

Current Population Reports

Population Characteristics

The Foreign-Born Population: 1994

By Kristin A. Hansen and Amara Bachu

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Nearly 1 in 11 Americans are foreign-born

In 1994, 8.7 percent of the population of the United States was foreign-born — nearly double the percent foreign-born in 1970 (4.8 percent). While the percent foreign-born is at its highest level since before World War II, much greater proportions of the U.S. population were foreign-born during the early part of this century. From a high of 14.7 percent in 1910, the percent foreign-born declined to a low of 4.8 percent in 1970. Since that time, the percent has steadily increased.

One-third of the foreign-born live in California...

The foreign-born population is not distributed evenly throughout the country. California is home to 7.7 million foreign-born persons — more than one-third of all immigrants to the U.S. and nearly one-quarter of all California residents. New York ranks second with 2.9 million and Florida ranks third with 2.1 million foreign-born. Three other States have over 1 million foreign-born residents — Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey.

"Natives" are persons born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or an outlying area of the U.S., such as Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands, and persons who were born in a foreign country but who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. All other persons born outside the United States are "foreign-born."

Figure 1.
Percent Foreign-Born: 1900–1994

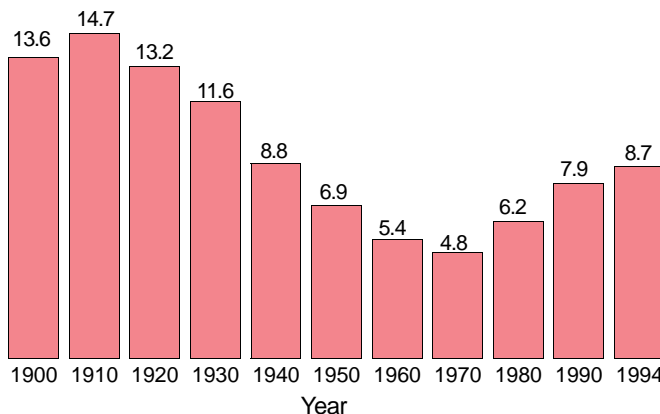
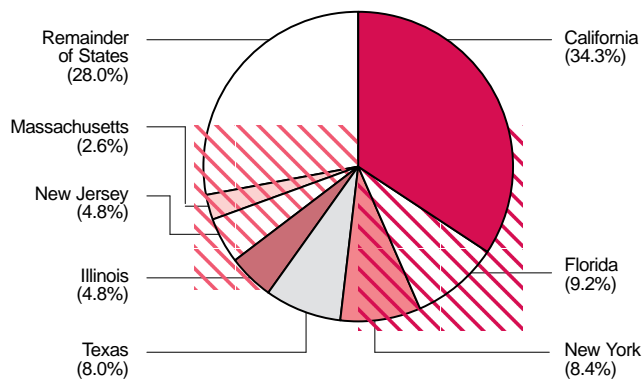


Figure 2.
Foreign-Born Population by State of Residence



Year of entry

Twenty percent of the foreign-born population came to the U.S. in the last 5 years. Twice as many came per year during the 1990's than during the 1970's—4.5 million persons arrived in the 5-year period between 1990 and 1994 while 4.8 million came during the decade of the 1970's. Nearly as many came per year during the

1980's (8.3 million total) as in the last 5 years. The remainder of the foreign-born came to the U.S. prior to 1970.

Country of birth...

Of the 22,568,000 foreign-born persons living in the United States in March 1994, 6.2 million came from Mexico. Mexico was by far the country of origin with the

largest number of immigrants. The next largest group was from the Philippines—1,033,000.

... by year of entry

Of the 4.5 million most recent immigrants, over a quarter (1.3 million) came from Mexico and an additional 243,000 came from Russia. Other countries with large numbers of recent immigrants include Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, India, and El Salvador.

During the 1980's, the largest numbers of immigrants came from Mexico (2,671,000) and the Philippines (424,000). China, Korea, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba also contributed large numbers. Prior to 1970, Mexico was still the most frequent country of origin (768,000), but the other top countries of origin were very different from today. They included Germany, Cuba, Italy, Canada, and England.

Citizenship

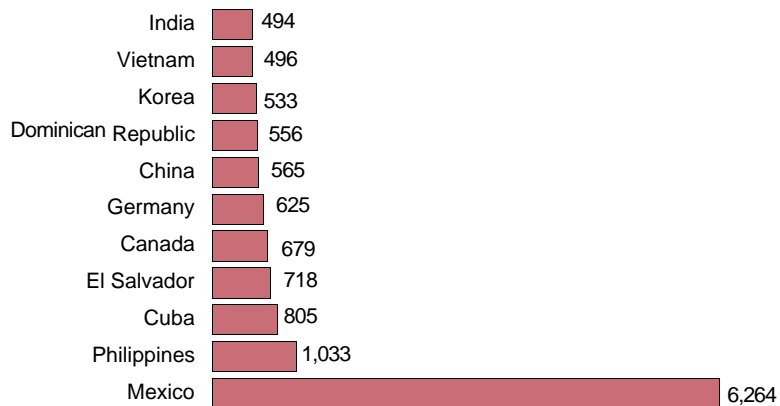
Foreign-born persons over the age of 18 can become "naturalized citizens" of the United States after they have lived here for a minimum of 5 years and have passed a citizenship exam. Spouses of U.S. citizens (and certain others) can become naturalized after 3 years and children who immigrate generally become citizens when their parents are naturalized. About 31 percent of the foreign-born population in the United States are naturalized citizens.

Foreign-born persons are older than natives....

The median age of all foreign-born persons in the United States (37 years) is higher than the median age for natives (33 years). But when the foreign-born population is divided into those who are naturalized citizens and those who are not citizens, a very different picture is formed. Only naturalized citizens are older on average (48 years) than natives.

Figure 3.

Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Population (Number in thousands)



... and younger than natives

Age and year of entry have obvious connections. The most recent immigrants are younger on average than natives. Those who came to the United States between 1990 and 1994 have a median age of only 26 years.

Race and Hispanic origin

More than two-thirds of the foreign-born population are White, about 1 in 5 are Asian or Pacific Islander, and only 7.1 percent are Black. The remainder reported their race as either "American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut" or "other race." Nearly half (45.5 percent) of all foreign-born persons are of Hispanic origin.

Nearly two-thirds of the Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States are foreign-born and most of the immigrants (91.7 percent) entered this country since 1970. Although 38.5 percent of the persons of Hispanic origin in this country are foreign-born and most have lived in the U.S. long enough to qualify for naturalization, only 18.3 percent are naturalized citizens.

Fertility

In June 1994, there were 6.2 million foreign-born women 15 to 44 years old, representing 10.4 percent of all women in the United States in the childbearing

ages. These women had borne 1.5 children each compared with 1.2 children borne to native-born women. About 68 percent of these women in childbearing ages immigrated to the United States after 1980. Women who became naturalized citizens had borne an average of 1.5 children each, not significantly different from the average reported by non-citizens.

Educational attainment

While it seems a paradox, the foreign-born are both more educated and less educated than natives. Recent immigrants 25 years and over are more likely to have a college degree than either natives or earlier immigrants. While 11.5 percent of recent immigrants have a graduate or professional degree, only about 7.5 percent of natives and immigrants in earlier years have such degrees. Recent immigrants are also more likely to have bachelor's degrees (20.9 percent) than either natives (14.7 percent) or earlier immigrants (13.9 percent).¹

On the other hand, immigrants are also less likely to have graduated from high school than natives. Only 17.1 percent

¹The percentages for natives and earlier immigrants are not significantly different from each other. Educational attainment by race and Hispanic origin and by country of origin are available in the detailed tabulation package.

of natives over the age of 25 are not high school graduates while 36.0 percent of immigrants do not have high school degrees.

Labor force status

The foreign-born population has a higher unemployment rate than do natives (9.1 percent versus 6.8 percent, respectively). However, the unemployment rate of naturalized citizens is no different statistically from that of natives. Foreign-born persons who are not citizens have the highest unemployment rate (10.7 percent).

Income in 1993

Foreign-born persons as a group had a lower median income in 1993 than natives (\$12,179 versus \$15,876) but this difference seems to be related to length of residence. Foreign-born persons who immigrated during the 1970's have median incomes no different than that of natives. Recent immigrants have the lowest median income (\$8,393) of all immigrants by period of entry into the United States.

Receipt of public assistance

Recent immigrants are more likely to receive public assistance income than natives (5.7 percent versus 2.9 percent). The rates drop significantly for immigrants who have been here for 5 or more years. The rates for foreign-born persons who entered during the 1970's and 1980's are not significantly different from those of natives or recent immigrants. And immigrants who arrived before 1970 are less likely to be receiving public assistance (1.4 percent) than natives.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is the primary source of public assistance income in the CPS data²; most natives and immigrants who are receiving some kind of public assistance are receiving AFDC.

²The CPS does not include the value of non-cash benefits, such as food stamps, as public assistance income.

Poverty status

While the data on income and receipt of public assistance are limited to persons ages 16 and over, poverty status is based upon family income and persons of all ages are tallied as to whether or not they are in a family above or below the poverty line. The foreign-born are 1.6 times more likely to be in poverty than natives (22.9 versus 14.4 percent). And recent immigrants are over twice as likely to be in poverty (37.1 percent). Only persons who immigrated prior to 1970 are less likely than natives to be in poverty (10.8 percent).

Tenure

Homeownership is one indicator of economic well being. While over two-thirds of natives live in owner-occupied housing units, less than half of the foreign-born live in owner-occupied housing. Homeownership among immigrants increases with length of residence; while persons who immigrated before 1970 have homeownership rates higher than natives, only 17.5 percent of recent immigrants are living in their own homes.

Source of the data

The Current Population Survey began collecting monthly data on nativity in January of 1994. Each respondent was asked where they were born and the country of birth of each of their parents. Persons born outside of the United States were also asked their citizenship status and the year they came to the United States to live. Most of the characteristics of the foreign-born population shown in this brief report are from the March 1994 supplement to the Current Population Survey; the data on fertility are from June 1994.

The foreign-born population in this report include some undocumented immigrants, refugees, and temporary residents such as students and temporary workers as well as the legally admitted

immigrants included in data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

More information

A package of tables showing detailed characteristics of the foreign-born by country of birth and selected states is available on floppy disk for \$40 or on paper for \$63 from Population Division's Statistical Information Office at 301-457-2422. The table package is also available on the Internet (www.census.gov); look for Migration Data from the Population Division. Technical information about the collection, processing, and quality of the nativity data from the CPS is available in "Evaluation of Nativity Data from the Current Population Survey" by Gregg Robinson (forthcoming). Public Use Tapes of the Current Population Survey can be purchased from Customer Services at 301-457-4100.

Contacts

Nativity statistics —
Kristin A. Hansen
301-457-2454
KAHANSEN@CENSUS.GOV

Fertility statistics—
Amara Bachu
301-457-2449
ABACHU@CENSUS.GOV

The statistics in this report are subject to sampling variability, as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources. For information on the source of data and the accuracy of estimates, including the use and computation of standard errors, see the "Source and Accuracy Statement" that accompanies the tabulation package.

Table 1.
**Selected Characteristics of Natives and the Foreign-Born Population by
 Citizenship and Year of Entry: 1994**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Foreign born							
	Native	Total	Natural- ized citizen	Not a citizen	Year of entry			
					Before 1970	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1994
Age								
Total	237,184	22,568	6,975	15,593	4,974	4,781	8,311	4,502
Under 5 years	20,160	298	28	270	0	0	24	274
5 to 17 years	47,118	2,190	245	1,945	0	88	1,203	899
18 to 24 years	22,839	2,636	383	2,253	1	533	1,196	904
25 to 29 years	17,034	2,592	412	2,180	106	402	1,410	673
30 to 34 years	19,643	2,677	599	2,078	251	578	1,324	524
35 to 44 years	37,006	4,522	1,489	3,033	662	1,528	1,757	575
45 to 64 years	45,245	5,014	2,193	2,821	2,088	1,359	1,069	498
65 years and over	28,139	2,640	1,626	1,014	1,864	293	328	154
Median age (years)	32.9	37.0	48.0	32.8	59.1	40.2	31.2	26.3
Sex								
Male	115,782	11,132	3,203	7,929	2,165	2,318	4,381	2,269
Female	121,402	11,436	3,772	7,664	2,810	2,463	3,930	2,233
Race and Hispanic origin								
White	199,793	15,428	4,749	10,680	4,313	3,058	5,190	2,867
Black	31,443	1,596	343	1,253	200	342	738	317
Asian or Pacific Islander	2,813	4,630	1,701	2,929	386	1,176	1,992	1,076
Hispanic origin ¹	16,376	10,270	1,879	8,391	1,560	2,334	4,404	1,971
Fertility ²								
Women 15 to 44 years	53,849	6,239	1,439	4,801	620	1,366	2,752	1,501
Children ever born per 1,000	1,208	1,539	1,486	1,554	1,880	1,787	1,561	1,129
Educational Attainment								
Total 25 years and over	147,067	17,445	6,319	11,126	4,972	4,161	5,887	2,423
Not high school graduate	25,166	6,274	1,538	4,736	1,590	1,574	2,302	807
High school grad/some college	89,382	7,147	3,085	4,062	2,402	1,667	2,245	831
Bachelor's degree	21,660	2,596	1,097	1,499	588	620	882	506
Graduate or professional degree	10,859	1,428	599	830	392	300	458	279
Labor Force Status								
Total 16 years and over ³	176,607	20,559	6,764	13,795	4,974	4,748	7,334	3,504
In the civilian labor force	116,281	12,883	4,151	8,732	2,482	3,360	5,100	1,939
Employed	108,402	11,706	3,905	7,801	2,342	3,077	4,583	1,703
Unemployed	7,880	1,176	245	931	140	283	517	236
Not in the labor force	59,411	7,635	2,580	5,056	2,485	1,363	2,223	1,565
Income in 1993								
Total 16 years and over	176,607	20,559	6,764	13,795	4,974	4,748	7,334	3,504
Without income	10,540	2,802	380	2,421	210	504	1,144	943
With income	166,067	17,757	6,384	11,374	4,764	4,244	6,190	2,561
\$1 to \$9,999 or less	57,416	7,283	2,064	5,217	1,759	1,478	2,614	1,429
\$10,000 to \$19,999	39,905	4,909	1,664	3,244	1,197	1,208	1,887	615
\$20,000 to \$34,999	36,994	3,067	1,361	1,707	938	825	1,001	303
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17,122	1,252	618	633	400	376	392	83
\$50,000 or more	14,629	1,248	676	571	471	356	293	129
Median income (dollars)	\$15,876	\$12,179	\$16,103	\$10,930	\$14,473	\$15,121	\$11,580	\$8,393
Received Public Assistance ⁴	5,076	758	82	676	72	162	323	201
Received AFDC	4,082	550	63	487	57	121	257	116
Poverty Status ⁵								
In poverty	34,086	5,179	707	4,472	535	778	2,195	1,672
Not in poverty	202,659	17,355	6,266	11,088	4,440	4,004	6,106	2,805
Tenure								
In owner-occupied unit	162,805	10,416	4,925	5,492	3,820	2,818	2,989	790
In renter-occupied unit	74,379	12,152	2,050	10,102	1,154	1,964	5,323	3,712

¹Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. ²Data from the June 1994 CPS. ³Includes persons in Armed Forces, not shown separately. ⁴Does not include non-cash benefits such as food stamps. ⁵Persons for whom poverty status is determined.