

The Foreign-Born Labor Force in the United States, 2016

Thomas Gryn and Laquitta Walker, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America
Denver CO April 25-28, 2018

Introduction

This poster presents general trends and characteristics of the foreign-born labor force in the United States using data from the 2016 American Community Survey. Data are based on an annual sample of the U.S. population. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions see www.census.gov/acs/.

American Community Survey Quick Facts

- Purpose:** Provide timely data at national and extensive sub-national geography levels.
- Universe:** U.S. resident population (sample size was 3.5 million addresses for 2016).
- Frequency:** Yearly estimates; ACS data are collected continuously throughout the year; monthly samples are aggregated into period data.
- Geography:** Nation, state, county, and place.

American Community Survey Key Migration-Related Items

- Place of birth/nativity
- U.S. citizenship status
- Year of naturalization
- Race, Hispanic origin, ancestry
- Residence 1 year ago
- Year of entry
- Language spoken at home

How the Census Bureau Defines Native and Foreign Born

Native – Includes anyone who is a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes respondents who indicated they were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (such as Guam), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents.

Foreign born – Includes anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes respondents who indicated they were a U.S. citizen by naturalization or not a U.S. citizen.

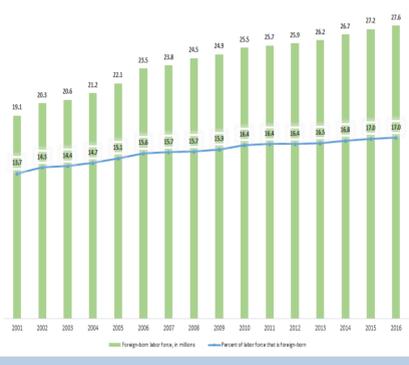
What is meant by the term “civilian labor force”?

Civilian Labor Force – People classified as employed or unemployed according to the below criteria.

Civilian Employed - Civilians 16 years old and over who either (1) were “at work” - those who did any work at all during the previous week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business or (2) were “with a job but not at work”— those who did not work during the previous week but had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent due to illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons. Excluded from the employed are people whose only activity consisted of work around the house or unpaid volunteer work for religious, charitable, and similar organizations; also excluded are all institutionalized people and people on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

Civilian Unemployed - Civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they (1) were neither “at work” nor “with a job but not at work” during the reference week, and (2) were looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and (3) were available to start a job.

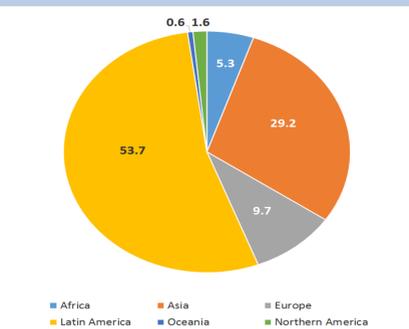
Figure 1. Number and Percent Foreign Born in the Civilian Labor Force, 2001-2016



There were approximately 27.6 million foreign-born members of the labor force in the U.S. in 2016.

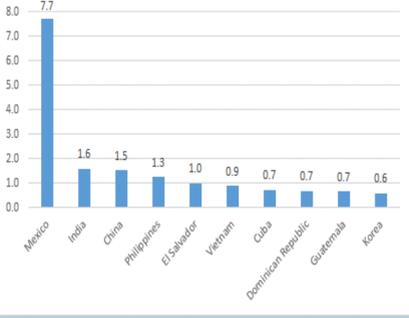
The total number of foreign-born members of the labor force in the U.S. has increased considerably since 2001, as has the percent of the civilian labor force that is foreign born.

Figure 2. Region of Birth of the Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, 2016



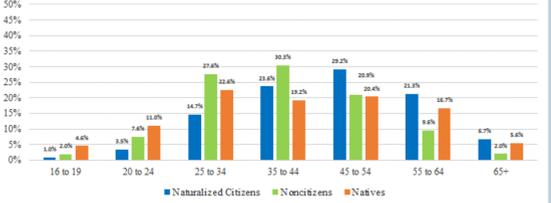
Foreign-born members of the labor force were most likely to report having been born in Latin America (53.7%), followed by Asia (29.2%) and Europe (9.7%).

Figure 3. Top Ten Countries of Birth of the Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, 2016 (in millions)



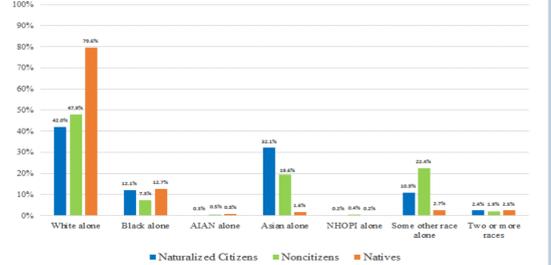
Foreign-born members of the labor force are from a wide number of countries of birth. The most commonly reported countries of birth were Mexico (7.7 million), India (1.6 million), and China (1.5 million).

Figure 4. Age by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



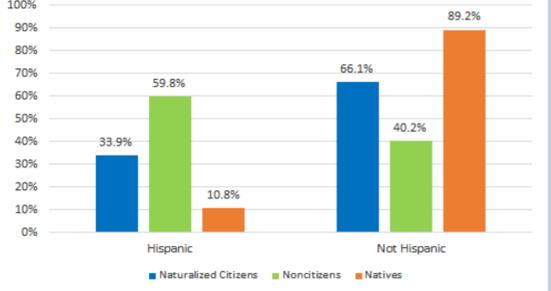
Foreign born, noncitizen members of the labor force were more likely to be ages 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 than either foreign-born naturalized citizens or natives.

Figure 5. Race by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



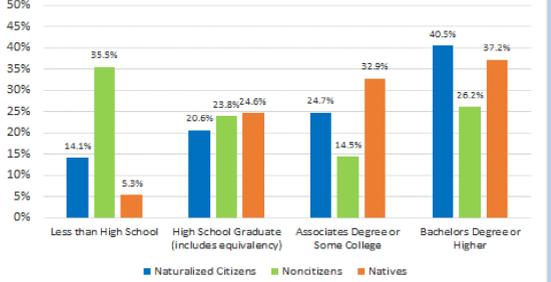
Native members of the labor force were more likely to report their race as white than either naturalized citizens or noncitizens, while noncitizens and naturalized foreign-born respondents were more likely to report as “Asian” compared to natives.

Figure 6. Hispanic Origin by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



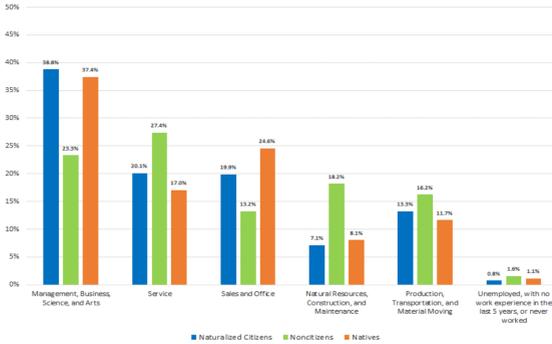
Foreign born, noncitizen members of the labor force were more likely to report their ethnicity as Hispanic compared to natives or naturalized citizens.

Figure 7. Educational Attainment by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



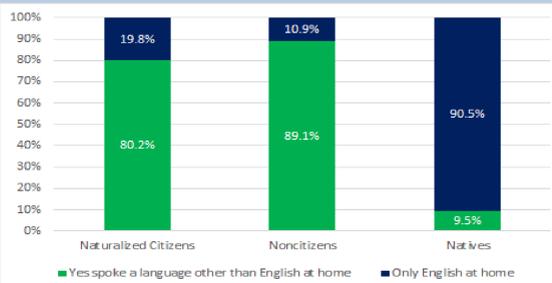
Foreign-born, naturalized citizen members of the labor force were more likely to report having a bachelors’ degree or higher than natives or noncitizens. Noncitizens were more likely to report having less than a high school diploma than natives and naturalized citizens.

Figure 8. Occupation by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



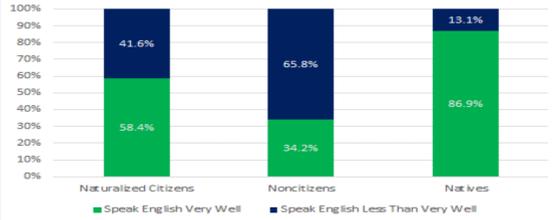
Foreign-born noncitizens were more likely to report working in service, natural resources, or production occupations. Foreign-born naturalized and native-born members of the labor force were more likely to report working in management/business/science/art or sales and office occupations.

Figure 9. Speak Other Language at Home by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



Both naturalized and noncitizen members of the labor force were more likely to speak a language other than English at home compared to natives.

Figure 10. English Proficiency by Nativity and Citizenship for the Civilian Labor Force: 2016



Both naturalized citizens and native members of the labor force were more likely to speak English “very well” than noncitizens.

Conclusion

There were approximately 27.6 million foreign-born members of the labor force in the U.S. in 2016, and the total number of foreign-born members of the labor force in the U.S. has increased considerably since 2001. Foreign-born members of the labor force are from a wide number of countries of birth, and were most likely to report having been born in Mexico, followed by India and China. Foreign-born noncitizen members of the labor force were different from native-born and naturalized labor force members in age, race and Hispanic origin, educational attainment, occupation, speaking another language at home, and English proficiency.

This poster is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.