

Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign Born (2000 Update)

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Census Brief:
Current Population Survey

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U.S. foreign-born population reaches 28 million.

As of March 2000, according to data collected in the Current Population Survey, the estimated foreign-born population of the United States was 28.4 million. The number climbed 8.6 million, or 44 percent, since the 1990 census. Previously, the foreign-born population had expanded from 9.6 million in 1970, the lowest total in the 20th century, to 14.1 million in 1980 and to 19.8 million in 1990.

Meanwhile, 10 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born in 2000, the highest rate since 1930. (See Figure 1.)¹ The 2000 percentage is midway between the highest rates, which occurred during periods of large-scale migration from Europe (14 percent in 1870 and 15 percent in 1890 and 1910), and the lowest rate, which occurred at the end of a long period of limited migration (5 percent in 1970).

One-half of the foreign-born population is from Latin America.

In 2000, 14.5 million (1-in-2) foreign-born residents were from Latin America, a marked increase from the 1.8 million (1-in-5) in 1970. (See Figure 2.) Mexico alone accounted for 7.8 million of the total of foreign born in 2000, up from 800,000 in 1970. There were also at least 500,000

¹ Figures 1, 2, 4 and 5 present rounded percentages in bar charts.

foreign-born residents in the United States in March 2000 from each of the following Latin American countries: Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador.

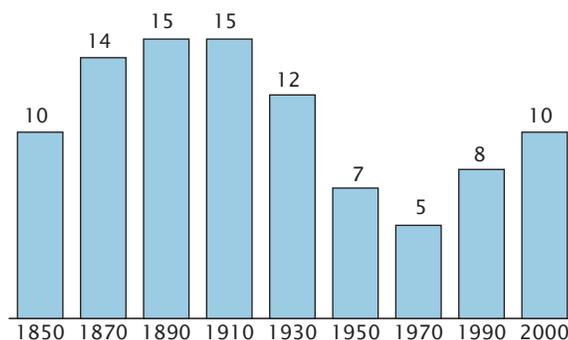
More than a quarter of the foreign-born population is from Asia.

There were 7.2 million U.S. foreign-born residents from Asia living in the United States in March 2000 — 26 percent of the foreign-born population. As recently as 1970, the corresponding figures were

Foreign-Born Population Defined

The *Foreign Born* were not U.S. citizens at birth. *Natives* were born in the United States or a U.S. Island Area such as Puerto Rico, or born abroad of a U.S. citizen parent.

Figure 1.
Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000
(Percent of total population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figure 1-1.

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800,000 and 9 percent. China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam and Korea — all in Asia — were among the countries of origin with the most migrants to the United States.

Another 4.4 million or 15 percent of foreign-born residents were European-born in 2000 — significantly different from 1970 when the majority — 62 percent — listed a European country as their place of birth.²

The foreign-born population is highly concentrated in a few states.

Six states had estimated foreign-born populations of 1 million or more in March 2000: California (8.8 million), New York (3.6 million), Florida (2.8 million), Texas (2.4 million), New Jersey and Illinois (1.2 million each, and not statistically different). While the total population of these states represented 39 percent of the total U.S. population, their foreign-born populations represented 70 percent of the nation's total foreign-born population.

In five of these six states, the proportion of the foreign-born population exceeded the national average of 10 percent: California (26 percent), New York (20 percent), Florida (18 percent), New Jersey (15 percent) and Texas (12 percent). (See Figure 3.)

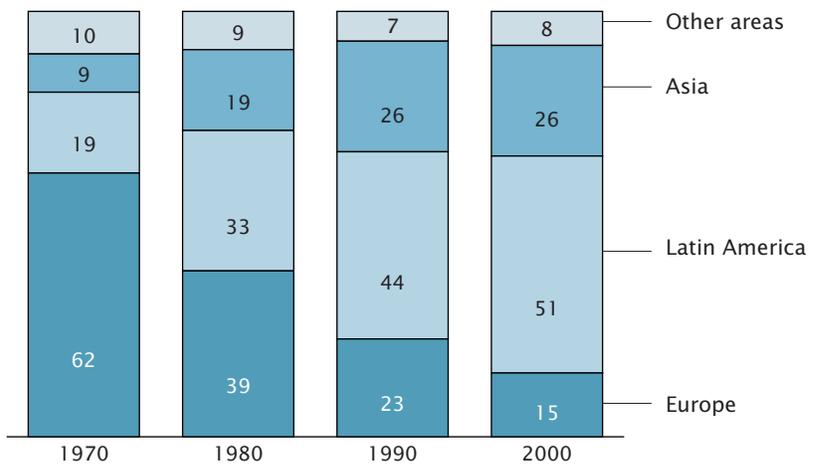
Foreign-born people are concentrated in large metro areas.

Five metro areas together were home to half of the nation's foreign-born population in 2000: Los Angeles and New York (4.7 million

² Categories of race and ethnicity are not interchangeable with geographic region. For example, although 15 percent of the foreign born come from Europe, about 70 percent of the foreign born are White. (See P23-206, p. 24.)

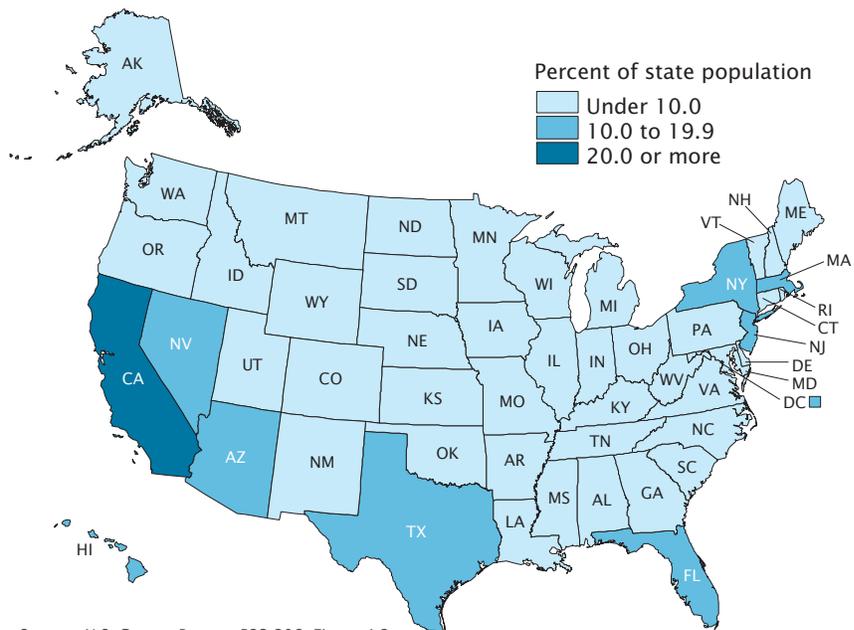
Figure 2. **Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth: 1970 to 2000**

(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figure 2-2.

Figure 3. **Foreign-Born Population by State: 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figure 4-2.

each), San Francisco (2.0 million), Miami (1.6 million) and Chicago (1.1 million). Of these, Miami had the highest proportion of foreign-born residents among its total population (43 percent).

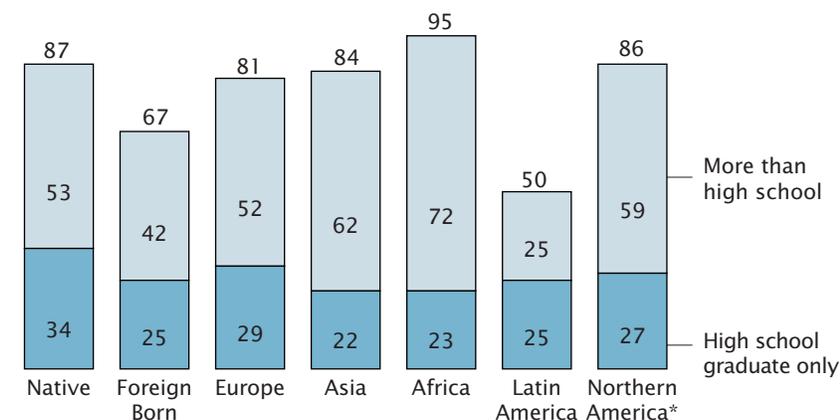
Region of birth is a key indicator of foreign-born people's well-being.

The social and economic well-being of the nation's foreign-born population is associated with where they

Figure 4.

High School Completion or Higher by Nativity and Region of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population: 2000

(Percent of the population 25 years and older)

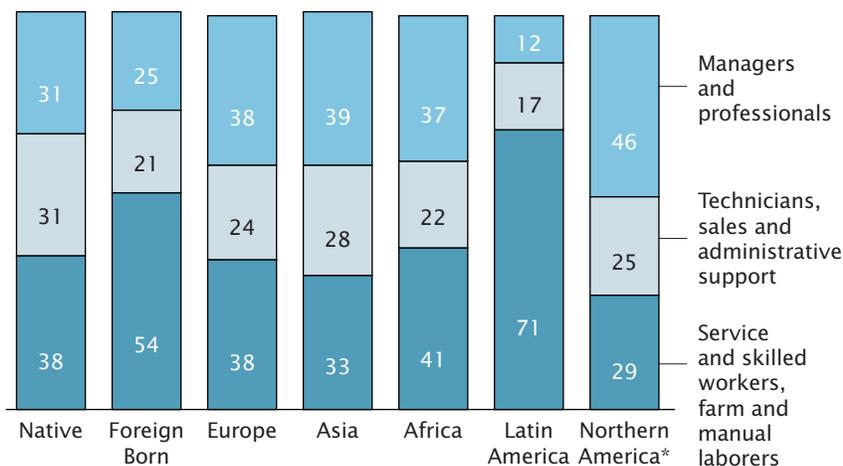


*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figures 14-1 and 14-2.

Figure 5.

Occupational Distribution by Nativity and Region of Birth of Foreign-Born Workers: 2000

(Percent distribution)



*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figures 16-1 and 16-2.

were born. The following is a look at how selected foreign-born groups compare with one another, as well as with the native population. Unless otherwise indicated, the data are for March 2000.

- **Age** — The median ages of the foreign-born population (38 years) and the native population

(35 years) did not differ significantly. However, there was great variation within the foreign-born population by region of birth, as median ages ranged from 50 years for people from Europe to 39 years for those from Asia and 35 years for Latin American-born residents. (The median age is the

age at which half the population is older and half is younger.)

- **Education** — The proportion of the population 25 years and older who had at least a high school education was lower among the foreign-born population (67 percent) than among the native population (87 percent). Foreign-born people from Asia had a high school completion rate (84 percent) that was statistically different from natives, but the difference was small. The rate was 81 percent for those from Europe, and 50 percent for those from Latin America.³ The foreign-born from Africa had the highest rate — 95 percent had completed high school. (See Figure 4.)
- **Labor force participation** — Foreign-born and native men 25 to 54 years old had comparable labor force participation rates (about 92 percent). In contrast, foreign-born women in this age range had a lower rate (67 percent) than their native counterparts (79 percent).
- **Occupation** — Twenty-five percent of foreign-born workers had jobs in a managerial or professional specialty occupation compared with 31 percent of native workers. (See Figure 5.) The proportions of foreign-born workers in these “white-collar” occupations varied greatly by region of birth, from 39 percent of the workers from Asia and 38 percent of those from Europe (not statistically different) to 12 percent of those from Latin America.
- **Health insurance coverage** — In 1999, 45 percent of foreign-born workers and 55 percent of native workers had employment-based health insurance. Among the foreign-born workers, the proportions were 57 percent for those

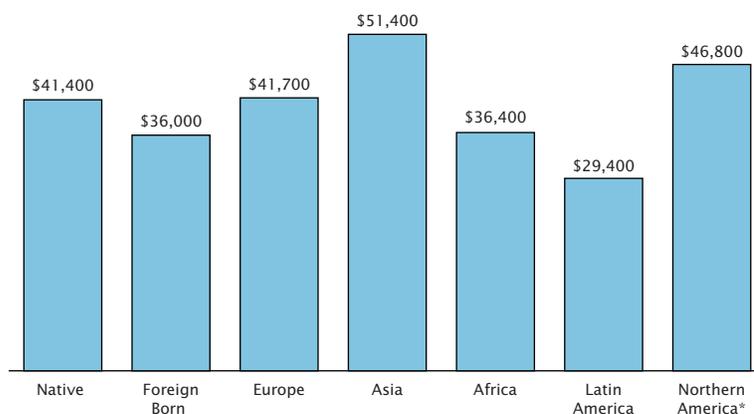
from Europe, 53 percent for those from Asia and 35 percent for those from Latin America.³

- Poverty** — The poverty rate was 17 percent for the foreign-born population in 1999, compared with 11 percent for the native population. Among the foreign-born population, poverty rates for those from Europe (9 percent) and Asia (13 percent) were similar to each other and to the native population. In contrast, the rate for those born in Latin America was 22 percent.
- Household size** — The average size of households with a foreign-born householder was 3.26 persons, larger than the average of 2.54 persons for households with a native householder. The average size of foreign-born households by region of birth of the householder was 2.38 persons for householders from Europe, 3.18 for those from Asia and 3.72 for those from Latin America.⁴
- Household income** — The median income in 1999 for households with a foreign-born householder was \$36,000, compared with \$41,400 for households with a native householder. (See Figure 6.) Median household income levels were \$51,400 if the householder was from Asia, \$41,700 when the householder was from Europe and \$29,400 when the householder was from Latin America.⁴
- Homeownership** — In 2000, the homeownership rate was higher for households with a native householder (70 percent) than for those with a foreign-born

³ The rates for Asia and Europe were not statistically different.

⁴ The figures for Europe and natives were not statistically different.

Figure 6.
Median Household Income by Nativity and Region of Birth of Foreign-Born Population: 1999
 (Households classified by nativity and region of birth of the householder)



*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-206, Figures 18-1 and 18-2.

householder (49 percent). Homeownership rates were 64 percent for those with householders from Europe, 52 percent for those whose householders were born in Asia and 41 percent for those from Latin America.

- Program participation** — In 1999, 15 percent of native householders and 21 percent of foreign-born householders participated in one or more means-tested, noncash program, such as Medicaid. Among foreign-born householders, the proportions of those participating in these programs were 10 percent for those from Europe, 17 percent for those from Asia and 30 percent for Latin America-born householders.

More Information:

The information in this Census Brief is based on findings from *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, Current Population Reports, Special Studies, P23-206. The report may be found on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/>

soccemo/foreign.html. Paper copies also may be ordered from the Census Bureau (tel. 301-457-2422; e-mail: pop@census.gov). Funding for the report was provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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The data in the report are from the March 2000 Current Population Survey. Data from 1990 and earlier censuses are included for comparison. Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. The Census Bureau's population estimates program uses different methods to estimate population by nativity and may show slightly different estimates of foreign-born and native populations from those presented here. Census 2000 data on nativity are scheduled to be released during 2002.