



# ***Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families***

**Lynn A. Karoly  
Gabriella C. Gonzalez**

**April 29, 2011**

**Presented at the Conference on “Enhancing Practice with Early English Language Learners,” Princeton University**

# *Immigrant Children Are An Important Segment of Our Youngest Population*

- **Nearly 6 million children age five and under are immigrant children**
  - They were born abroad (6 percent)
  - One or both parents were born abroad (94 percent)
- **Comprise 24 percent of population age five and under**
  - Immigrant share reaches 50 percent in California
- **Represent a diverse group but many face disadvantages that place them at risk of poor school performance**
  - Linguistically isolated households
  - Parents with low education
  - Family income below poverty

# ***Growing Evidence of Benefits of High Quality Early Care and Education (ECE)***

- **Child development and brain research points to critical period in early years**
- **Evidence from rigorous evaluations of model programs and larger-scale programs of benefits from high quality ECE programs**
  - **Shorter-term benefits in school readiness**
  - **Longer-term benefits in education and economic outcomes**
- **Research has spurred public sector investments in ECE as part of education reform agenda**

# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

## **Questions**

- **To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?**
- **What are the potential benefits to ECE participation?**
- **What barriers preclude children who could benefit from participation?**
- **What are the policy implications?**

# *Approach*

- Define immigrant children as those born abroad or U.S.-born with one or both nonnative parents
- Scope includes early learning programs in home- and center-based settings serving children from birth to kindergarten entry
- Draw on most recent data available
- Evaluate literature on ECE more generally and specific to immigrant populations

# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

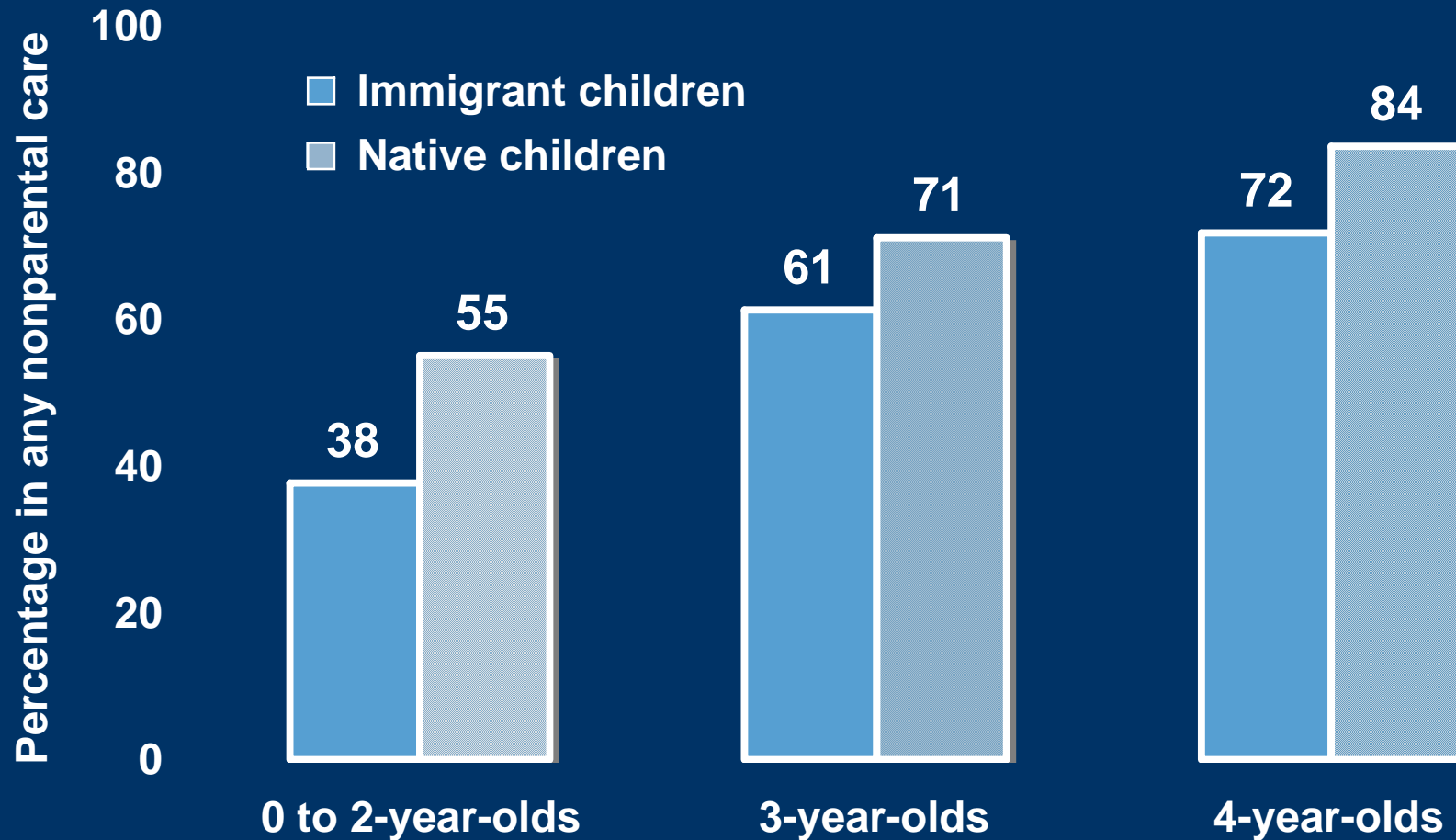
## **Questions**

- **To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?**

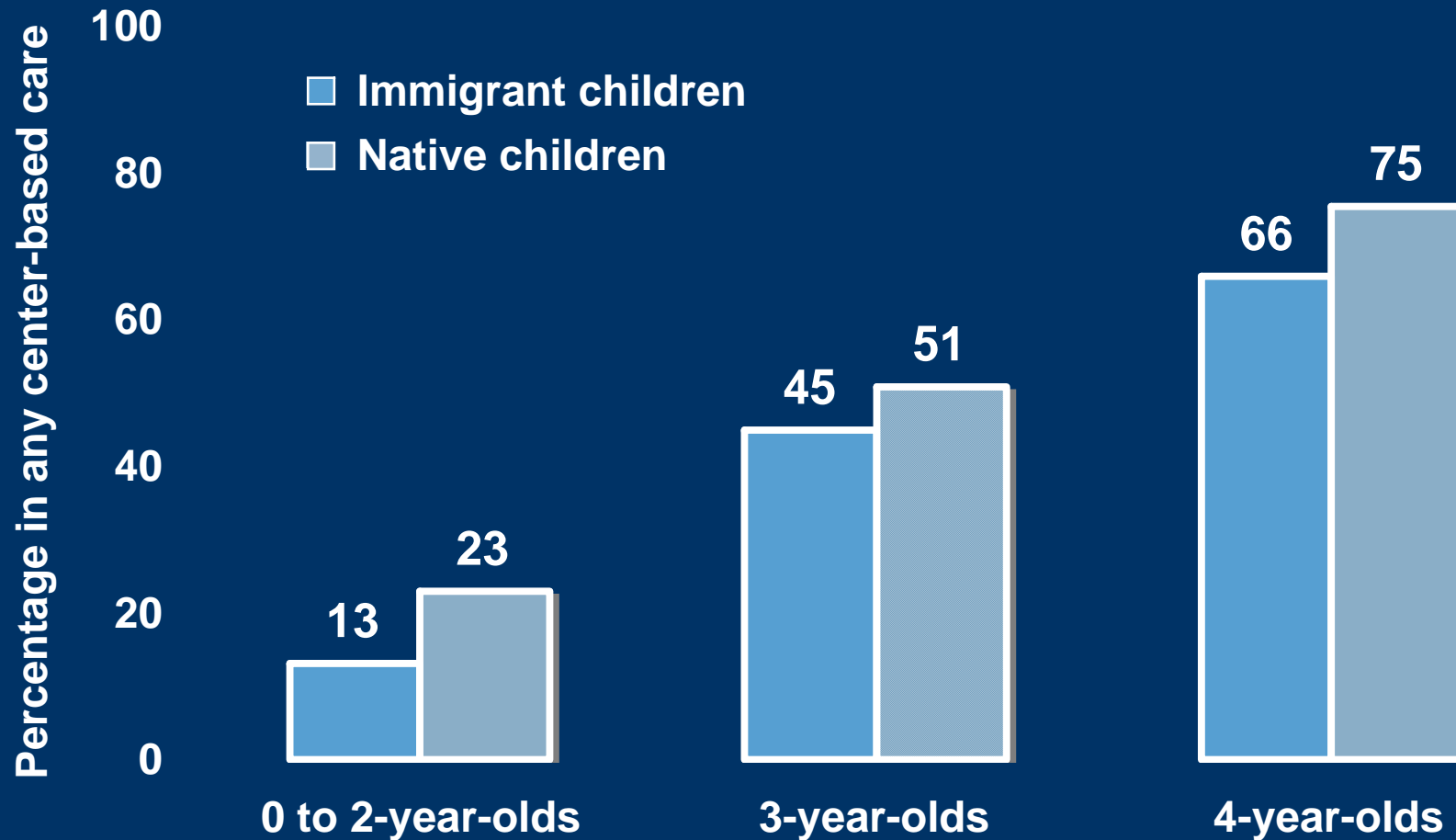
## **Answers**

- **They are less likely to use ECE and quality shortfalls exist; lower use can be explained by a few factors**

# *Immigrant Children Are Less Likely to Be in Any Nonparental Care Before K Entry*

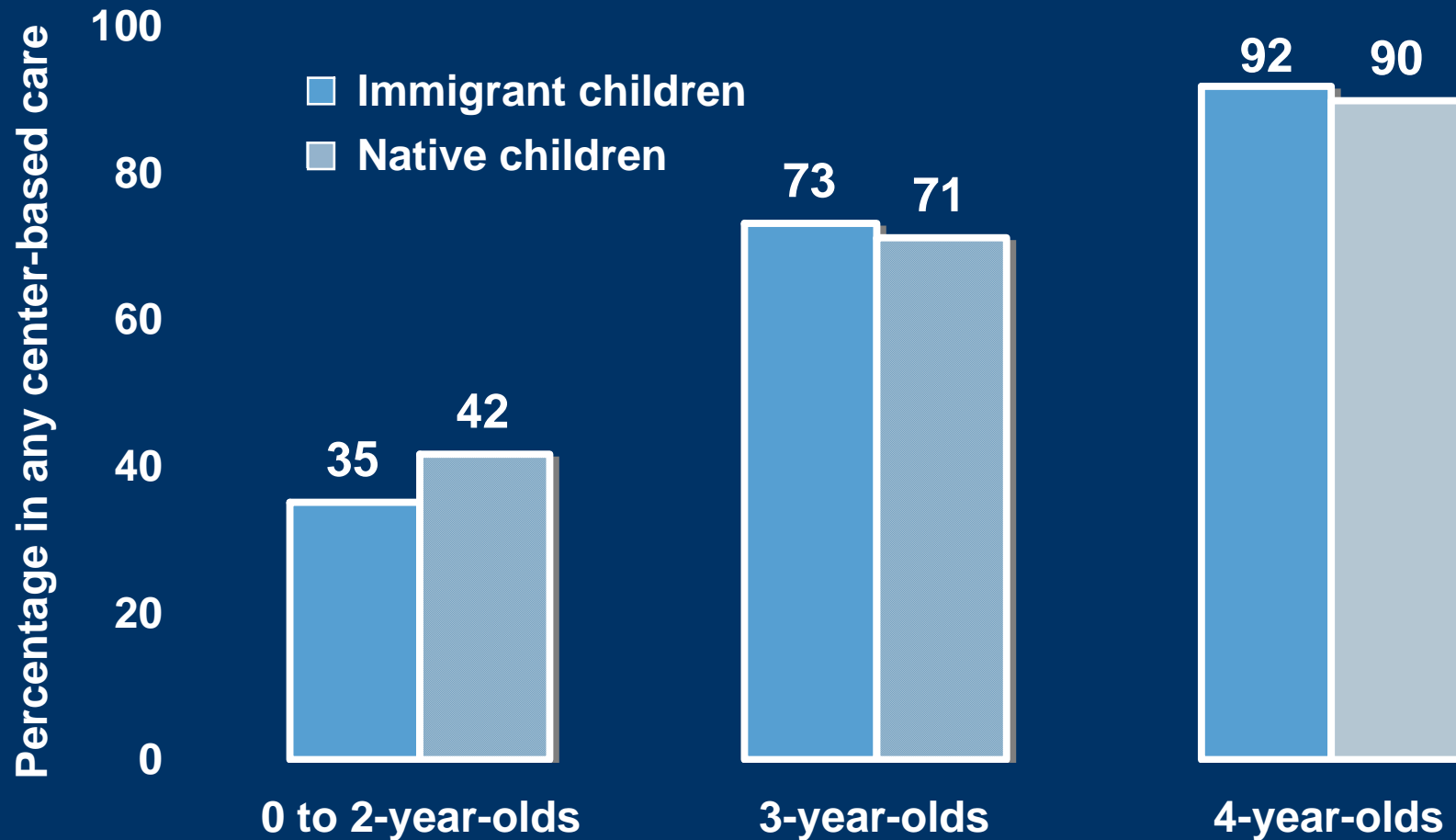


# *They Are Also Less Likely to Be in Any Center-Based Care Before K Entry*





## *Among Care Users, Immigrant–Native Differences In Care Use Patterns Are Smaller*



# *Immigrant Children Concentrated in Groups With Lower Usage of Nonparental Care*

## Immigrants

Income below poverty	69%
Income above poverty	73%

# *Immigrant Children Concentrated in Groups With Lower Usage of Nonparental Care*

## Immigrants

Income below poverty	69%
Income above poverty	73%

Parental education below HSG	66%
Parental education HSG or higher	74%

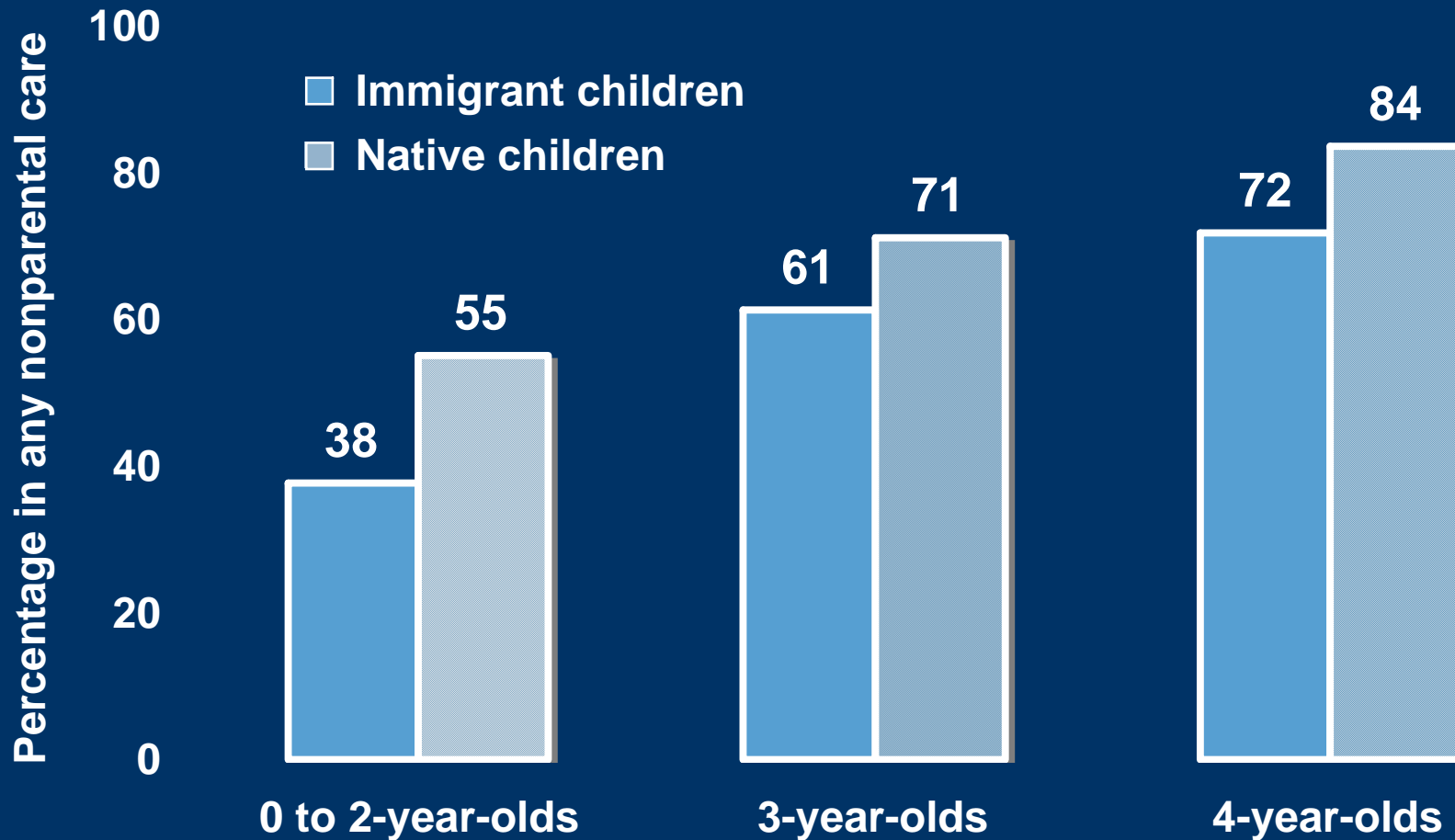
Two parent family	27%
One parent family	67%

Hispanic or Latino	70%
Not Hispanic or Latino	74%

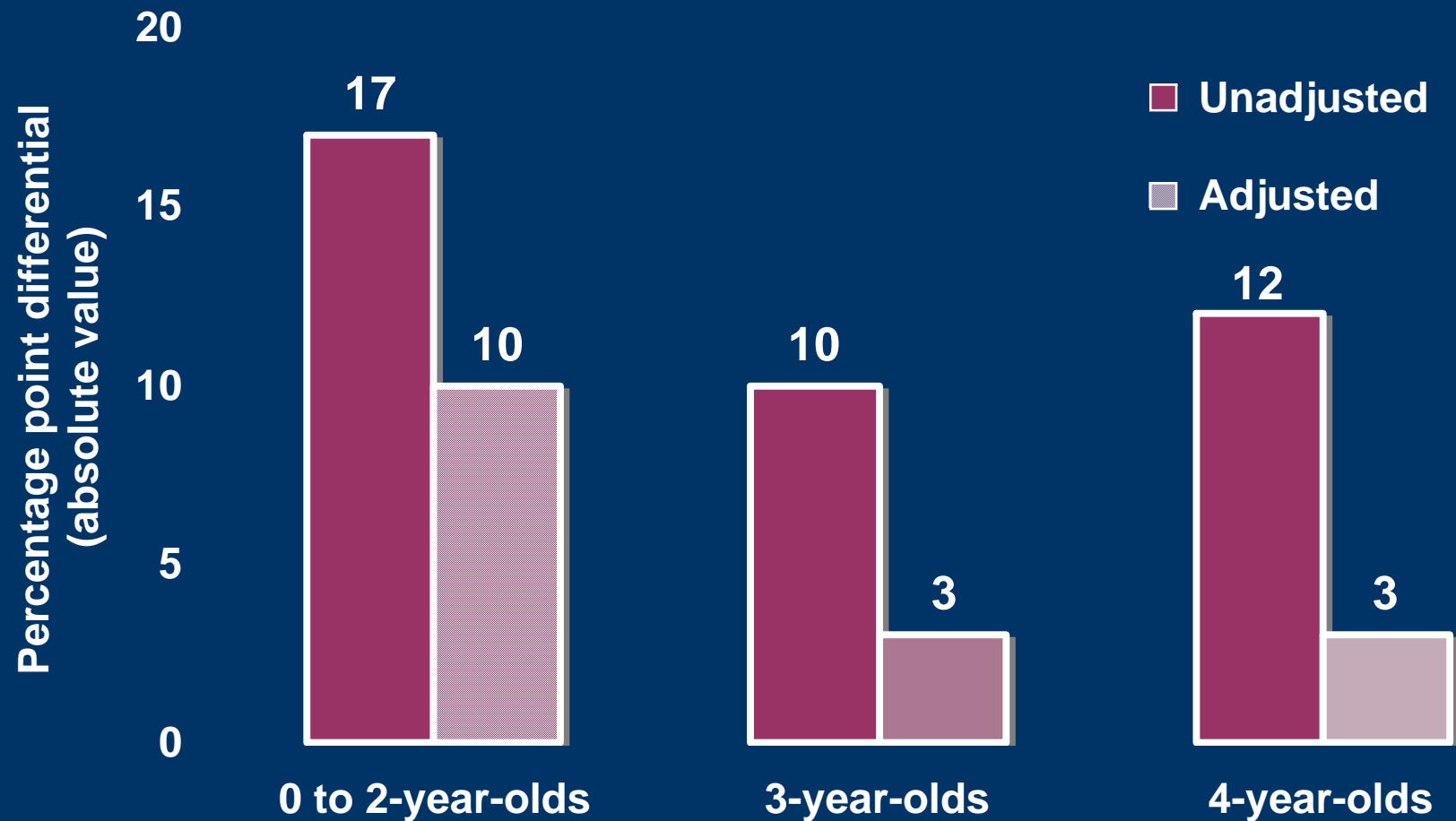
## ***But Care Usage By Immigrant Children Is Also Lower Than Natives For Most Subgroups***

	Immigrants	Natives
Income below poverty	69%	80%
Income above poverty	73%	84%
Parental education below HSG	66%	71%
Parental education HSG or higher	74%	84%
Two parent family	27%	35%
One parent family	67%	89%
Hispanic or Latino	70%	70%
Not Hispanic or Latino	74%	85%

# *Recall Gaps in Immigrant-Native Use of Any Nonparental Care: 17, 10, 12 Percentage Points*



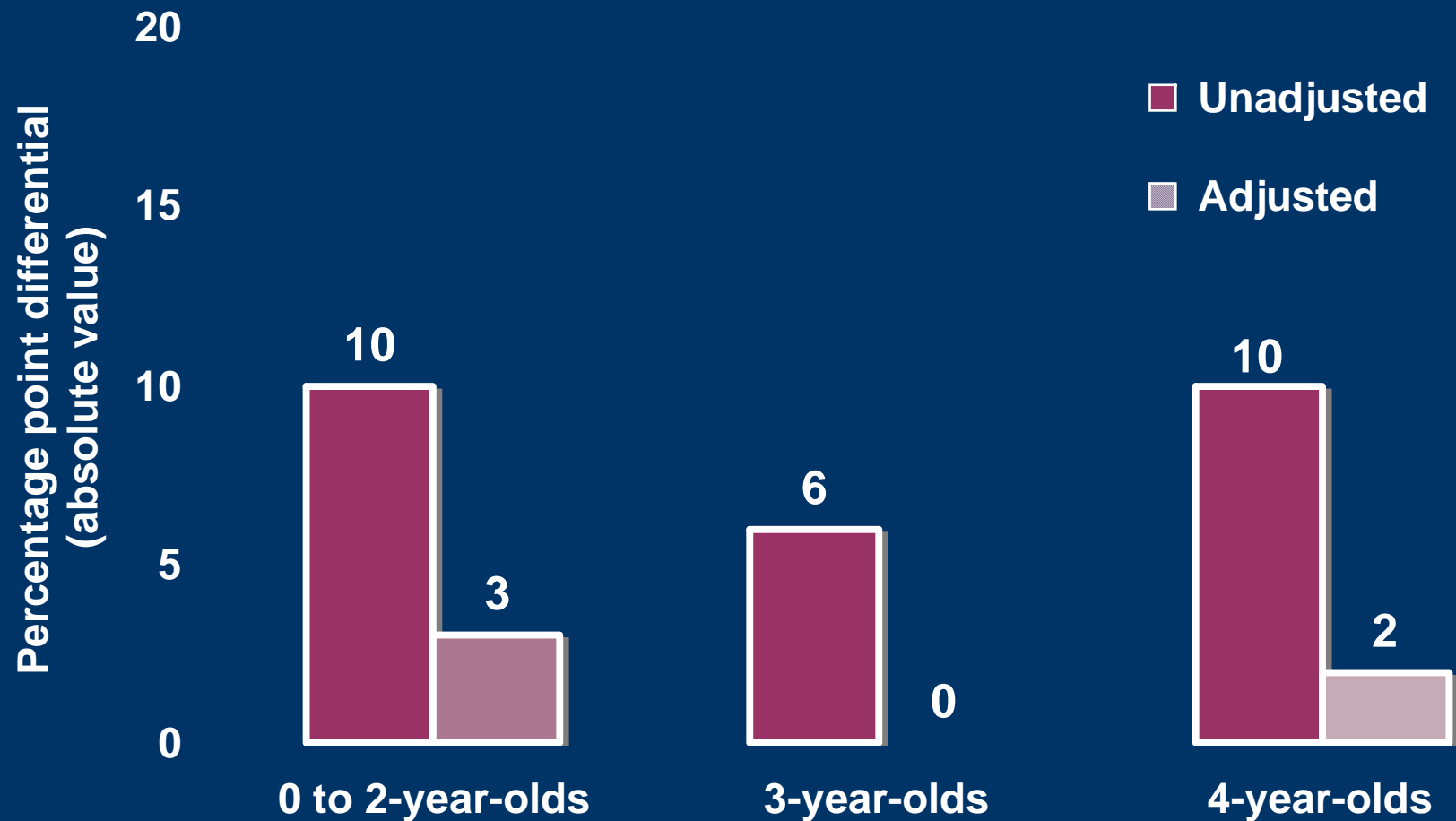
# *Much of the Participation Gap In Use of Any Nonparental Care Is Explain by Four Factors*



NOTE: Adjusted gap controls for poverty status, parental education, number of parents, and Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: Karoly and Gonzalez (2011), Figure 1, based on 2005 NHES.

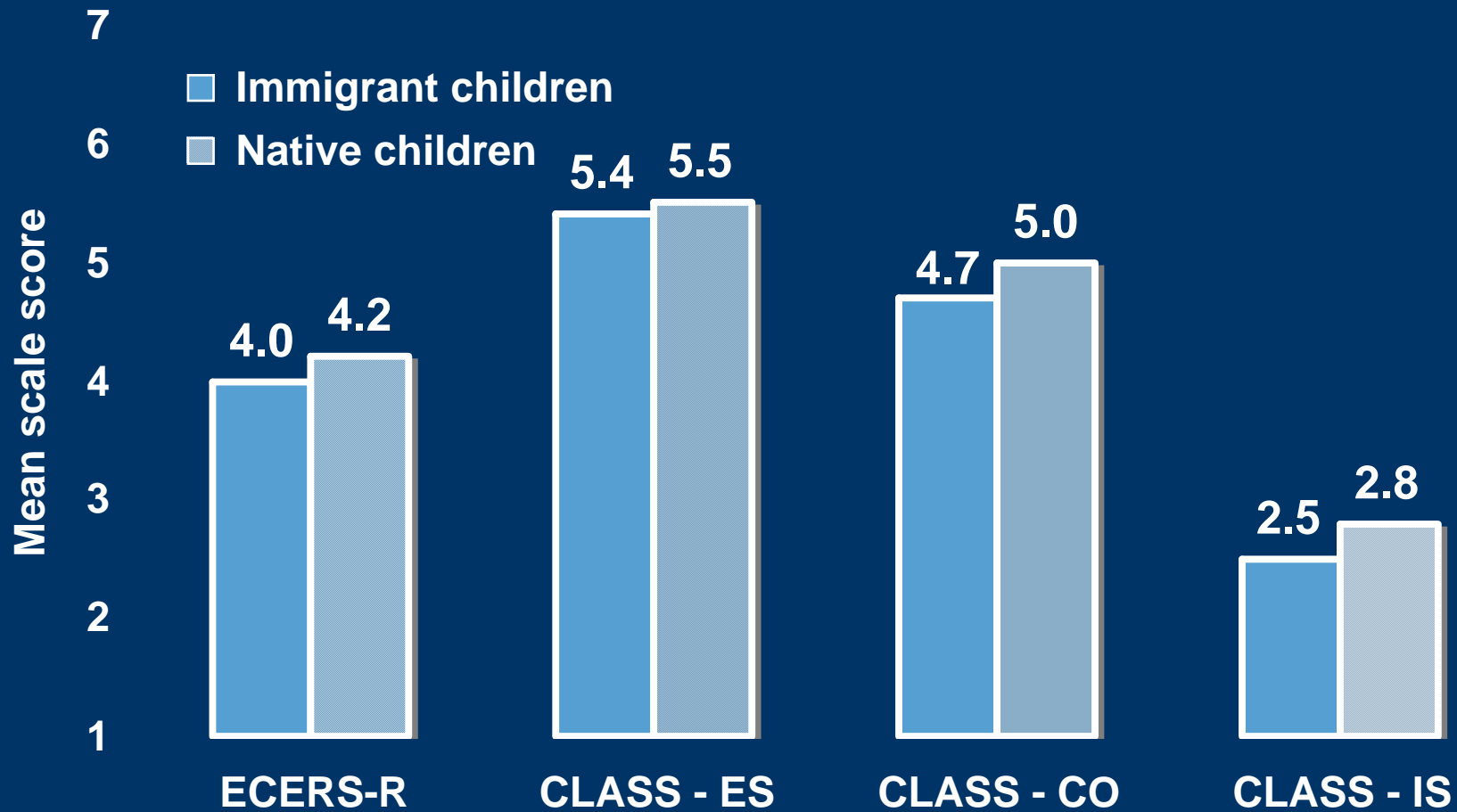
# Same Factors Explain Much of the Gap In Use of Any Center-Based Care



NOTE: Adjusted gap controls for poverty status, parental education, number of parents, and Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: Karoly and Gonzalez (2011), Figure 1, based on 2005 NHES.

# Both Immigrant and Native Children Experience Quality Shortfalls



NOTE: ECERS-R based on 2 subscales. ES = emotional support; CO = classroom organization; IS = instructional support.

SOURCE: Karoly and Gonzalez (2011), Table 4, based on 2007 CA Preschool Study.



# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

## **Questions**

- To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?
- **What are the potential benefits to ECE participation?**

## **Answers**

- They are less likely to use ECE and quality shortfalls exist; lower use can be explained by a few factors
- **Evidence of at least short-term benefits and likely long-term benefits too**

# ***Broad Research Base Shows Benefits of ECE, Especially for High-Risk Children***

- **Best evidence from evaluations using experimental or quasi-experimental designs**
- **Recent evaluations of larger-scale public programs**
  - **Early Head Start and Head Start**
  - **Preschool programs in AR, CA, MI, NJ, NM, SC, and WV**
  - **Oklahoma's universal preschool program**
- **Long-term evaluations of smaller- and larger-scale high quality programs**
  - **Preschools: Perry Preschool and Chicago Child-Parent Centers**
  - **Early intervention: Abecedarian and Infant Health and Development Program**

# ***Benefits Evident In Multiple Domains and Through Time***

- **Multiple studies show benefits at school entry**
  - **Cognitive gains that are large relative to other interventions**
  - **Smaller socio-emotional and behavioral gains**
- **Those studies with longer-term follow-up show continued benefits**
  - **Improved educational outcomes**
  - **Better economic outcomes**
  - **Reduced crime, delinquency and other antisocial behaviors**

## ***Research on Immigrant Children Also Shows Benefits from High Quality ECE***

- **More limited evidence base regarding benefits of ECE for immigrant children or English learners**
- **Some studies have considered these populations and shown short-term benefits consistent with other studies**
  - **OK universal preschool program**
  - **Observational studies using ECLS-K**
- **Longer-term benefits have yet to be documented**
- **May be benefits for immigrant parents from ECE participation such as gains in social capital or increased parental educational involvement**

# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

## **Questions**

- To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?
- What are the potential benefits to ECE participation?
- **What barriers preclude children who could benefit from participation?**

## **Answers**

- They are less likely to use ECE and quality shortfalls exist; lower use can be explained by a few factors
- Evidence of at least short-term benefits and likely long-term benefits too
- **Structural, informational, cultural, bureaucratic, and other factors likely reduce participation**

# *Literature Suggests Four Types of Barriers to ECE Participation by Immigrant Families*

- **Structural**
- **Informational and bureaucratic**
- **Cultural**
- **(Mis)perceptions**

# ***Structural Barriers Can Be Significant***

- **Affordability**

- Lower incomes for immigrant families means cost may preclude use of more formal programs
- Children may be eligible for subsidies but parents do not have needed documentation
- Subsidies do not cover all eligible children

- **Availability**

- Care options in immigrant communities are often more limited
- Limits on nonstandard care options (e.g., care during nontraditional hours)

- **Access**

- Transportation barriers preclude use

# ***Informational and Bureaucratic Barriers Can Be Especially Problematic for Immigrants***

- **Immigrant families are often unaware of ECE programs or subsidies they qualify for**
  - **Reliance on word of mouth instead of traditional sources of information**
- **Application and enrollment process are often complex and harder for immigrant families to navigate**
  - **Language barriers**
  - **Lack of documentation**
  - **Inability to access needed vaccinations**



## ***Cultural Barriers May Exist But Likely Less Important Than Other Factors***

- **Familistic culture often cited as reason for lower use of formal care arrangements**
  - **But several studies show structural factors play larger role than cultural ones**
- **Lack of cultural sensitivity or inability to communicate in parents' language may limit parent interest or involvement**

## ***Barriers Created by (Mis)Perceptions May Also Play a Role***

- **Distrust of government may limit participation in publicly subsidized programs**
  - **Misunderstandings regarding limits on eligibility based on citizenship status**
  - **Fear of a “public charge” determination**
  - **Wariness about disclosing personal information**
- **Concerns about stigma associated with using public subsidies**
- **Knowledge of ECE benefits may be limited, especially for immigrants from origin countries with low ECE use**

# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

## Questions

- To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?
- What are the potential benefits to ECE participation?
- What barriers preclude children who could benefit from participation?
- What are the policy implications?

## Answers

- They are less likely to use ECE and quality shortfalls exist; lower use can be explained by a few factors
- Evidence of at least short-term benefits and likely long-term benefits too
- Structural, informational, cultural, bureaucratic, and other factors likely reduce participation
- Combine policies targeted to disadvantaged children generally and those that address unique immigrant needs

# ***Policy Options for Disadvantaged Children More Generally***

- **Immigrant children are likely to benefit from federal, state, and local efforts to increase access to and raise quality of ECE**
  - **Increased funding for subsidized programs**
  - **Program consolidation for improved ease of use and greater efficiency**
  - **Quality improvement initiatives (e.g., rating systems, workforce development)**
  - **Alignment of preK and early elementary education**
  - **Linked and enhanced data systems**
- **Advantages to both universal and targeted approaches**
- **Need to evaluate effects of these reforms on immigrant children**

# *Policy Options Specific to Immigrant Children*

- **Structure of ECE programs can be modified to address unique immigrant needs**
  - Greater outreach using language-accessible communication strategies to raise awareness, dispel myths, support access, and promote engagement
  - Streamline bureaucratic processes
  - Emphasize cultural competency in workforce development
- **Providers can adjust to accommodate immigrant children and families**
  - Improve cultural competency of staff
  - Implement proven methods for English learners
- **Again, evaluations can determine if these strategies are effective**

# *What is the Promise of ECE for Immigrant Children?*

## **Questions**

- To what extent do immigrant children participate in ECE and what is the quality of those experiences?
- What are the potential benefits to ECE participation?
- What barriers preclude children who could benefit from participation?
- What are the policy implications?

## **Answers**

- They are less likely to use ECE and quality shortfalls exist; lower use can be explained by a few factors
- Evidence of at least short-term benefits and likely long-term benefits too
- Structural, informational, cultural, bureaucratic, and other factors likely reduce participation
- Combine policies targeted to disadvantaged children generally and those that address unique immigrant needs

# Study Available in 2011 FOC Volume



Lynn A. Karoly & Gabriella Gonzalez,  
“Early Learning Environments: Child  
Care and Preschool Arrangements for  
Children in Immigrant Families,”  
*Future of Children*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2011.

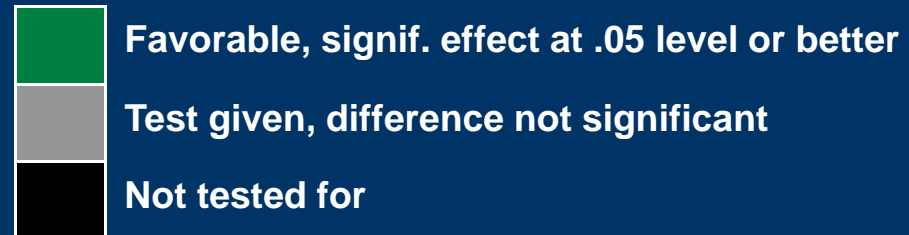
url: [futureofchildren.org](http://futureofchildren.org)





# High-Quality Preschool Programs Can Raise Pre-Literacy and Pre-Math Skills

Program	Vocab. (PPVT)
Perry Preschool	1.02
Chicago CPC	
Head Start	
Arkansas	0.36
California	0.30 – 0.47
Michigan	
New Jersey	0.34
New Mexico	0.36
Oklahoma (Tulsa)	
Oklahoma	0.32
South Carolina	
West Virginia	



RAND PPVT=Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

SOURCE: RAND analysis of preschool research literature (TR-537, 2007 and MG-889, 2009).

# High-Quality Preschool Programs Can Raise Pre-Literacy and Pre-Math Skills

Program	Vocab. (PPVT)	Pre-reading (WJ)	Pre-writing (WJ)	Pre-math (WJ)	Cognitive readiness
Perry Preschool	1.02				
Chicago CPC					0.46
Head Start		0.32	0.24		
Arkansas	0.36			0.24	
California	0.30 – 0.47			0.31 – 0.38	
Michigan				0.51	
New Jersey	0.34			0.19	
New Mexico	0.36			0.39	
Oklahoma (Tulsa)		0.79	0.64	0.38	
Oklahoma	0.32			0.49	
South Carolina					
West Virginia				0.52	

RAND PPVT=Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; WJ=Woodcock-Johnson.

34 Apr-11

SOURCE: RAND analysis of preschool research literature (TR-537, 2007 and MG-889, 2009).

## *Two Programs with Longer Follow-Up Show Favorable Effects on Educational Outcomes*

Outcome	Perry Preschool	Chicago CPC
Reading achievement	0.34	0.24
Math achievement	0.33	0.23
Grade retention		0.34
Special education use	0.29	0.26
High school completion	0.43	0.16

NOTE: Perry achievement measures are for grade 6; Chicago CPC are for grade 8.