THE U.S. NEW IMMIGRANT SURVEY:

OVERVIEW AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

BASED ON THE NEW-IMMIGRANT COHORTS OF 1996 AND 2003

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Immigration affects American society in profound ways. Yet in perhaps no other area of social science and public policy research has there been as large a gap between information needs and existing data. Consequently, many fundamental questions remain unanswered. These include the following: How does the health and well-being of immigrants compare to that of the native-born? How many immigrants return to their home country? What is the relationship between legal and illegal immigration? What are the contributions and costs of immigrants to the economy? What are the factors affecting the assimilation of immigrants and their children? What are the achievements of, and burdens imposed by, immigrant children and the children of immigrants?

Embedded in immigration questions are further questions that run the gamut of human experience, from processes of language acquisition to identity formation to achievement of excellence and development of civic virtue.

The New Immigrant Survey is a new plan for nationally representative, longitudinal studies of immigrants and their children that promises to provide new kinds of data that will help answer many of the important questions about immigration and concomitantly shed light on basic aspects of human development. This paper describes the design of the New Immigrant Survey, focusing on the first full cohort (NIS-2003), which sampled immigrants in the period May-November 2003 and whose baseline round was in the field in the period June 2003 to June 2004, and reports preliminary findings on schooling and language skill, labor force activity, health, earnings and wealth, home ownership, and remittances, based on both the NIS Pilot of 1996 and NIS-2003.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE NEW IMMIGRANT SURVEY PROJECT

The objective of the New Immigrant Survey (NIS) is to provide a public-use data base on new legal immigrants to the United States and their children that will be useful for addressing scientific and policy questions about migration behavior and the impacts of migration. The basic design calls for taking representative samples of cohorts of new legal immigrants and following

them over time, with new cohorts selected every four or five years, or whenever developments in U.S. immigration policy or in conditions worldwide warrant. The sampling frame for each cohort, to be fully described below, is based on the electronic administrative records compiled for new immigrants by the U.S. government (via, formerly, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and now its successor agencies, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS)). It consists of all adult immigrants admitted to legal permanent residence during a specified period and two types of child immigrants who would not be found in the households of adult immigrants. The sampling frame thus includes both new-arrival immigrants – immigrants arriving in the United States with immigrant documents acquired abroad – and adjustee immigrants – immigrants who are already in the United States with a temporary nonimmigrant visa (or, in some cases, illegally) and adjust to lawful permanent residence.

Interviews are conducted with sampled adult immigrants and their spouses and with the sponsor-parents of sampled child immigrants and the spouses of the sponsor-parents; sampled children and other children (both foreign-born and U.S.-born children) in the households of both sampled adult and child immigrants are interviewed and/or given assessments based on an age-eligibility schedule.

Two key elements of the design are that interviews for the baseline round are conducted as soon as possible after admission to lawful permanent residence (LPR), and that immigrants are interviewed in the language of their choice.[1] The survey is made possible by the fact that the administrative records in the sampling frame include the address to which the immigrant has requested that the "green card" – the paper evidence of legal permanent residence – be mailed; this is the best possible address for locating sampled immigrants.

New rounds of data collection will be conducted regularly for each cohort. The current

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[1] The acronym LPR will be used for both lawful permanent resident and lawful permanent residence. The context should make clear whether reference is to a person or to a status.

design calls for re-interview every three to five years.

The design of the New Immigrant Survey was sharpened in discussions by immigration researchers and policymakers over a period of many years. Successive panels established in both the public and private sectors developed the idea of a multiple-cohort, longitudinal survey of immigrants and their children, obtaining both retrospective and prospective data and including child assessments as well as information on extended family members. Table 1 provides a list of the panels which contributed to the development of the NIS design.

– Table 1 about here --

Because the NIS design, based on sampling named individuals from administrative records, with its attendant challenges of locating the immigrant and providing instruments and interviewers in several languages, had never been tried before, a pilot -- the NIS-P -- was carried out in 1996. The Pilot both confirmed the soundness of the design, highlighted the importance of contacting sampled immigrants as soon as possible after admission to permanent residence, and provided new information on immigrants never before available (discussed below).

Both the Pilot (NIS-P) and the first full cohort (NIS-2003) were investigator-initiated projects submitted to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for support and were peer-reviewed. Support was provided by the NIH, via the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Immigration and Naturalization Service and its successor agency. Additional support for NIS-2003 was provided by ASPE and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

All aspects of the design of NIS-2003 were developed with information from two sources: (1) the NIS Pilot of 1996; and (2) the public-use immigrant records for Fiscal Years 1996-2000.

1.1. Sample Design of NIS-2003

NIS-2003 Cohort. The first full cohort to be surveyed as part of the New Immigrant Survey project consists of new legal immigrants in the seven-month period May to November of 2003. This seven-month period includes the final five months of FY 2003 and the first two

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months of FY 2004. Many other designs were considered, including sampling from a full twelve months and sampling from both a calendar year and a fiscal year. The final plan was developed taking into account a range of considerations, including representativeness, cost, government resources for providing the sampling frame, and interviewer-organization field commitments.

Adult and Child Samples. The Adult and Child Samples are defined in terms of immigration category and age. The United States grants immigrant visas to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria set forth for the various classes of admission; such immigrants are called principals. Examples include the spouses of U.S. citizens, refugees, workers of several kinds, and winners of the diversity visa lottery. The United States also grants immigrant visas to the spouses and minor children "accompanying, or following to join" principals in certain classes of admission. Examples include spouses and minor children of employment principals and of sibling principals, and the nonrefugee spouses and minor children of refugees; principals for whose spouses and minor children visas are not available include, not surprisingly, spouses and parents of U.S. citizens.

The Adult Sample covers all immigrants who are 18 years of age or older at admission to LPR and who have visas as principals or as accompanying spouses. The Child Sample covers immigrants with child-of-U.S.-citizen visas (except self-petition immigrants) who are under 18 years of age and adopted orphans under five years of age.

The NIS thus excludes from the sampling frame accompanying children, accompanying adult offspring, and other accompanying non-spouse/non-child relatives; these are covered as household members of sampled immigrants in the Adult Sample. The NIS also excludes adopted orphans five years of age and over, self-petition child-of-U.S.-citizen immigrants, and children under 18 who hold principal visas other than child-of-U.S.-citizen or adopted-orphan visas. Self-petition child-of-U.S.-citizen immigrants may be covered as household members of self-petition immigrants in the Adult Sample; the other excluded children are relatively few, so that it would not be possible to obtain large enough sample sizes to permit reliable inference (additionally, rules for the protection of human subjects preclude contacting unaccompanied

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minors such as some self-petition children).

Table 2 provides an overview of the NIS Adult and Child Samples.

– Table 2 about here --

Sample Sizes and Response Rates. The design called for drawing 12,500 immigrants into the Adult Sample and 1,250 into the Child Sample. The target response rate was 70 percent, a rate which would yield a sample size of 8,750 in the Adult Sample and 875 in the Child Sample. Immigrants are a highly mobile population who are difficult to locate and some of whom never take up residence in the United States. As of March 2005, while the NIS project team is still reviewing all questionnaire materials, it appears that the completed interviews number at least 8,573 in the Adult Sample, thus attaining a response rate of at least 68.6 percent. While an increased budget would potentially increase the response rate to 75%, a response rate close to 70% would in today's U.S. survey environment be considered successful.

Sample Stratification. There is substantial interest, both scientific and policy interest, in comparing immigrant characteristics and behavior across immigration visa categories. Immigration visa categories provide information about the way in which LPR was acquired, whether, for example, by dint of employment or through marriage to a U.S. citizen, etc. Of course, the numbers admitted vary substantially across visa categories. Immigrants admitted as spouses of U.S. citizens constituted between 27 and 33 percent of adult immigrants in the 1996-2000 period, diversity principals, in whom there is great interest as the visa is acquired by lottery, constituted 4-5 percent. Similarly, adopted orphans are one-fourth to one-fifth of the child sampling frame. Accordingly, the Adult and Child Samples were stratified in order to obtain reliable information on the visa categories of major interest.

In the Adult Sample, four strata were defined: spouses of U.S. citizens, employment principals, diversity principals, and other immigrants. Table 3 provides the number sampled in each stratum and the corresponding percentages. Table A.1 in the Appendix provides the actual percentages in each stratum in the 1996-2000 period. As shown in Table 3, spouses of U.S. citizens and employment principals are each 16.5% of the Adult Sample – spouses of U.S.

citizens are thus undersampled and employment principals oversampled, spouses of U.S. citizens sampled at approximately half their natural occurrence and employment principals at approximately twice their frequency. Diversity principals are 13.5% of the Adult Sample, and thus they are sampled at about three times the natural rate. In the Child Sample, equal numbers were sampled of the under-5 adopted orphans and the minor children of U.S. citizens.

– Table 3 about here –

Sample Geography. The United States covers a vast area, and it would be prohibitively expensive to attempt to locate and interview all sampled immigrants regardless of where they reside. On the other hand, a representative sample of new immigrants cannot be constrained by location choices. Fortunately, immigrants display substantial geographic clustering, and thus it was possible to design the geographic aspect of the NIS without sacrificing representativeness or spending astronomical sums.

Analysis of the initial residence (the address to which the green card would be mailed) for the full immigrant cohorts in the five-year period FY 1996 to FY 2000 showed that approximately 89 percent of the immigrants in the defined sampling frames reside in the top 85 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and another 4-5 percent in the top 38 counties, with about 1 percent overseas. Accordingly, the geographic sample design called for including all top 85 MSAs and all top 38 counties and to select a random sample of 10 MSAs from among the rest of the MSAs and a random sample of 15 county pairs from among the rest of the counties. The segment with an initial overseas address were originally included, but they proved too difficult to locate and were subsequently excluded (for example, the substantial address resources used by survey organizations are not helpful for locating individuals with APO addresses). Of course, respondents with a non-overseas address in the administrative record who were overseas during the field period were interviewed.

Table 4 summarizes the geographic design of NIS-2003.

– Table 4 about here –

Monthly Replicates. The NIS Pilot had confirmed that immigrants are a highly mobile

population and that locating them requires contacting them as soon as possible after admission to LPR – while the addresses to which they have requested that the green cards be mailed are still fresh. Accordingly, the design called for sampling once a month from the government administrative records on new immigrants. As events unfolded, the survey organization, which needed one month's lead time for location and mailing activities prior to the first actual interview, was ready to start interviewing on 14 June 2003. Accordingly, the first replicate drawn covered the half-month 1-15 May. This was followed by six monthly replicates and a final half-month replicate.

The procedures for selecting the sample consisted of three steps. First, the Office of Immigration Statistics prepared an electronic file with the immigrant records for all new legal immigrants whose records were entered in the specified period (for example, 1-15 May 2003) and sent it to the PIs. Second, the PIs selected the Adult and Child Samples according to the specifications described above. Third, the PIs sent the Samples to the survey organization, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), affiliated with the University of Chicago. Appendix Table A.2 provides the sample delivery schedule. The sample selection at the second step was carried out using a random-number statistical routine, so that each immigrant in the sampling frame received a sampling number and then the first x cases in each stratum were taken. Appendix Table A.3 provides the number of cases sampled in each stratum in each replicate.

Duplicates, Retentions/Deletions, Replacements. The original sampling design, as described above, did not notice relationships between individuals selected into the sample (the administrative record does not provide information on relationships, but does, of course, provide addresses, which could be the same for several new immigrants, as well as visa codes, which in some cases signal family relationships). Thus, if a husband and wife both fell in the sample, the original idea was to keep both of them as sampled immigrants. However, the field procedures developed by the survey organization made this impossible to implement efficiently. Accordingly, to maximize the smoothness of the field operation, the PI team decided to define as duplicates three kinds of multiple immigrants selected in the samples: two adults married to each

other; two minor children; and a parent and a minor child.

Duplicates were identified at two points, first, at the sampling stage, and second, in the field. Duplicates identified in the field could come from the same replicate or from different replicates (principals and accompanying spouses and children need not arrive on the same date, for example). The rules followed for retentions and deletions were: (1) if the two (or more) duplicates are in the same replicate, retain the one with the earlier sampling number; and (2) if the duplicates are in different replicates, retain the one in the earlier replicate.

Replacements for duplicates found in the field for Replicates 1-7 were made at the time of the subsequent replicate. Duplicates found in the field after delivery of Replicate 8 were not replaced. It would have been extremely costly to launch the field operations for these cases, which numbered 12 adults and one child. Thus, the final number of cases selected were 12,488 in the Adult Sample and 1,249 in the Child Sample.

Table 5 summarizes procedures for defining, retaining/deleting, and replacing cases.

– Table 5 about here –

Note that in all duplicate cases, the "deleted" case remains in the NIS as a spouse, child, or sibling of the sampled immigrant. When the data are released for public use, the documentation will include information on which spouses or children were in fact deleted sampled immigrants; researchers may decide to include them in some analyses of main sampled immigrants.

Sampling Weights. The public-use data set will include, for each replicate and for each stratum within each replicate, the number in the sampling frame, the number sampled, the number located, and the number interviewed. Researchers will be able to design weighting schemes appropriate to the particular topic and approach. Note also that information in the electronic immigrant record includes information which can be used to carry out selectivity corrections.

1.2. Language Design of NIS-2003

Language Principle. The key principle is that every respondent – sampled immigrant,

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spouse, child – is interviewed in his or her preferred language. Interviewing respondents in the language of their choice maximizes response rate and data quality. However, it presents new challenges in questionnaire preparation and field operations. The NIS approach classified languages into several tiers and designed a treatment for each tier. The language classification was based on (1) the expected origin-country distribution, (2) the expected native-language distribution, and (3) the expected preferred languages by country.

Expected Languages. The major origin countries were identified by using information on the immigrant cohorts of FY 1996-2000, on the set of high-admission countries identified annually by the State Department as part of the Diversity Visa Program, and on nonimmigrant refugee admissions. Next, using information from the NIS Pilot on native languages and preferred languages, the languages were classified into tiers indicating the expected volume of requests for interview in each language.

Language Tiers. Tier 0 is English. On the basis of the NIS Pilot, English was expected to be the modal preferred language. In the Pilot, although only about 20 percent of the respondents came from a country one of whose official or dominant languages is English, over 40 percent preferred English (almost 46 percent in the unweighted sample). Tier 1 is Spanish; in the Pilot, 26 percent in the unweighted sample preferred Spanish. Tier 2 comprises the next six languages expected to be most often requested – Chinese, Korean, Polish, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese. In the Pilot, each of the Tier 2 languages was requested by more than 1 percent of the sample; the language most requested was Chinese, by 9 percent, followed by Russian, by 7 percent. Tier 3 includes the next nine languages expected to be most requested – Arabic, Croatian, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Serbian, Ukrainian, and Urdu. Finally, Tier 4 includes all other languages.

Language Treatments by Tier. Spanish (Tier 1) received the same treatment as English – not only translation but also full CAPI implementation. For Tier 1 and Tier 2 languages, the instruments were translated. For Tier 3 languages, a set of key concepts was translated.

Interviews in Tier 1 and Tier 2 languages, plus Amharic, French, and Haitian Creole, were conducted by bilingual interviewers. Interviews in all other languages were conducted by a

team of interviewer and interpreter. Additionally, in languages for which bilingual interviewer treatment had been specified, if bilingual interviewers were not available, interviewer-interpreter teams conducted the interviews.

Key Concepts (Tier 3). Two sets of key concepts were identified, one related to immigration, the other not. These were presented to the respondents in both translation and English original. Appendix Tables A.4 and A.5 provide the lists.[2]

Translation of Instruments and Key Concepts. A professional translation firm translated the instrument into the Tier 1 and Tier 2 languages and the key concepts into the Tier 3 languages. Assessment of the Spanish translation was carried out by an NORC team of bilingual translation experts. Assessment of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 translations was carried out by NORC expert reviewers (bilingual translators experienced with survey questionnaires).

1.3. Questionnaire Content

NIS survey instruments for the baseline round obtained information on a variety of topics, including health, schooling, marriage and family, skills, languages and English language skills, labor force participation, earnings, use of government services, networks, travel, and religion. In successive rounds, the instruments will track changes over time. A large component of the NIS survey instruments is/will be comparable to instruments used in the major U.S. longitudinal surveys, thus facilitating comparisons of immigrants and the native-born. Special attention is/will be paid to immigrant children and the children of immigrants, including assessment of their academic abilities, skills, and achievements. As well, the instruments seek immigrants' ideas about the migration process, including assessment of the helpfulness of various sources of information.

The Round 1 child assessments consisted of the Digit Span for Memory test and the Woodcock Johnson III, Tests 1, 5, 9, and 10 of Achievement. The Digit Span for Memory test and the WJIII Tests 1 and 10 were given to children aged 3 to 12, inclusive. Children aged 6 to

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[2] Additionally, a set of terms which would not be translated was identified. The following are some examples: area code, zipcode, DVD, and Medicare.

12, inclusive, also received the WJIII Tests 5 and 9.

2. SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS BASED ON THE
NEW-IMMIGRANT COHORTS OF 1996 AND 2003

Schooling of New Legal Immigrants (NIS-P). With average and median schooling of
12.7 and 13 years, respectively, new legal immigrants are as well schooled as the native-born
(whose average and median are 13 and 12 years, respectively) and better schooled by one year
than the larger set of foreign-born surveyed in the Census and CPS. The schooling distribution
among new legal immigrants, however, differs from that among the native-born in that it has
heavy tails, with concentrations among the very highly educated as well as those with few years
of schooling. The proportion with at least 17 years of schooling is 21 percent, exceeding
substantially that among the native-born, 7.7 percent. At the other extreme, the proportion with
less than nine years of schooling is 20 percent among the NIS-P immigrants and only 6 percent
among the native-born.[3]

Spousal Similarity in Schooling (NIS-P). Among married couples formed by a U.S.
citizen sponsoring the immigration of a spouse, husbands and wives have similar levels of
schooling, with the U.S. citizen slightly better educated than the immigrant spouse, regardless of
gender (however, U.S. citizen husbands and their immigrant wives have substantially higher
schooling than U.S. citizen wives and their immigrant husbands, on average, two years higher).
Husband-wife schooling levels are less similar among married couples in which both spouses are
immigrants than among couples involving a U.S. citizen sponsor and an immigrant spouse,
except when the wife is the principal in an employment category. These results provide evidence
that the United States rewards investment in human resources and that schooling similarity
between spouses is increasingly the norm. Moreover, these findings suggest that immigration
laws importantly shape the characteristics of families, and thus the next generation – the children

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[3] Fuller description of these results is found in Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, and Smith
(2000b).

of immigrants and immigrant children.[4]

Early Assimilation Effects (NIS-P). Among immigrants sponsored as the spouses of U.S. citizens, those who marry in the United States (and thus presumably have spent more time in the U.S., on average, in a temporary status) have higher schooling and lower husband-wife schooling disparity. These results provide further evidence of the U.S. ideals of high education and spousal similarity and of their attractiveness to immigrants.

Skill Transferability (NIS-P). Early analyses indicate that not all of an immigrant's skills are immediately transferable and that transferability both varies by personal characteristics and increases with time in the United States. Thus, accurate assessment of a new immigrant cohort's skills requires longitudinal observation.

Preferred Language (NIS-P). Although less than 20 percent of the NIS-P immigrants came from a country one of whose official or dominant languages is English, over 40 percent preferred to be interviewed in English at the baseline round. Another 31 percent preferred Spanish, and 8 percent preferred Russian. Other languages preferred by NIS-P immigrants were, in order of frequency (adjusted for over/undersampling), Chinese, Vietnamese, Polish, French, Tagalog, Korean, Thai, Arabic, Gujarati, Romanian, Albanian, Bengali, Farsi, Ibo, Italian, and Portuguese. In 58 of the 111 countries represented in the NIS-P, all the immigrants preferred English, and in 22 countries all the immigrants preferred a non-English language.

Language Investment (NIS-P). Immigrants are investing individuals, and this trait is reflected in their knowledge of languages. While as children only slightly less than 10 percent spoke more than one language, by the time of admission to legal permanent residence, 72 percent spoke more than one language. Among the monolingual children, 12 percent spoke English, and among these children, 22 percent learned another language. Among the non-English monolingual children, 73 percent learned (at least some) English and another 3.5 percent learned another language or languages.

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[4] For further discussion of these results, see Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, and Smith (2000a).

Use of English (NIS-P). There is substantial use of English among the NIS-P immigrants. Over three-fourths – 78 percent -- report that they use English either at home or outside the home. Moreover, almost half – 48 percent – use English both in the home and outside the home, and the proportion who speak only English either at home or outside the home is 34 percent.

Religious Preference (NIS-P). Approximately two-thirds of the NIS-P immigrants are Christian, substantially below the 82 percent of the native-born surveyed in the General Social Survey of 1996. However, the proportion Catholic is 42 percent, almost twice as large as among the native-born (22 percent). The proportion reporting themselves outside the Judaeo-Christian fold is over four times larger among recent immigrants than among the native-born (17 versus 4 percent); 8 percent of the new immigrants are Muslim. And as would be expected in a country whose principles include not only the freedom to practice any religion but also the freedom to practice no religion, 15 percent of the new immigrants report no religion, a larger fraction than among the native-born (12 percent).[5]

Smoking (NIS-P). It is well known that there is less smoking in the United States than in many other countries around the world and that smoking in the U.S. has declined steadily from rates of 57 percent and 28 percent, among men and women, respectively, in 1955, to rates of 26 and 21 percent, respectively, in 2000. How about immigrants to the United States? How much do they smoke? Among the NIS-P immigrants, 25 percent of the men smoke, down from 53 percent who report ever smoking, and only 7 percent of the women smoke, down from 20 percent who report ever smoking. Thus, immigrant men smoke slightly less than U.S. men and immigrant women substantially less than U.S. women. Immigrant men have achieved convergence with U.S. men by dint of quitting; immigrant women have diverged from U.S. women by drastically quitting. These patterns suggest that immigrants, especially immigrant women, may be becoming more American than the native-born.

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[5] Further results are found in Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, and Smith (2003).

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Home Ownership (NIS-P and NIS-2003). Foreign-born persons in the United States

are highly heterogeneous. Not only do they come from an extraordinary variety of countries and

backgrounds, but, importantly, they face very different U.S. environments, depending on their

exact legal status. Housing behavior cannot be understood without understanding the

environment faced; and the environment faced cannot be understood without information about

legal status. Though anyone, or almost anyone, with sufficient financial resources can purchase a

house in the United States, the desire to purchase a house will probably differ across the various

types of foreign-born: illegal aliens, legal temporary residents (such as foreign students, World

Bank staffers, or newspaper correspondents), lawful permanent residents, and those among LPRs

who have naturalized. A person who does not have assurances of remaining in the U.S. - a

person, say, subject to deportation – will not want to buy a house.

The large data bases currently available (such as the Census and the Current Population

Surveys) do not provide information on legal status (except for information on naturalization),

and thus it is difficult to understand and interpret a person's actions based on these data. Net of

every other characteristic – income, region of the country, etc. – legal status may play a

determining role in the decision to buy or rent.

The NIS-Pilot (NIS-P) included the question, "Right now, do you own any property in the

United States? (By property we mean any commercial or residential property you currently own

including your home and any business you own)." This question was asked at the 12-month

round; the average time since admission to LPR was 22-23 months. The NIS-2003 baseline-

round questionnaire included the question, "Do you [and your spouse, etc.] own this [home or

apartment], rent it, or what?" The average time since admission to LPR was four months. Thus,

the housing information provided by the NIS-2003 cohort pertains to a substantially earlier point

in the immigrant career than the housing information provided by the NIS-P sample.[6]

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[6] The results reported in this section are based on the complete NIS-2003 Adult Sample
as of March 2005 ($N = 8,573$). Further review of survey materials may increase the number of
completed instruments and thus the size of the interviewed sample. These results thus update the
results reported in Jasso (2004), which were based on data from the first three replicates (the

Examination of the data yields information about visa effects, duration effects, and cohort effects.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of the NIS-2003 immigrants aged 25-64 years at admission to lawful permanent residence who own their home, separately for three classes of admission -- spouses of U.S. citizens, employment principals, and diversity principals – and a fourth residual category. As shown, 41% of the spouses of U.S. citizens and 38% of the employment principals own their own home (at approximately four months after admission to LPR, on average); the comparable proportions are 21% in the residual category and only 5% among diversity principals. Clearly, immigrants screened by an employer or a U.S. citizen spouse have (or acquire) both the resources and the resolve to participate in the "American dream" and to do so almost immediately.

– Figure 1 about here –

Of course, some immigrants adjust their status to LPR after living in the United States with a temporary nonimmigrant visa, such as an F visa for foreign students or an H-1B visa for specialty workers, and so on. If both the requisite resources and the resolve to buy a home increase with time in the United States, adjustee immigrants would have higher rates of home ownership than new-arrival immigrants. Figure 2 reports the proportions who own their home, separately for adjustee immigrants and new-arrival immigrants.[7] As shown, there are large duration effects. The proportions who own their home are over twice as large for adjustee immigrants, relative to new-arrival immigrants, in three of the four admission classes – all except the spouses of U.S. citizens, a visa category in which the U.S. citizen sponsor may have already owned a home before marrying and sponsoring the immigrant spouse.

– Figure 2 about here –

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May, June, and July subsamples).

[7] The contrast is not exact, as some new-arrival immigrants have in fact been living in the United States but are ineligible to adjust status, for example, because they are currently deportable.

A priori it is reasonable to expect nontrivial cohort effects. First, the FY 2003 immigrants are subject to the stringent affidavit-of-support provisions instituted by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which went into effect in December of 1997; we thus expect the NIS-2003 immigrants to have more resources than the NIS-P immigrants. Second, the NIS-P immigrants are thought to include an IRCA-aftermath stream consisting of spouses of newly-naturalized amnestied aliens; for this reason, the NIS-2003 immigrants may also be thought to have more resources than the NIS-P immigrants. Third, the NIS-2003 immigrants include a higher proportion adjusting status than the NIS-P immigrants (approximately 57% in the NIS-2003 versus 55% in the NIS-P); longer time in the United States is also associated with greater resources. Counterbalancing these three factors all favoring higher home ownership in the NIS-2003 than in the NIS-P is the fact that the NIS-2003 immigrants are interviewed 18-19 months earlier in the immigrant career than the NIS-P immigrants. Which factors dominate is an empirical question.

Figure 3 depicts the proportions reporting ownership of property (1996) or a home (2003). As shown, the proportions who own property/home are roughly similar in the residual category and not too different in the employment category, but they differ substantially in the spouse-of-U.S.-citizen category (24.6% in 1996 versus 40.6% in 2003). Given that the 2003 information was obtained 18-19 months earlier in the immigrant career than the 1996 information, these results suggest higher home ownership rates in the more recent cohort. Among the spouses of U.S. citizens, the differential is striking, suggesting a pronounced cohort effect plausibly associated with the IRCA-aftermath stream consisting of spouses of newly-naturalized amnestied persons.

– Figure 3 about here –

To assess the net effects of cohort, duration, and class of admission, we carry out a binary logit analysis of the probability of owning property (in the 1996 cohort) and a home (in the 2003 cohort). Table 6 reports the estimates. The admission category variables are jointly significant at high levels of significance, indicating the persistence of visa effects in a multivariate context. In

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2003, net of duration effects and other variables, visa effects mirror the percentages in Figures 1 and 3; spouses of U.S. citizens have the highest probability of owning a home, followed closely by employment principals. In 1996, however, spouses of U.S. citizens rank lower than the other admission categories in the probability of owning property, a result which departs from that in the raw percentages (Figure 3).

– Table 6 about here –

The adjustment-of-status variable is statistically significant in both cohorts, underscoring the importance of the duration effects visible in Figure 2. The coefficient is larger in the 2003 cohort, suggesting that the more recent set of adjustees were more successful in converting time in the U.S. into a home. This may be due in part to the fact that, under provisions in effect in 1996, the earlier immigrants could adjust from an illegal status while in the United States. To the extent that illegal migrants have fewer resources than their counterparts who are adjusting from a legal status, the estimated duration effects would reflect the differing composition of the adjustees with respect to ownership-relevant characteristics.

Finally, schooling and age are significant in both cohorts. Schooling exerts, as expected, a positive effect on the probability of ownership. The effects of age are represented by downward parabolas, peaking at 41 years of age (1996) and 44 years of age (2003).

3. CONCLUDING NOTE

The foregoing results pertain to an early point in the immigrant career. The patterns we have seen may change over the life course, indeed may change fairly rapidly. Whether these patterns last, or intensify, or attenuate, or are reversed – only longitudinal research can tell. Meanwhile, other cohorts may exhibit different patterns and different trajectories over the life course. The multi-cohort, longitudinal design of the New Immigrant Survey promises to illuminate the immigrant experience, providing a rich foundation for scientific advances and more informed policymaking.

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Table 1. Public and Private Panels Which Contributed to the Design of the New Immigrant Survey

Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, 1981

NAS-NRC Panel on Immigration Statistics, 1985

Rockefeller/Sloan Workshop on Immigration, 1985

IUSSP Workshop on Migration, 1987

NIH Workshop on Immigration, 1993

NAS-NRC Workshop on Immigrant Children and Families, 1994

NAS-NRC Panel on Impacts of Immigration, 1997

Binational Study of U.S.-Mexico Migration, 1997

Table 2. Overview of NIS Samples, by Visa Type and Age

Visa Type	Sample	
	Adult	**Child**
A. Principals		
Spouse of U.S. Citizen	18+	---
Spouse of Permanent Resident	18+	---
Employment	18+	---
Diversity	18+	---
Other Principal	18+	---
Child of U.S. Citizen	18+	<18
Adopted Orphan	---	<5
B. Accompanying, or Following to Join		
Spouse of New Immigrant	18+	---
Child of New Immigrant	Excluded	
Other Relative of New Immigrant	Excluded	

Notes:

1. Principal and accompanying immigrants. The United States grants immigrant visas to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria set forth for the various classes of admission; such immigrants are called *principals*. Examples include the spouses of U.S. citizens, refugees, workers of several kinds, and winners of the diversity visa lottery. The United States also grants immigrant visas to the spouses and minor children "accompanying, or following to join" principals in certain classes of admission. Examples include spouses and minor children of employment principals and of sibling principals, and the nonrefugee spouses and minor children of refugees; principals for whose spouses and minor children visas are *not* available include, not surprisingly, spouses and parents of U.S. citizens.

2. New Immigrant Survey Samples.

   a. The NIS Adult Sample covers all immigrants who are 18 years of age or older and who have visas as principals or as accompanying spouses.

   b. The NIS Child Sample covers immigrants with child-of-U.S.-citizen visas (except self-petition immigrants) who are under 18 years of age and adopted orphans under five years of age.

   c. The NIS excludes accompanying children, accompanying adult offspring, and other accompanying non-spouse/non-child relatives; these are covered as household members of sampled immigrants in the Adult Sample. The NIS also excludes adopted orphans five years of age and over, self-petition child-of-U.S.-citizen immigrants, and children under 18 who hold principal visas other than child-of-U.S.-citizen or adopted-orphan visas; self-petition child-of-U.S.-citizen immigrants may be covered as household members of self-petition immigrants in the Adult Sample.

   d. Age refers to age at admission to lawful permanent residence.

Table 3. NIS Sampling Strata by Class of Admission

A. Adult Sample

Stratum 1	Spouses of U.S. citizens	2,064	16.5%
Stratum 2	Employment principals	2,064	16.5%
Stratum 3	Diversity principals	1,688	13.5%
Stratum 4	Others	6,684	53.5%

B. Child Sample

Stratum 1	Minor children of U.S. citizens	625	50%
Stratum 2	Adopted orphans under 5 years	625	50%

Note: The number of sampled cases is 12,500 in the Adult Sample and 1,250 in the Child Sample. A response rate of 70% would yield 8,750 cases in the Adult Sample and 875 in the Child Sample.

Table 4. NIS Samples, by Geographic Region

1. Top 85 MSAs – certainty MSAs	included
2. Other MSAs – noncertainty MSAs	10 sampled
3. Top 38 counties – certainty counties	included
4. Other counties – noncertainty county pairs	15 county pairs sampled
5. Overseas	excluded

Table 5. NIS Samples – Duplicates, Retentions/Deletions, Replacements

A. Duplicates

    1. Definition

        a. Two adults married to each other

        b. Two minor children

        c. A parent and a minor child

    2. Identification

        a. At sampling stage

        b. In the field

B. Retentions and Deletions

    1. Within replicate – Retain the one with the earlier sampling number.

    2. Across replicate – Retain the one in the earlier replicate.

C. Replacements

Replacements for out-of-scope (OOS) duplicates found in the field for Replicates 1-7 were made at the time of the subsequent replicate.   OOS-duplicates found in the field for Replicate 8, or found in the field for any Replicate after delivery of Replicate 8, were not replaced.

Table 6. Logit Estimates of Determinants of Owning Property/Home in the United States among New Legal Immigrants Aged 25-64: NIS Cohorts of 1996 and 2003

	1996 Cohort Own Property	2003 Cohort Own Home
Age	.218 (2.74)	.223 (8.18)
Age squared	-.00267 (2.70)	-.00251 (7.75)
Sex (1=female)	.0670 (.38)	.113 (1.75)
Total schooling (years)	.0541 (2.84)	.0521 (7.72)
Adjustee	.731 (3.51)	1.68 (11.2)
Spouse of U.S. citizen	-.0962 (.42)	.688 (8.20)
Employment principal	.482 (2.18)	.398 (4.64)
Diversity principal	---	-1.10 (6.48)
Constant	-6.53 (4.17)	-7.66 (13.4)
N	750	6636

Notes: Data are drawn from the New Immigrant Survey Cohorts of 1996 and 2003. Absolute values of asymptotic *t*-ratios appear in parentheses beneath the corresponding estimates.

Table A.1. Percentage of Immigrants in NIS Sampling Strata, Adult and Child Sampling Frames: FY 1996-2000

		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
A. Adult Sampling Frame						
1	Spouses of U.S. citizens	27.2	30.5	33.3	29.3	32.7
2	Employment principals	8.24	7.17	7.45	5.46	8.22
3	Diversity principals	4.71	4.32	4.87	5.14	3.90
4	Others	59.8	58.0	54.4	60.1	55.2
B. Child Sampling Frame						
1	Minor children of U.S. cit	80.2	81.8	76.5	73.8	74.7
2	Adopted orphans under 5	19.8	18.2	23.5	26.2	25.3
C. Adult and Child Sampling Frames and Excluded as Percentage of Entire Cohort						
	Adult Sampling Frame	68.4	70.2	68.8	67.6	71.2
	Child Sampling Frame	5.56	7.63	8.52	8.40	7.45
	Excluded	26.1	22.2	22.6	24.0	21.4

Table A.2. NIS Sample Replicates and Delivery Schedule: First NIS Cohort, 2003

Replicate Number	Sampling Period	Adult Sample	Child Sample	NIS-PI Receipt	NORC Receipt
1	1 May - 15 May	893	90	20 May	23 May
2	16 May - 15 June	1,786	179	18 June	23 June
3	16 June - 15 July	1,786	178	18 July	23 July
4	16 July - 15 Aug	1,785	178	20 Aug	25 Aug
5	16 Aug - 15 Sept	1,786	179	18 Sept	23 Sept
6	16 Sept - 15 Oct	1,786	178	20 Oct	23 Oct
7	16 Oct - 15 Nov	1,785	178	19 Nov	24 Nov
8	16 Nov - 30 Nov	893	90	3 Dec	8 Dec
Total		12,500	1,250		

Notes: For each replicate, NIS team receives the complete immigrant-record extract for the sampling period from USCIS, draws the sample, and sends the sample to NORC.

Table A.3. NIS Sampling Strata – Cases To Be Contacted

Replicate Number	Number of Cases	Strata			
		1	2	3	4
A. Adult Sample					
		16.5%	**16.5%**	**13.5%**	**53.5%**
1 (and 8)	893	147	147	121	478
2 (and 3,5,6)	1,786	295	295	241	955
3 (and 2,5,6)	1,786	295	295	241	955
4 (and 7)	1,785	295	295	241	954
5 (and 2,3,6)	1,786	295	295	241	955
6 (and 2,3,5)	1,786	295	295	241	955
7 (and 4)	1,785	295	295	241	954
8 (and 1)	893	147	147	121	478
Total	12,500	2,064	2,064	1,688	6,684
B. Child Sample					
		50%	**50%**	---	---
1 (and 8)	90	45	45	---	---
2	179	89	90	---	----
3 (and 4,6,7)	178	89	89	---	---
4 (and 3,6,7)	178	89	89	---	---
5	179	90	89	---	---
6 (and 3,4,7)	178	89	89	---	---
7 (and 3,4,6)	178	89	89	---	---
8 (and 1)	90	45	45	---	---
Total	1,250	625	625	---	---

Table A.4. Key Concepts for Which Translated Term Is Followed by English Original: Related to Immigration

The terms in this list, and all their cognates, appear in the English original following the translated term.

accompanying family members
adjust – adjustment – adjustee
affidavit of support
alien
asylee – asylum
border crossing card
citizen
diversity – diversity visa
exchange visitor
green card
immigrant
joint sponsor
lottery – lottery visa
national
nonimmigrant
parolee
permanent resident alien – lawful permanent resident – legal permanent resident
permanent residence – lawful permanent residence – legal permanent residence
petition – petitioner
principal – principal alien
refugee
sponsor (noun and verb)
visa – immigrant visa – student visa – training visa – etc.

Notes: The chief source for this list is the INS Glossary (INS website; INS *Statistical Yearbooks*), supplemented by review of websites for persons seeking legal immigration. List prepared by NIS project staff in consultation with INS and NORC.

Table A.5. Key Concepts for Which Translated Term Is Followed by English Original: Not Related to Immigration

The terms in this list, and all their cognates, appear in the English original following the translated term.

alimony
allowance
bio-feedback training
child support
condo
food stamps
hearing aid
home economics
home equity line of credit
laid off
money market fund
PAP smear
time shares
trust (as in trust fund)

Note: List prepared by NIS project staff in consultation with NORC.

Fig 1. Percent Who Own Home, New Immigrants Aged 25-64, by Visa Class: NIS 2003 Immigrant Cohort
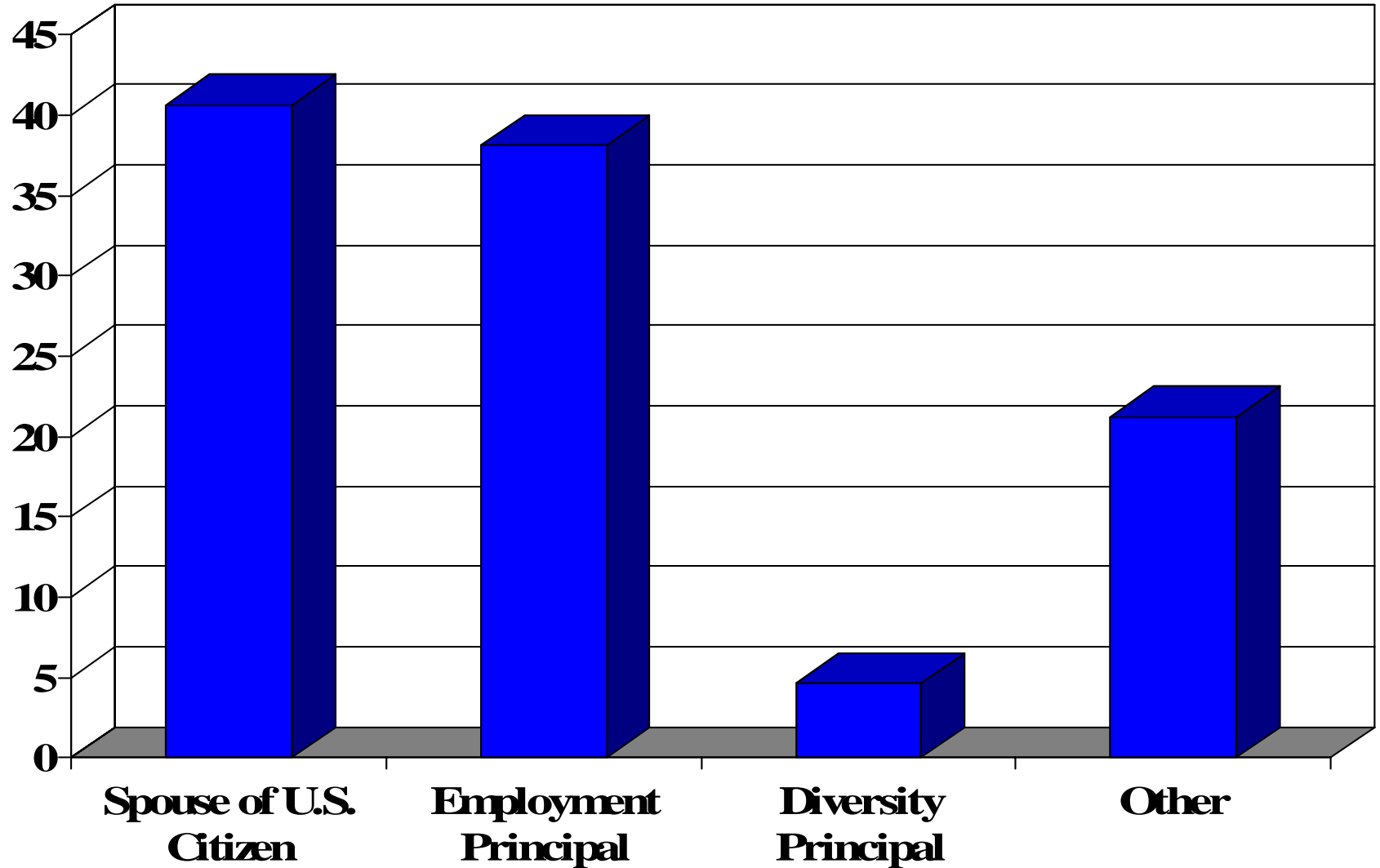
Fig 2. Percent Who Own Home, New Immigrants Aged 25-64, by Visa Class and Adjustment of Status: NIS 2003 Immigrant Cohort
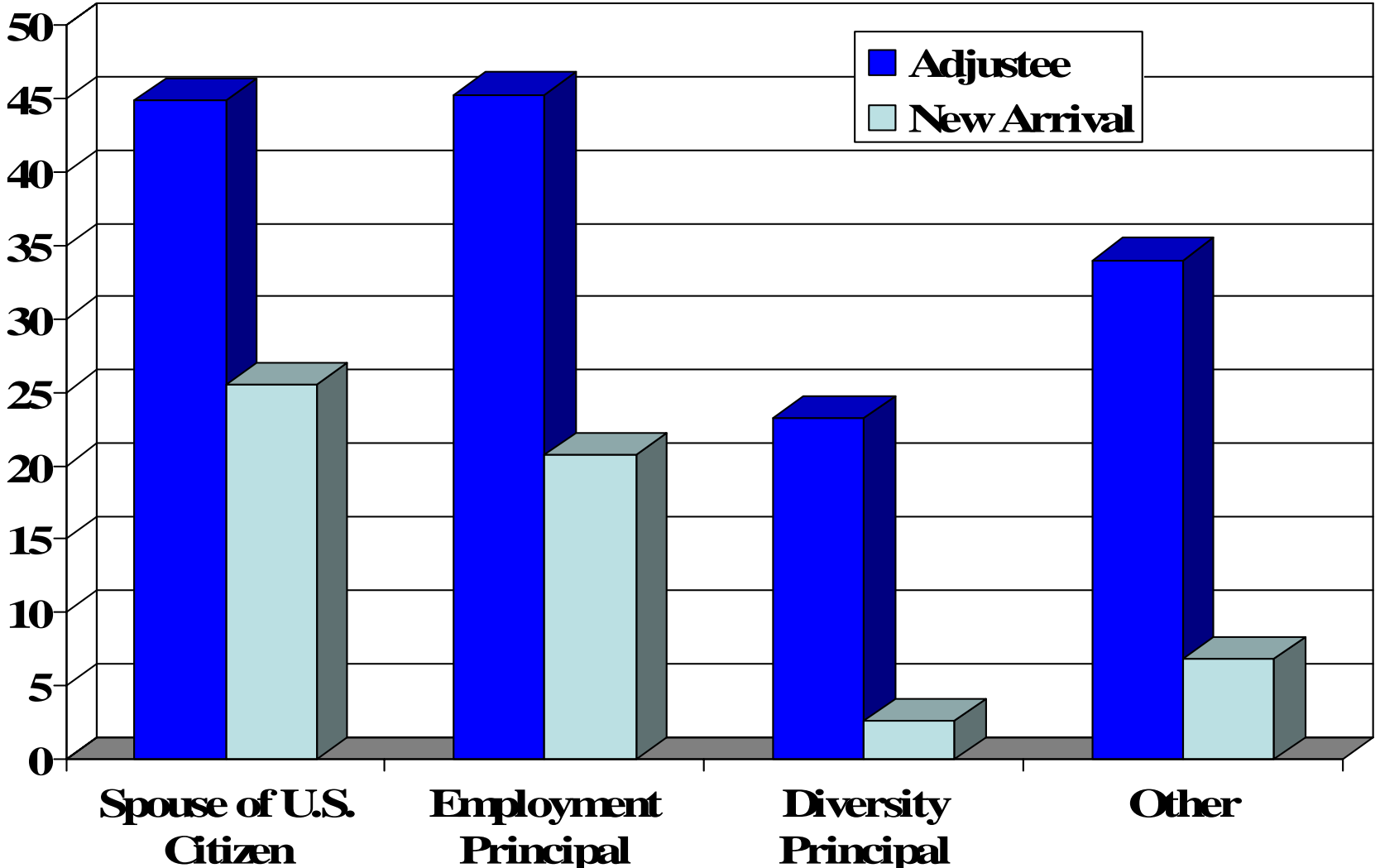
Fig 3. Percent Who Own Home, New Immigrants Aged 25-64, by Visa Class: NIS 1996 and 2003 Immigrant Cohorts