves into community centers, eliminating “senior” from their identity. Others are moving toward multigenerational service models, hoping to attract families and their extended networks.

■ **The politics of aging:** As immigrant boomers increase in number, their political clout will grow. How will they exercise their collective political muscle? Will they vote according to age-based interests? Will they invest in policies that do not directly affect them? Can a common political accord be forged between generations?

CCF will explore these issues in the next phase of the Community Experience Partnership.

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