The U.S. Foreign-Born Population: Trends and Selected Characteristics

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Summary

This report offers context for consideration of immigration policy options by presenting data on key geographic, demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the foreign-born population residing in the United States. Interest in the U.S. foreign-born population stems in part from the changing demographic profile of the United States as well as the rapidity of such change, and how both of these trends correspond to U.S. immigration policy. Although the foreign born are relatively small in absolute terms—39.9 million people representing 12.9% of the total U.S. population of 309.3 million in 2010—they are growing far more rapidly than the native-born population. Between 2000 and 2010, the foreign born contributed 32% of the total U.S. population increase and almost all of the prime 25-54 working age group increase. Almost one-third of the foreign born arrived in the United States since 2000, and an estimated 28% were residing illegally in the United States in 2010.

Geographic origins of the foreign born have shifted from Europe (74% in 1960) to Latin America and Asia (81% in 2010). In recent years, many foreign born have settled in new urban and rural destinations, often in response to employment opportunities in construction, manufacturing, and low-skilled services. Yet, as in previous decades, at least two-thirds of the foreign born remain concentrated in just six states: California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey.

Several measures of marital status and household structure show little difference between the native born and foreign born. The foreign born have lower average educational attainment, but the proportion with at least a bachelor's degree matches that of the native born.

In 2010, the foreign born accounted for 16.3% of all workers, with higher labor force participation rates among men and lower rates among women compared to native-born workers. With exceptions, native and foreign-born workers generally resemble each other in their distribution across broad industrial and occupational sectors. Among specific occupations, however, glaring differences occur, with native-born workers dominating occupations such as construction inspectors and librarians, and foreign-born workers dominating occupations such as agricultural laborers and tailors.

Lower education levels and differences in industrial sector and occupational distributions explain in part why foreign-born workers have lower median incomes and higher poverty rates than native-born workers. Earnings differences are minimal for those with a four-year college degree. Among the foreign born, median incomes of naturalized citizens are 62% higher than those of noncitizens, reflecting higher education levels, older ages, and greater U.S. labor market experience. Poverty status is linked to the lack of citizenship, a difference that is magnified after including the "near-poor," who earn between 100% and 200% of the poverty threshold.

Although foreign-born population growth and transformation often occur because of factors beyond the control of Congress—including political turmoil and natural disasters in neighboring countries and social and economic processes of globalization—how Congress crafts immigration law does influence the size and character of resulting immigration flows to the United States.

Contents

Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Contacts

Examine the Foreign Born?

This report offers context for consideration of immigration policy options by presenting data on key geographic, demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the foreign-born population residing in the United States. Data on the native-born population are often shown for comparison. The report relies heavily on the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS), the largest most representative and recent dataset available on the U.S. population.[1] In some instances, other data sources, such as Decennial Census and Current Population Survey data are introduced. At times, the report discusses possible reasons for patterns observed in the data.

The term "foreign-born" used in this report refers to people born outside the United States who do not automatically acquire citizenship at birth. The foreign born have a variety of immigration statuses and include immigrants,[2] refugees, nonimmigrants,[3] and persons illegally residing in the United States.[4] This report often distinguishes between two groups of foreign-born individuals: noncitizens (a broad category that includes unauthorized aliens as well as legal permanent residents) and naturalized U.S. citizens.

Interest in the U.S. foreign born stems, in part, from the changing demographic profile of the U.S. population, the rapidity of such change, and how both trends correspond to the objectives of U.S. immigration policy.[5] Although relatively small in absolute terms, the foreign born are growing faster than the native-born population generally and specifically among young people and the civilian labor force.[6] Moreover, much policy attention is devoted to dealing with the estimated 11.2 million foreign born (as of 2010) residing illegally in the United States.[7]

In 1970, the foreign born numbered 9.7 million people, or 4.8% of the total U.S. population, their lowest proportion since 1850.[8] By 2010, the foreign-born population had increased to 39.9 million people representing 12.9% of the total U.S. population (see **Figure 1**). Although the absolute number of foreign born is higher than at any point in the nation's history, the foreign-born proportion of the total U.S. population was still lower in 2010 than peaks reached at the beginning of the 20th Century.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Technical Documentation*, 2010, http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_documentation/.

[2] The term immigrant refers to any foreign national admitted to the United States for lawful permanent residence. Those who obtain citizenship through naturalization are classified as naturalized citizens, and all others as noncitizens.

[3] Nonimmigrants refers to foreign nationals admitted on a temporary basis and include tourists, diplomats, foreign students, persons on work visas, temporary agricultural workers, and exchange visitors.

[4] The foreign-born population is not the same as the "foreign stock" which includes both the foreign born as well as native-born children of foreign-born parents.

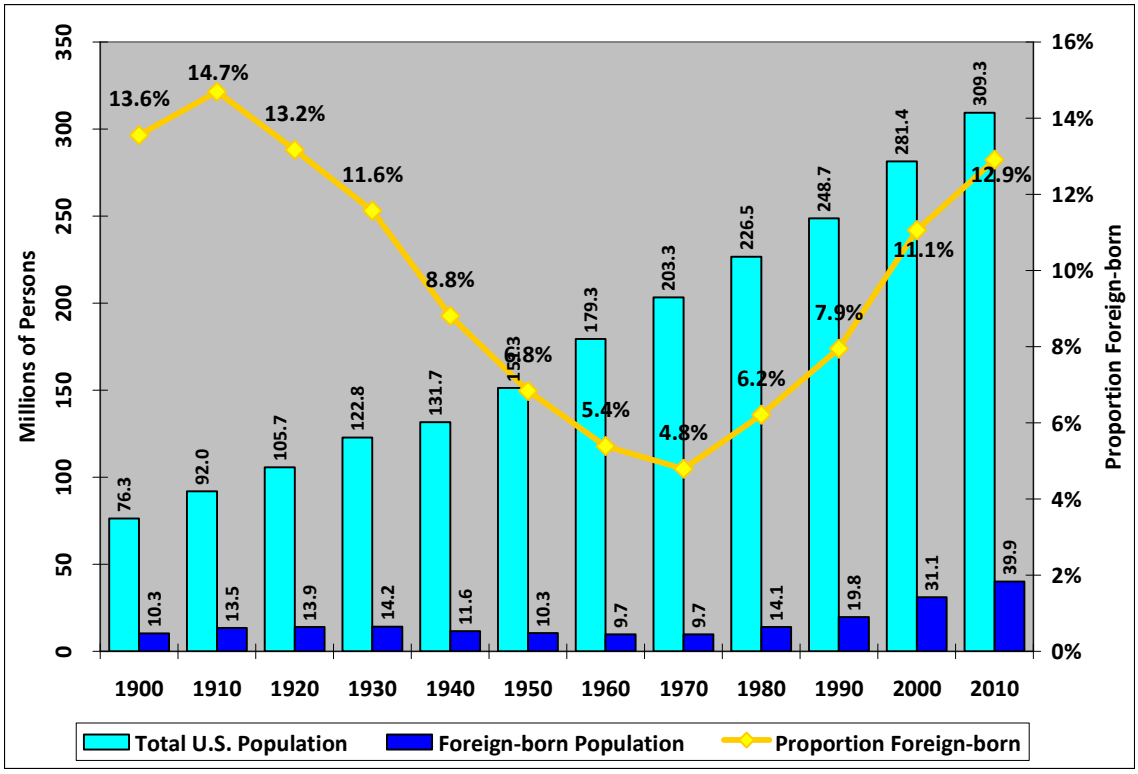
[5] For more extensive discussion on U.S. demographic composition, see CRS Report RL32701, *The Changing Demographic Profile of the United States*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

[6] For more information, see CRS Report 95-408, *Immigration: The Effects on Low-Skilled and High-Skilled Native-Born Workers*, by (name redacted).

[7] For more information, see Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Jeffrey S. Passelet al., *Unauthorized Immigrants: Length of Residency, Patterns of Parenthood*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, DC, December 1, 2011; and CRS Report R41207, *Unauthorized Aliens in the United States*, by (name redacted).

[8] U.S. census data on the foreign born prior to 1850 are not available.

Figure 1. Total U.S. and Total Foreign-Born Population Sizes, 1900-2010



Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1960 Statistical Abstract, Population Section, Table 29 (1900-1950); 2000 Statistical Abstract, Population Section, Table 46 (1960-1990); 2003 Statistical Abstract, Population Section, Table 48 (2000); 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) data (2010).

This report presents information on the foreign-born population that is relevant to several prominent immigration policy issues, including the unauthorized alien population; proposed revisions to current immigration policies; the skill and educational composition of new immigrants; and the impact of foreign-born workers on the U.S. economy.[9] Using the 2010 ACS PUMS, the report describe characteristics of the foreign-born that relate directly to these immigration policy issues.

The report begins by placing the current foreign-born population in historical context. It then describes from what regions of the world the foreign born originate, where they settle in the United States, and how these foreign origins and U.S. destinations have changed over the past five decades. Because legal status is central to immigration policy, the report discusses the unauthorized population and naturalization trends and often breaks out descriptive statistics by citizenship status throughout the text. The report describes several critical determinants of labor market outcomes, including age, educational attainment, and English language ability, and then compares the industrial sector and occupational distribution of the foreign born with the native

[9] For information on several of these topics, see CRS Report R41207, *Unauthorized Aliens in the United States*, by (name redacted); CRS Report R40848 *Immigration Legislation and Issues in the 111th Congress*, coordinated by (name redacted); and CRS Report RL33977 *Immigration of Foreign Workers: Labor Market Tests and Protections*, by (name redacted).

born. Finally, the report presents several measures of economic well-being, including median income and poverty.

Foreign-Born Population Growth in Historical Context

In 2010, the nation's 39.9 million foreign-born persons represented 12.9% of the total U.S. population (**Figure 1**). While this proportion remains lower than those reached during the turn of the last century, **Figure 1** illustrates that the proportion of the foreign-born population has increased steadily since 1970. Moreover, the foreign-born population's contribution to total population growth in recent years—31.6% between 2000 and 2010—has been disproportionate for its size.

The relatively high foreign-born proportion between the late 19th century and 1920 resulted from several factors, including the U.S. industrial revolution, which generated substantial labor demand; political and economic turmoil throughout Europe during the latter 19th Century; and the expansion of affordable transatlantic travel.[10] In response to these historically high immigration flows, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited, by country, the number of new immigrants to a proportion of those already living in the United States and reduced immigration levels overall.[11] The Great Depression reduced the foreign-born population by curtailing U.S. labor demand and worldwide migration flows.[12]

Foreign Origins and U.S. Destinations

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 collected and codified existing immigration law provisions into one organized structure.[13] Amended many times, it remains the foundation of U.S. immigration law. The 1952 Act introduced a system of preferences based on family reunification and skills that upheld and reinforced the national origins quota system established in 1924.[14] In 1965, Congress amended the INA, removing widely perceived discriminatory provisions of previous immigration laws and loosening numerical restrictions on immigration. The 1965 revisions to the INA also had the effect of gradually shifting the ethnic composition of the immigrant flow away from Europe and toward Latin America and Asia.[15] Subsequent legislation—such as the Refugee Act of 1980[16]; the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986[17], which legalized the status of 2.7 million previously unauthorized residents; and the

[10] Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 166-242.

[11] Ibid, pp. 243-292.

[12] Ibid.

[13] P.L. 82-414, 182 Stat. 66, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

[14] For more information, refer to the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Milestones: 1945-1952: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)*, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, http://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/ImmigrationAct.

[15] Ibid, p. 337.

[16] P.L. 96-212. For more information and an example, see CRS Report RS20154, *Kosovo: Refugee Assistance and Temporary Resettlement*, by (name redacted) and Joyce C. Vialet (out of print; available upon request).

[17] P.L. 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359 (November 6, 1986).

Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1990[18]—have all increased the number of the foreign born directly by expanding legal immigration to the United States. These laws have also increased the numbers of foreign born indirectly because naturalized immigrants and legal permanent residents can sponsor for citizenship their relatives living abroad.[19]

Legislation aside, the U.S. foreign born also expanded from the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Central American political turmoil, greater numbers of U.S.-based foreign-born students and business people, and greater U.S. citizen contact with foreign nationals from international travel, study, and work assignments.

Region of Birth

Origin countries of the foreign born have changed since 1960 in ways that have increased U.S. population diversity. The absolute number of foreign born by region of birth (**Table 1**) and the percent distribution of the total foreign-born population by region (**Figure 2**) illustrate these trends. The proportion of all foreign-born persons originating from Europe declined from 74% in 1960 to 12% by 2010. Over the same period, fivefold increases occurred in the proportion from Latin America (9% to 53%) and Asia (5% to 28%). Proportions from other areas, including Canada, increased and then dropped over this period, although absolute numbers from these areas have increased steadily.

Table 1. Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth, 1960 to 2010

(Millions of persons)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Other Areas	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.6
Europe	7.3	5.7	5.1	4.4	4.9	4.8
Asia	0.5	0.8	2.5	5.0	8.2	11.3
Latin America	0.9	1.8	4.4	8.4	16.1	21.2
Total	9.8	9.5	14.1	19.9	31.1	39.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, 2001, p.11; and CRS presentation of 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) data.

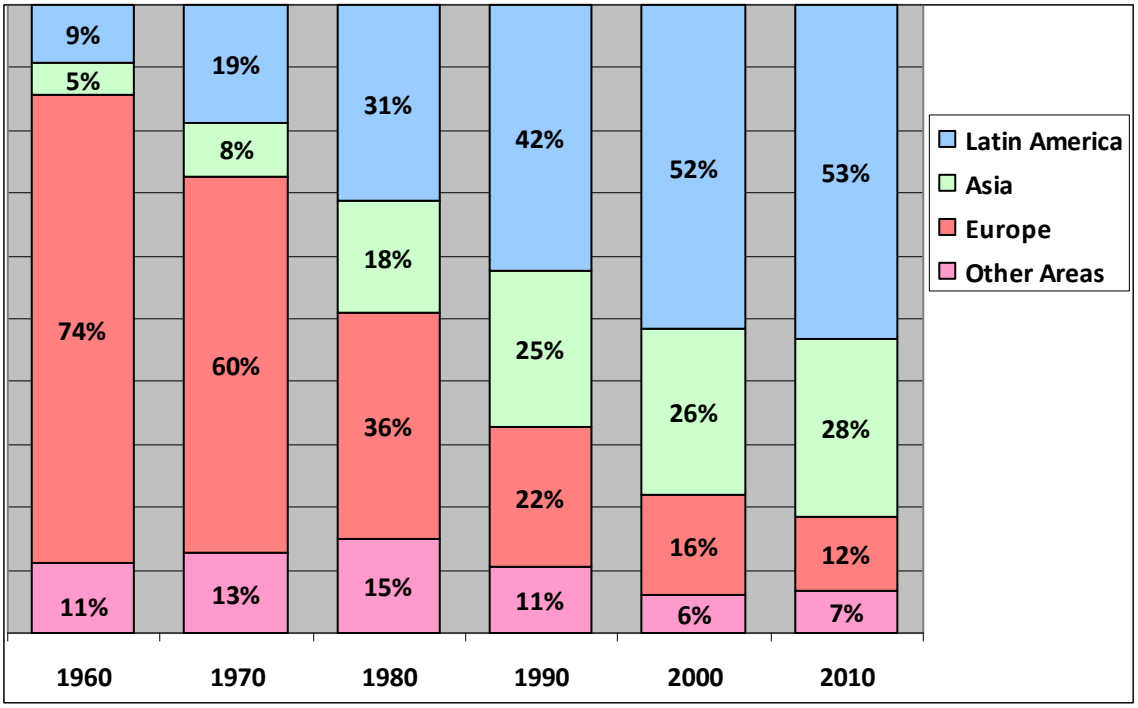
Notes: Differences between totals in Table 1 and Figure 1 are due to rounding.

[18] P.L. 101-649, 104 Stat. 4978 (November 29, 1990).

[19] Current U.S. immigration policy permits U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to petition on behalf of relatives living abroad according to a set of preferences. The largest number of beneficiaries consist of immediate family members of petitioners (spouses, minor children, and parents for petitioners ages 21 and older) who face no numerical restrictions. Relatives of petitioners who fall into other family-based preference categories face total annual numerical quotas. For instance, in 2010, of the 691,003 persons who obtained legal permanent residence within family-based provisions of U.S. immigration policy, 476,414 persons, or 69% did so as immediate family members of U.S. citizens and LPRs. For more information on family-based preference admissions, see CRS Report RL32235, *U.S. Immigration Policy on Permanent Admissions*, by (name redacted).

Figure 2. Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth, 1960 to 2010

(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, 2001, p.11, and CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Country of Birth

The shift in the origins of the foreign born becomes more vivid when examining specific countries. In 1960, European nations represented eight of the top 10 origin countries for the foreign born (**Table 2**). By 1990, that figure had dropped to three countries, and by 2010, no European country ranked among the top 10 origin countries. In contrast, in 1960 only one country from either Latin America or Asia ranked among the top 10 origin countries (Mexico), but by 2010 *all* of the top 10 origin countries were from these two regions.

Trends on the top 10 origin countries for the foreign-born population reflect not only foreign-born composition but also immigrant diversity, a central principle governing legal immigration policy and the rationale for the Diversity Visa Lottery, which admits 55,000 persons annually from countries sending relatively few immigrants.[20]

[20] CRS Report RS21342, *Immigration: Diversity Visa Lottery*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

Table 2. Ten Leading Countries of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population, 1960-2010

Rank	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
1	Italy	Italy	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
2	Germany	Germany	Germany	China	China	China
3	Canada	Canada	Canada	Philippines	Philippines	India
4	U.K.	Mexico	Italy	Canada	India	Philippines
5	Poland	U.K.	U.K.	Cuba	Cuba	Vietnam
6	Soviet Union	Poland	Cuba	Germany	Vietnam	El Salvador
7	Mexico	Soviet Union	Philippines	U.K.	El Salvador	Cuba
8	Ireland	Cuba	Poland	Italy	Korea	Korea
9	Austria	Ireland	Soviet Union	Korea	D.R.	D.R.
10	Hungary	Austria	Korea	Vietnam	Canada	Guatemala

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, 2001, p.13; and CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: For 1990, 2000, and 2010, China includes Taiwan and Hong Kong. U.K. and D.R. refer to the United Kingdom and the Dominican Republic, respectively.

Geographic Distribution in the United States

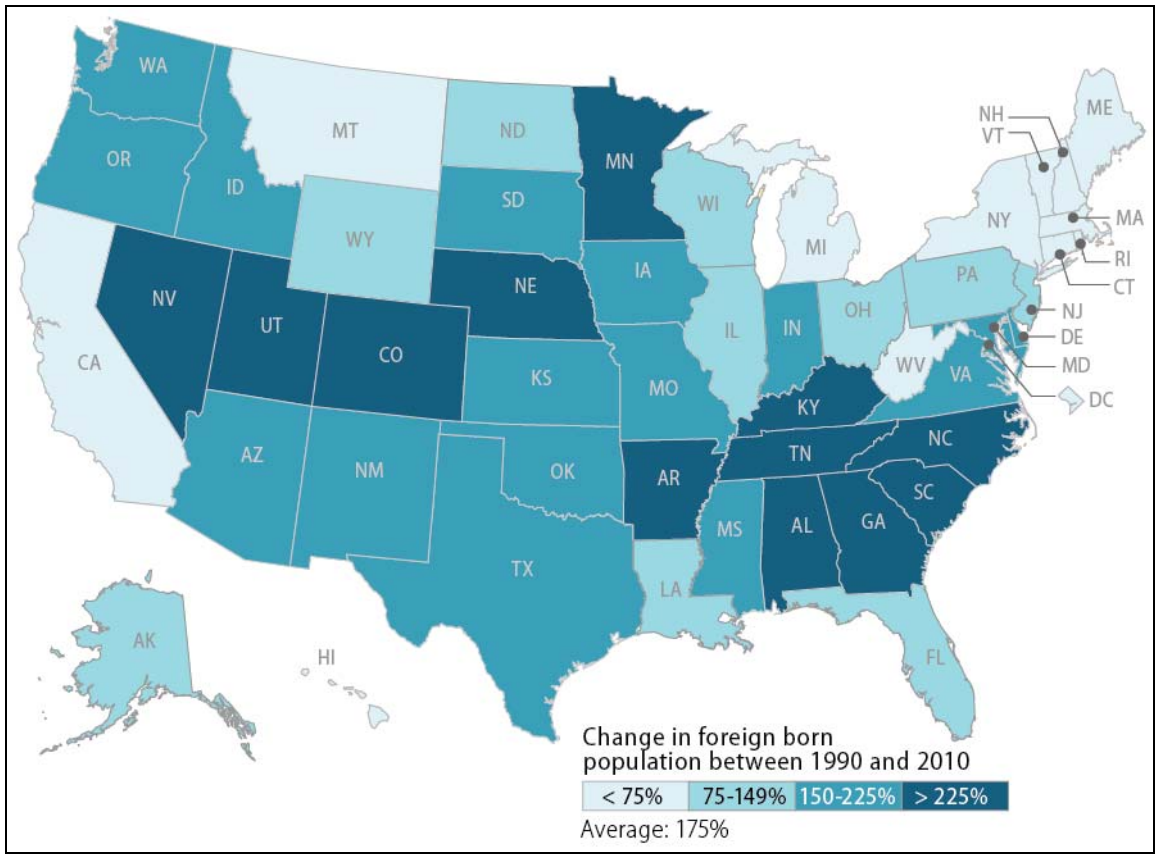
The geography of foreign-born population settlement in the United States can be divided between the "stock" of the existing population and the "flow" of the recently arrived foreign born. The latter become especially visible during the past two decades in U.S. regions, cities, and rural areas that had not experienced recent foreign-born population growth, prompting some states and localities to pass or consider ordinances addressing immigration-related policy issues.[21]

As in previous decades, the foreign born continue to be concentrated in the nation's most populous states (**Table A-3**). Six states—California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois—accounted for 73%, 68%, and 65% of the entire foreign-born population in 1990, 2000, and 2010, respectively. Nationally, a much smaller proportion of the foreign born (8.5%) are concentrated in rural areas compared to the native born (23.5%).[22]

[21] For more information, see CRS Report RL32270, *Enforcing Immigration Law: The Role of State and Local Law Enforcement*, by Lisa M. Seghetti, (name redacted), and (name redacted).

[22] U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey. This categorization is based on Census Bureau definitions of urban (places with populations exceeding 2,500) versus rural rather than the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) county-level definition of metropolitan versus nonmetropolitan. Numbers are based on 2009 ACS one-year estimates because 2010 ACS one-year estimates by rural/urban geography were unavailable as of this writing.

Figure 3. Foreign-Born Population Growth Between 1990-2010



Source: CRS presentation of 1990 Decennial Census and 2010 ACS PUMS data.

The declining proportion of foreign born living in the most populous six states reflects greater population dispersion to what are referred to as "new immigrant destinations" in both urban and rural areas.[23] The extent of this geographic shift can be seen in **Figure 3**, which displays foreign-born population growth for all states between 1990 and 2010. Notably, 10 of the 12 states with the highest foreign-born population growth rates are located in the South and Mountain West,[24] two areas that as recently as 1960 contained 12.5% of the total foreign-born population, a figure that had increased to 38.0% by 2010. States with the lowest foreign-born population growth during this period were concentrated in the Northeast, the northern Midwest, and California.

[23] See Roberto Suro and Audrey Singer, "Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations," Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution and The Pew Hispanic Center, Washington DC, 2004; William Kandel and John Cromartie, "New Patterns of Hispanic Settlement in Rural America," Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, RDRR 99, Washington, DC, 2004; Victor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León (editors), *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2005; and Douglas S. Massey (editor), *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2008.

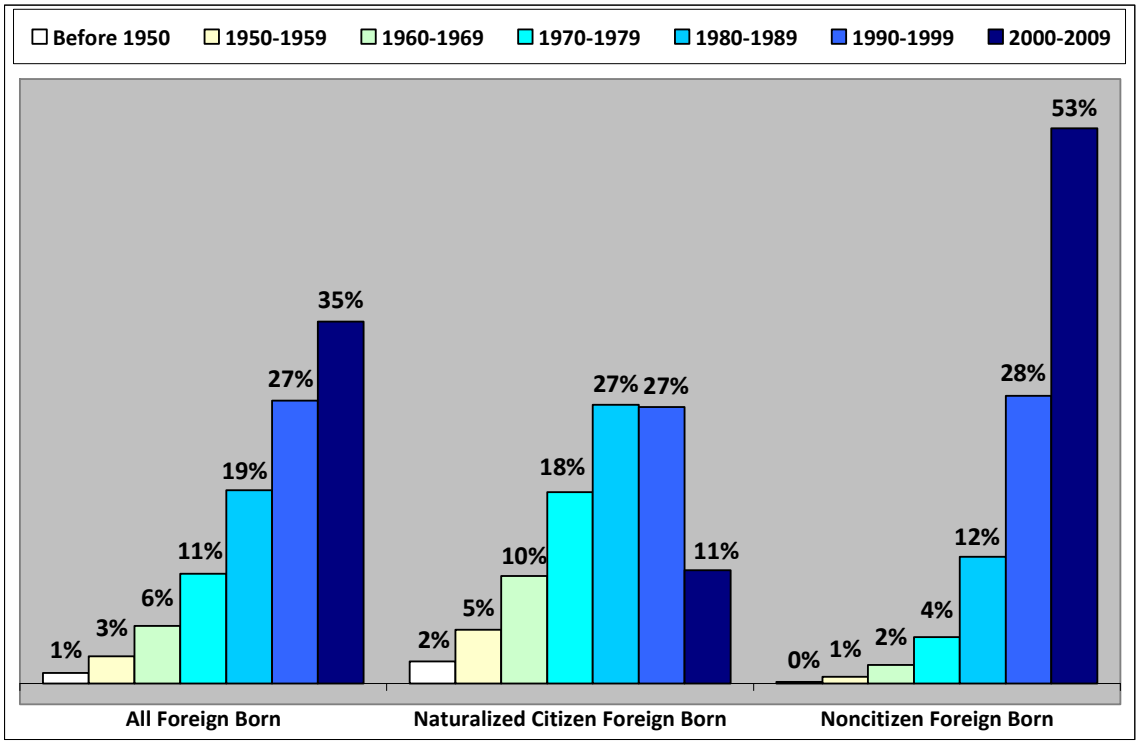
[24] The South Region includes the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central Divisions and is comprised of Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. The Mountain West Division includes Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

Moreover, many of these same states experienced total population growth that exceeded the national average of 7.0% (**Table A-3**). The correspondence between foreign-born and total population growth during this period often resulted from, among other factors, growing labor demand in the construction and low-skilled service sectors.[25] Outside of the more established destination states of Texas and Florida, foreign-born population growth in the South and Mountain West represents a considerable demographic shift.

Period of Arrival

Period of arrival data (**Figure 4**) reflect the large and recent increase in the foreign-born population. In 2010, almost 35% of all foreign-born persons in the United States had arrived since 2000, and almost 62% since 1990. Greater proportions of noncitizens than naturalized citizens arrived this past decade, mirroring to some extent the time required to attain citizenship.[26]

Figure 4. Foreign-Born Period of Arrival by Citizenship, 2010



Source: CRS Presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

[25] For discussion of causes and consequences of recent foreign-born population growth, see *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, ed. Douglas S. Massey (Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

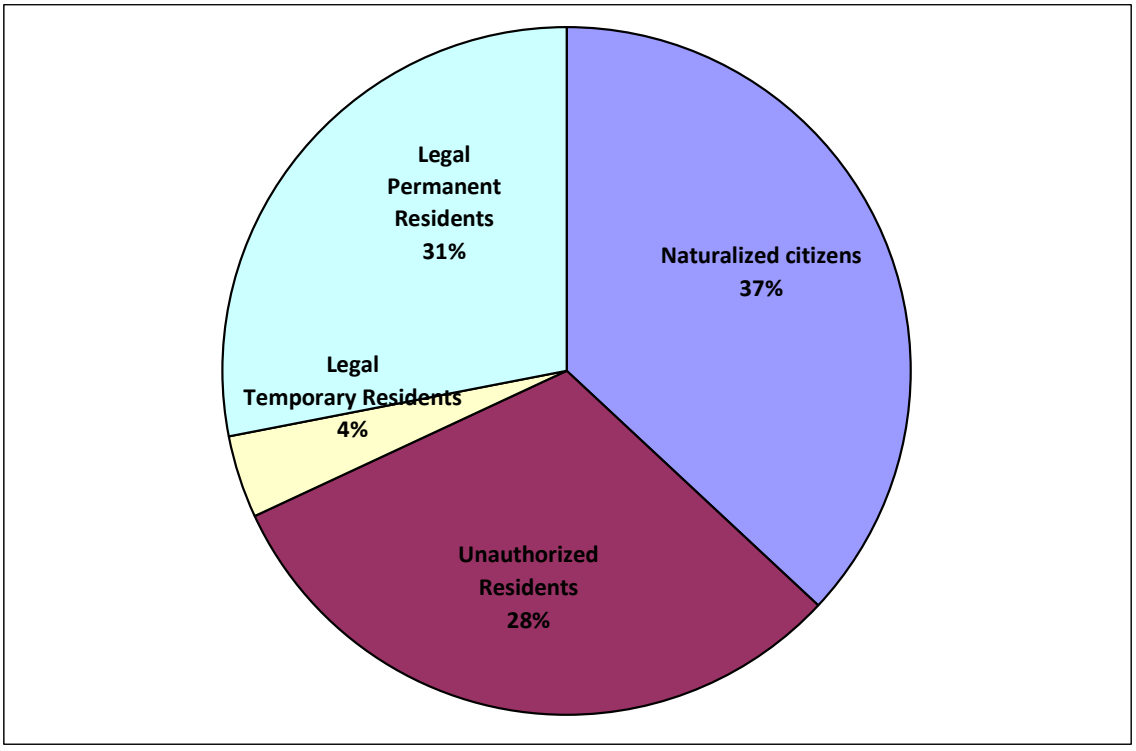
[26] Typically, five years of U.S. residence is required after receiving legal permanent residence. For more information, see CRS Report RS20916, *Immigration and Naturalization Fundamentals*, by (name redacted).

Legal Status of the Foreign Born

Legal status of the foreign born has received increased attention with the growing estimated size of the unauthorized population, the geographic dispersion of the foreign born to new U.S. destinations, and increased border security concerns. Legal status of the foreign born encompasses three broad groups: unauthorized aliens, legal noncitizens (which includes legal permanent and legal temporary residents), and naturalized citizens that are described below.[27]

According to the most recent estimates of foreign-born legal status (**Figure 5**), unauthorized aliens, legal residents (permanent and temporary) and naturalized citizens made up, respectively, 28%, 35% and 37% of the foreign-born population. Applied to the total estimated foreign-born population of 39.9 million persons in 2010 (computed from the ACS data), these percentages yield absolute population sizes of 11.2 million for unauthorized aliens, 14.0 million for legal residents, and 14.8 million for naturalized citizens.

Figure 5. Immigration Status of the Foreign-Born Population, 2010



Source: Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn. "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010," Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011.

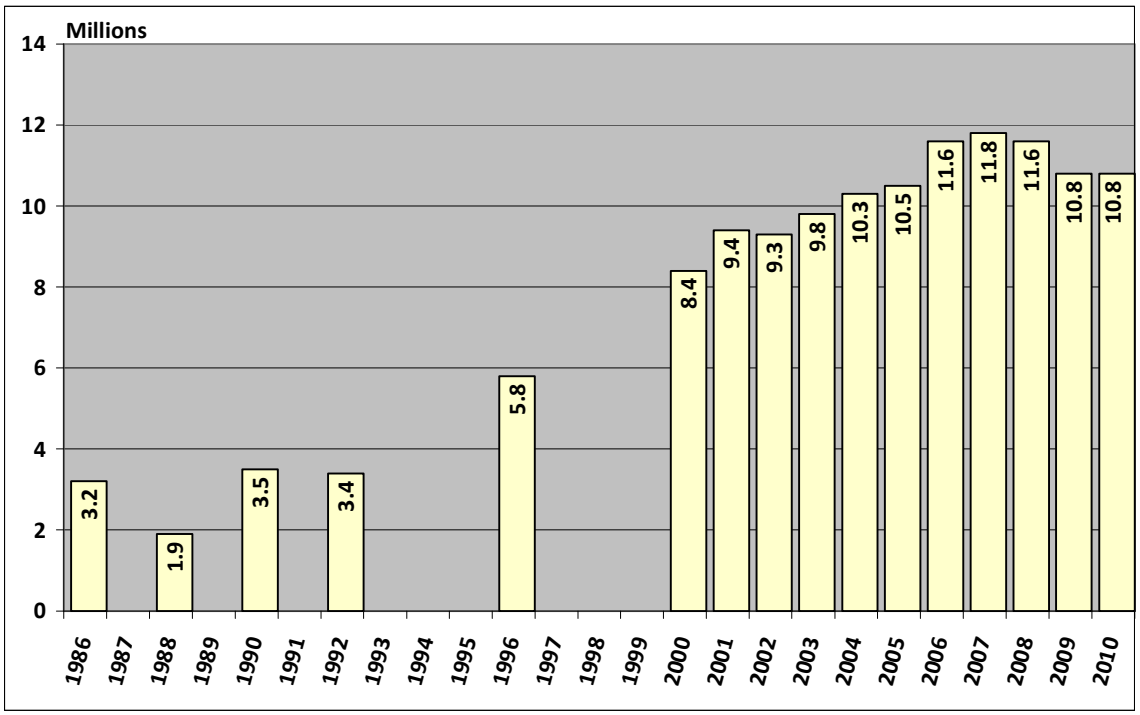
Note: Percentages are computed by the Pew Hispanic Center using the March Supplements to the 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS).

[27] The ACS, the decennial census, and other datasets used herein capture citizenship status but not unauthorized status among noncitizens, Consequently, this report distinguishes only between naturalized citizens and noncitizens when presenting descriptive statistics.

Unauthorized Foreign Born[28]

Unauthorized aliens are part of the noncitizen foreign-born population captured by the American Community Survey. However, surveys of the population such as the ACS, the CPS and other nationally representative datasets are only permitted to record if respondents are citizens, but not if they are unauthorized aliens. Therefore, policymakers typically rely on estimates produced by government agencies and private organizations to have a sense of how many unauthorized noncitizens live in the United States. In 2010, the unauthorized population was estimated at roughly 11 million persons (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6. Published Estimates of the Unauthorized Population, 1986-2010



Source: CRS presentation of estimates produced by Woodrow and Passel (1990) for 1986 and 1988; Warren (2000) for 1992; Warren (2003) for 1990 and 1996; Passel, Capps, and Fix (2004) for 2002; Passel and Cohn (2008) for 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004; Hoefer, Rytina, and Campbell (2006, 2007), respectively, for 2005 and 2006; and Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011), respectively, for 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Note: Estimates presented before 2003 are based upon the Current Population Survey data, and those from 2003 forward are based on the American Community Survey data. Note also that these estimates are comparable to those produced by the Pew Hispanic Center, which estimated the 2010 unauthorized alien population at 11.2 million. See Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn. "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010," Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011.

Estimates of the unauthorized population in **Figure 6** are shown from 1986, the year Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which legalized 2.7 million unauthorized aliens, through the most recent year for which reliable estimates are available

[28] For an extended discussion of the unauthorized population, see CRS Report R41207, *Unauthorized Aliens in the United States*, by (name redacted) and Jeffrey S. Passel and Paul Taylor,*Unauthorized Immigrants and Their U.S.-Born Children*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, DC, August 11, 2010, http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/125.pdf.

(2010).[29] Some attribute declining incoming flows and estimated unauthorized population sizes after 2007 to the economic downturn and increased enforcement efforts.[30] Some have suggested that greater enforcement of immigration laws likely reduced the overall flow from what it would have been during this period without such action.[31]

Legal Residents

Legal residents include immigrants and nonimmigrants. Immigrants are synonymous with legal permanent residents (LPRs) and refer to foreign nationals who come to live lawfully and permanently in the United States.[32] Nonimmigrants are admitted for a designated period of time and a specific purpose, and include foreign students, diplomats, temporary agricultural workers, persons on work assignments, and exchange visitors, among others. Conditions for immigrant admission to the United States are more stringent than those for nonimmigrants, yet once admitted, immigrants are subject to few restrictions regarding changes in employment and may apply for U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process, generally after five years.[33]

Naturalized Citizens

The process of converting legal permanent resident status to U.S. citizenship is referred to as naturalization. In most cases, persons wishing to naturalize must first be permanent residents. Naturalization requires applicants to possess certain eligibility criteria, including a minimum age

[29] Karen Woodrow and Jeffrey Passel, "Post-IRCA Undocumented Immigration to the United States: An Analysis Based on the June 1988 CPS," in *Undocumented Migration to the United States*, by Frank D. Bean, Barry Edmonston, and Jeffrey Passel, RAND Corporation, 1990; Robert Warren, *Annual Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States and Components of Change: 1987 to 1997*, Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, September 2000; Robert Warren, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States, 1990 to 2000*, Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, January 2003; Jeffrey Passel, Randy Capps, and Michael Fix, *Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures*, The Urban Institute, January 2004; Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Trends in Unauthorized Immigration: Undocumented Inflow Now Trails Legal Inflow*, Pew Hispanic Center, October 2008; Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Christopher Campbell, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2005*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, February 2006; Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Christopher Campbell, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2006*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, February 2007; Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2007*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, February 2008; Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2008*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, February 2009; Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, January 2010.; and and Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2010*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, February 2011. For more information on estimates of the unauthorized population, see CRS Report RL33874, *Unauthorized Aliens Residing in the United States: Estimates Since 1986*, by (name redacted).

[30] Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply Since Mid-Decade*, Pew Hispanic Center, September 2010.

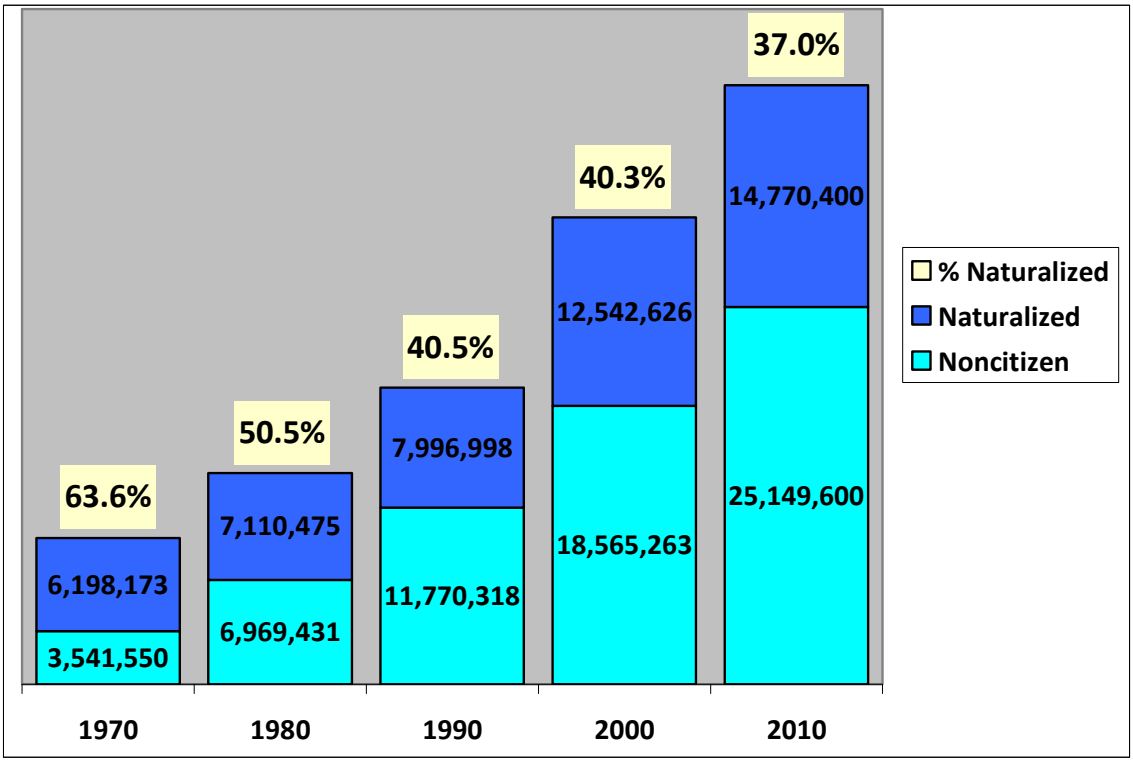
[31] Ibid.

[32] For more information on permanent legal residents, see CRS Report RL32235, *U.S. Immigration Policy on Permanent Admissions*, by (name redacted).

[33] For more information on nonimmigrants, see CRS Report RL31381, *U.S. Immigration Policy on Temporary Admissions*, by (name redacted).

of 18; permanent residency status for five years (three years in some circumstances); good moral character; basic knowledge of U.S. government; continuous presence in the United States (generally fewer than 6 months abroad during the entire permanent residency status period requirement); and the ability to read, write, and speak basic English.[34] These and other requirements explain the greater rate of naturalization among persons who have lived for more years in the United States (**Table A-2**). Because citizenship confers the right to vote, naturalization trends may sometimes have political impacts. Over the longer term, however, naturalization trends have demographic implications because citizens are accorded higher preferences than legal permanent residents under U.S. immigration law to sponsor immediate and extended family members to live in the United States. As **Figure 7** illustrates, in the past four decades, the total foreign-born and naturalized foreign-born populations have increased consistently while the proportion of foreign born who are naturalized has declined consistently from 63.6% in 1970 to 37.0% in 2010.

Figure 7. Foreign-Born Population by Citizenship, 1970-2010



Source: CRS presentation of data from Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennium Edition Online, Table Ad256-279, (1970-1990); Decennial Census (2000); and ACS PUMS data (2010).

Notes: Noncitizens include legal permanent residents, other persons with legal status, and unauthorized aliens.

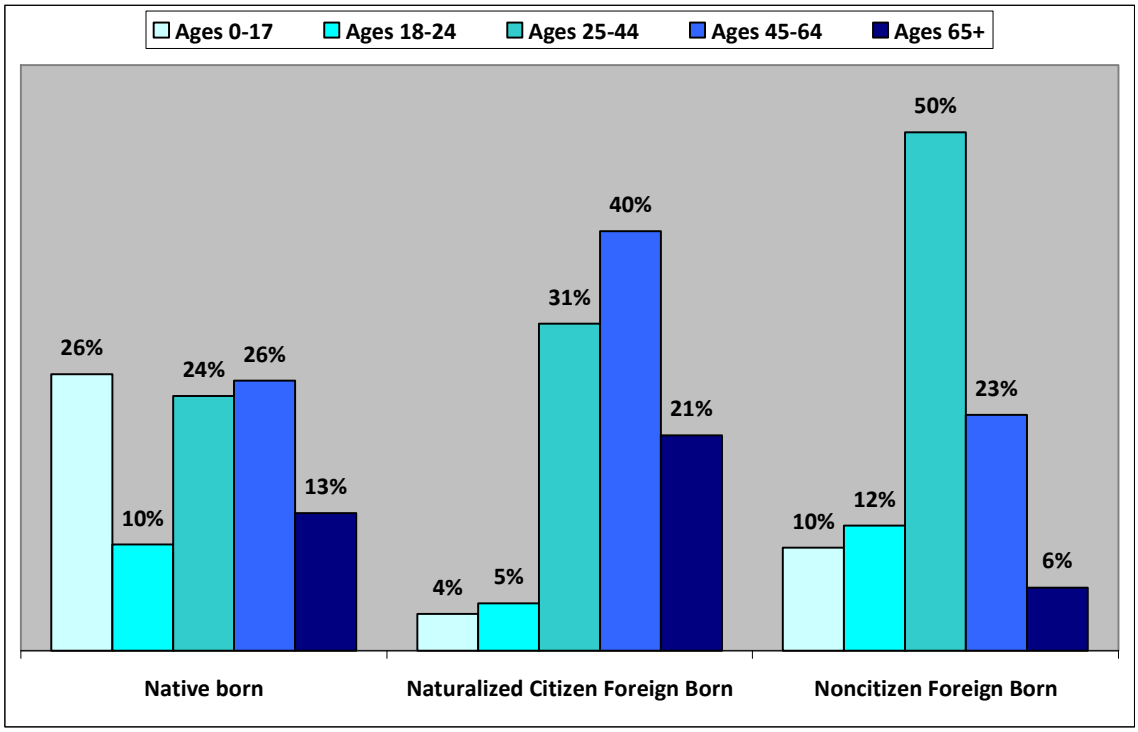
[34] For more information, see CRS Report RS20916, *Immigration and Naturalization Fundamentals*, by (name redac ted).

Demographic Characteristics

Age Composition

Figure 8 shows that prime working ages dominate the foreign born, with six of every 10 persons between the ages 25 to 54. By contrast, just four of every 10 native-born persons falls within this age group. Above age 55, the foreign born largely resemble the native born, while among youth, the two populations differ considerably: children under 18 comprise 26% of the native-born population but just 7% of the foreign-born population. Moreover, among the foreign born, the age distribution differs substantially between the generally older naturalized citizen population and younger noncitizen population.

Figure 8. Age Composition of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations, 2010



Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Bars sum to 100% for each population.

The foreign born, 12.9% of the U.S. population, contribute disproportionately to the U.S. population across all age groups (**Table 3**). Between 2000 and 2010, the foreign born contributed 8.8 million, or almost a third of the entire U.S. population increase of 27.9 million persons. Especially noteworthy was the foreign-born contribution of 5.4 million persons in the 25-54 prime working-age adult group. Some of this change occurred because the native born aged into older age cohorts. The foreign-born contribution to the child-age population was negative during this period, but this negative figure does not reflect a decline in child-bearing among foreign-born adults. Rather it reflects more native-born children born to foreign-born parents (see following discussion and **Table 4**). Among those ages 65 and older, the foreign born contributed just over a quarter (1.5 million persons) of the total U.S. increase (5.5 million persons).

Table 3. Contributions to U.S. Population Change, 2000-2010, by Nativity and Age

(Millions of persons)

Age Group	2000 U.S. Population	2010 U.S. Population	U.S. Population Change 2000-2010	Native-Born Contribution to 2000-2010 U.S. Population Change	Foreign-Born Contribution to 2000-2010 U.S. Population Change
0-4 years	19.0	20.1	1.0	1.2	(0.1)
5 to 17 years	53.1	54.0	0.9	1.3	(0.4)
18 to 24 years	27.1	30.9	3.8	3.7	0.1
25 to 34 years	39.6	40.9	1.3	0.5	0.8
35 to 44 years	45.9	41.3	(4.6)	(6.6)	2.0
45 to 54 years	37.6	44.9	7.3	4.7	2.6
55 to 64 years	24.2	36.7	12.6	10.5	2.1
65 to 74 years	18.5	21.9	3.4	2.4	0.9
75+ years	16.5	18.6	2.1	1.5	0.6
Total	281.4	309.3	27.9	19.1	8.8

Source: CRS presentation of 2000 Census SF3 and 2010 ACS PUMS data; Foreign-born age distribution data for 2000 from U.S. Census Bureau (2003).

Most children of foreign-born parents are born in the United States (**Table 4**). Of the 16.9 million children with at least one foreign-born parent in 2010, 14.5 million, or 86%, were born in the United States.[35] Children with foreign-born parentage comprised almost one-fourth (24%) of the 70.6 million U.S. children under age 18.[36]

Table 4. Parental Nativity of Children Under Age 18, 2010

			Foreign Born			
	Native Born		Naturalized Citizens		Noncitizens	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children's Parents Are:						
Only native-born	53,400,000	79%	196,482	33%	39,366	2%
Foreign-born	14,530,000	21%	392,923	67%	1,992,073	98%
Total children	67,930,000	100%	589,405	100%	2,031,439	100%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Data presented for one and two-parent households. Children with foreign-born parents may have either both parents foreign-born or one parent foreign-born and one native-born.

[35] The citizenship rights of U.S. born children of unauthorized aliens has received considerable recent public attention. For more information, see CRS Report RL33079, *Birthright Citizenship Under the 14th Amendment of Persons Born in the United States to Alien Parents*, by (name redacted).

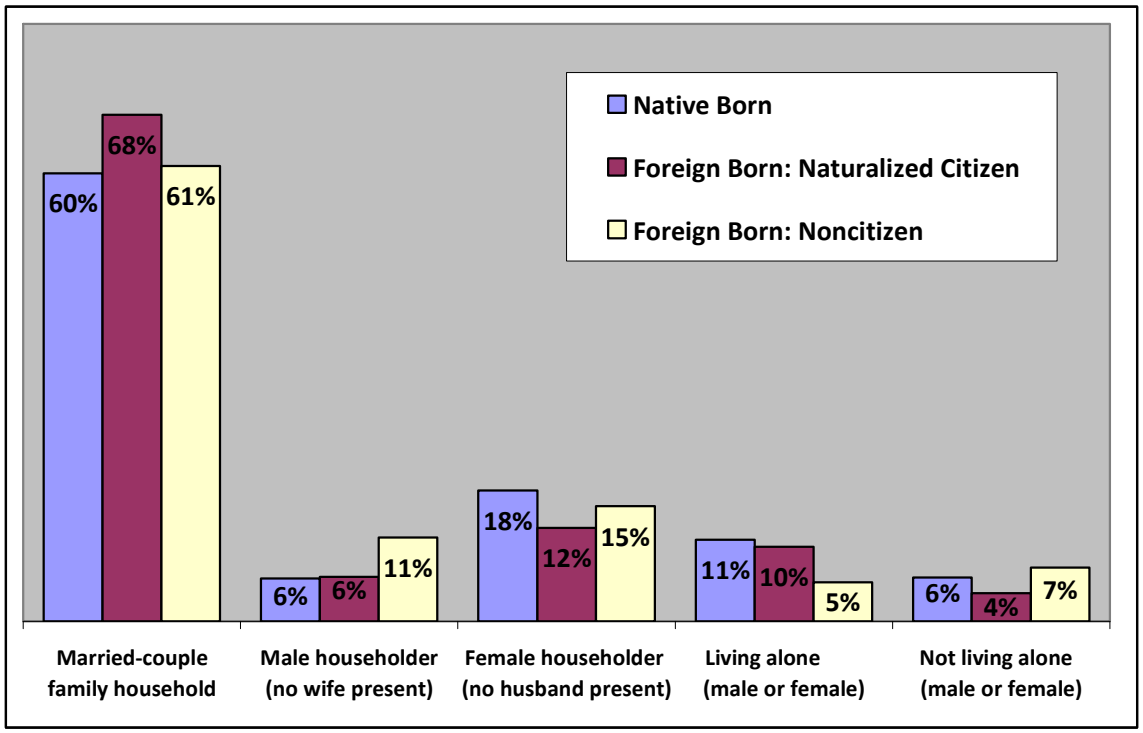
[36] For more on this topic, see Randolph Capps, Michael E. Fix, and Julie Murray et al., *The New Demography of America's Schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*, Urban Institute, Washington, DC, September 2005, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230_new_demography.pdf.

Native-born children with foreign-born parents confound the computation of foreign-born median age.[37] Traditionally among the foreign born, noncitizens with less U.S. experience are often young adults with the most to gain economically over their working careers by migrating to a new country.[38] Most foreign born are in fact relatively young, but because their U.S.-born children are included in native-born population figures, the foreign born have a higher median age (40) than the native born (35). However, when median ages are recomputed by reclassifying native-born minor children of foreign-born parents among the 38 million foreign born, the foreign-born median age (32) becomes less than the native-born median age (37).

Household and Family Structure and Size

Across several family and household measures, such as marital status (e.g., married, divorced, never married) and household structure (e.g., two-parent households, one-parent households), differences between the native born and foreign born are relatively modest (**Figure 9**).

Figure 9. Household Structure by Nativity, 2010



Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

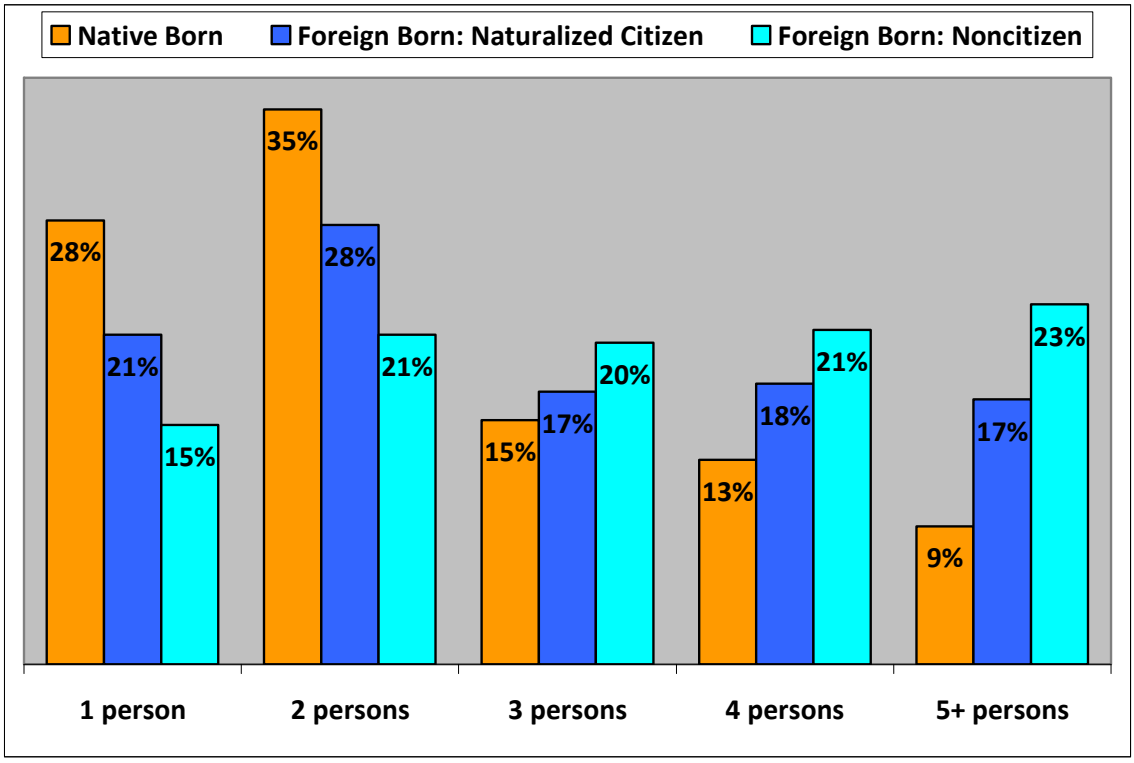
Notes: Persons not living alone are those living with other unrelated persons.

[37] The median is one type of average. It is found by sorting all of the values of a characteristic (such as age) from lowest to highest and then selecting the value that falls in the middle. As such, it is the value above and below which half the population falls.

[38] Douglas Massey, Rafael Alarcón, Jorge Durand, and Humberto González, *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 294.

Figure 10 presents household size—a commonly used measure of household structure—by nativity and citizenship status. Higher proportions of the native-born live in one- or two-person households compared to either foreign born group. Foreign-born noncitizens, by contrast, are found in equal proportions across all five categories shown. Differences in household size by nativity and citizenship status reflect several characteristics. Native-born persons and naturalized citizens, who have higher incomes than noncitizens (see **Table 10**), are more able to afford living alone or in nuclear families, if so preferred, compared to noncitizens who have lower median incomes. Age structure plays a role, particularly among the native born, with young adults and the elderly more likely to live alone.[39] Cultural preferences can also influence living arrangements, with multi-generational households more common among the foreign born.[40]

Figure 10. Household Size by Nativity and Citizenship, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010.

[39] U.S. Census Bureau, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2010, Table AVG2*, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Washington, DC, November 2010, http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2010.html.

[40] See Jennifer Van Hook and Jennifer E. Glick, "Immigration and Living Arrangements: Moving Beyond Economic Need Versus Acculturation," *Demography*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2007), pp. 225-249 and Janet M. Wilmoth, "Living Arrangements Among Older Immigrants in the United States," *The Gerontologist*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2001), pp. 228-238.

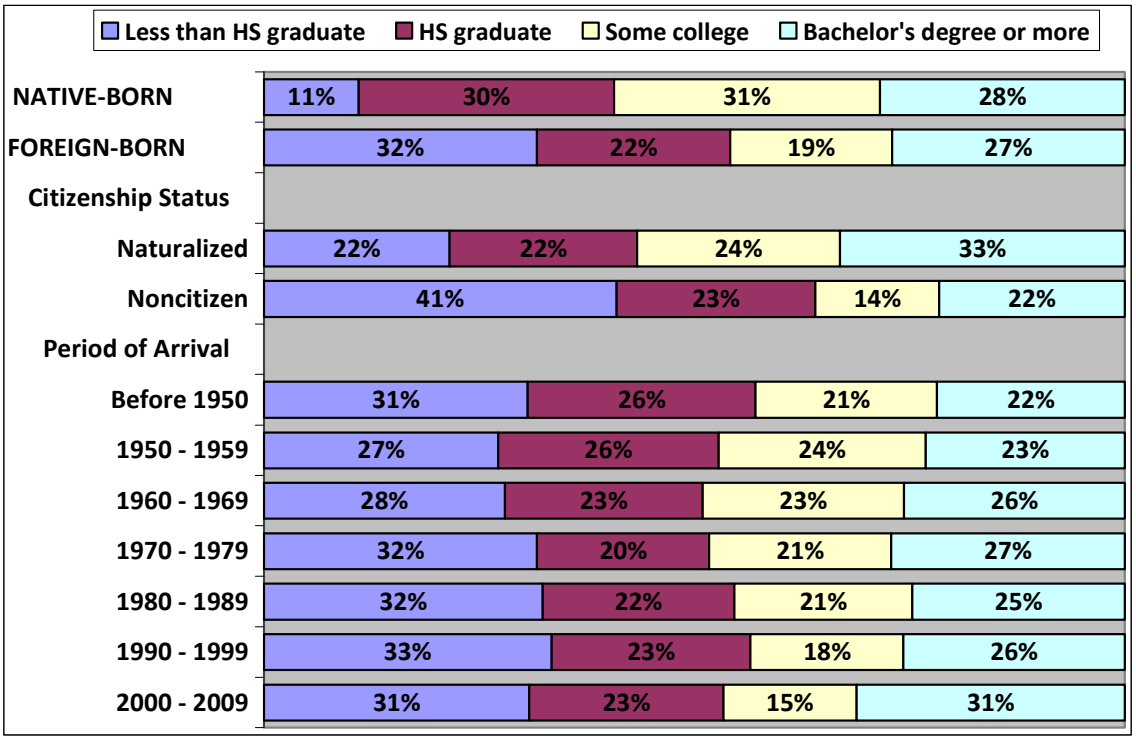
Education and Skills

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment correlates positively with several public policy objectives, including labor market participation, higher incomes, improved health, improved child welfare, reduced public service utilization, and greater civic participation.[41] Average educational attainment is lower for the foreign born than it is for the native born because many of the foreign born lack a high school diploma (**Figure 11**). However, at the other end of the education distribution, the proportion of the foreign born with at least a bachelor's degree matches that of the native born.

Figure 11. Education Attainment by Nativity, Citizenship, and Period of Arrival, 2010

(Persons ages 25 and older)



Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Foreign-born naturalized citizens have higher education levels than foreign-born noncitizens. Average education levels have been rising consistently throughout the world,[42] and consequently,

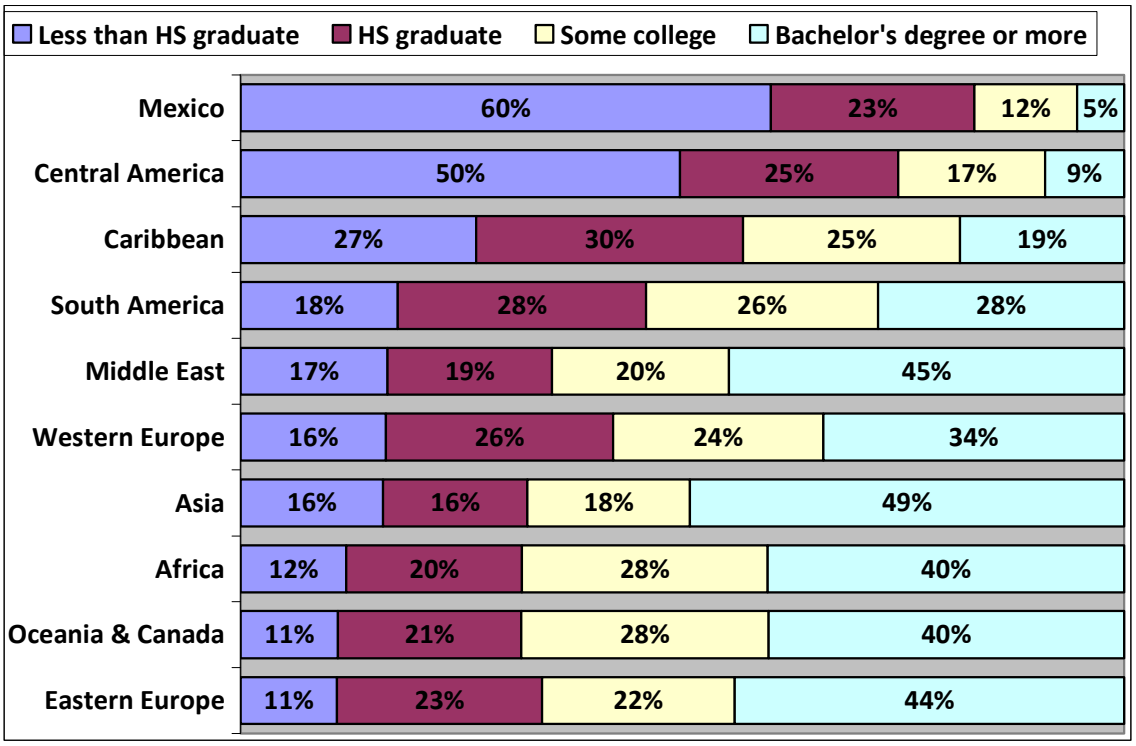
[41] *The Social Benefits of Education*, ed. Jere R. Behrman and Nevzer Stacey (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997); David E. Bloom, Matthew Hartley, and Henry Rosovsky, "Beyond Private Gain: The Public Benefits of Higher Education," in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, ed. James J.F. Forest and Philip G. Altbach, vol. 18 (Springer Netherlands, 2006), pp. 293-308; S. Baum and J. Ma, *Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York: College Board, 2007).

[42] R.J. Barro and J.W. Lee, "International Measures of Schooling Years and Schooling Quality," *American Economic Review*, vol. 82, no. 2 (May 1996), pp. 218-223; R.J. Barro and J.W. Lee, "A New Data Set of Educational Attainment in the World, 1950-2010," *NBER Working Paper Series*, vol. w15902 (2010).

more recent immigrants, on average, arrive to the United States with more years of schooling than immigrants who arrived in earlier decades, as illustrated in the period of arrival data in **Figure 11**. The proportion of the foreign born with a bachelor's degree has increased by roughly 50% since 1950, and from 22% in that decade to 31% for those arriving this past decade. **Figure 11** shows that the educational attainment categories of the foreign born that have declined over the period examined include those who completed high school or some college. However, the figure also shows that the proportion of the foreign born without a high school diploma remained unchanged over this time. While the proportions of foreign born in each of the four broad education categories presented in **Figure 11** suggest only modest changes in educational composition over time, they conceal significant increases in average schooling levels occurring in many countries.[43]

Figure 12. Educational Attainment of Foreign Born by Birth Region, 2010

(Persons ages 25 and older)



Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

The foreign born from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean have the lowest proportions of college graduates and the highest proportions of persons lacking a high school diploma, in sharp contrast with those from Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (**Figure 12**). Mexico's disproportionately high percentage of persons with less than a high school diploma may

[43] For example, data analyzed and presented by the World Bank indicate that the proportion of Mexicans aged 15-19 that had completed 9th grade increased from roughly 50% to just over 60% between 1994 and 2002. While this increase represents a substantial increase in relative terms, such an increase will not appear in **Figure 11** which will still categorize all of these 15-19 year olds in the first category of "Less than HS graduate." For more information, see, Deon Filmer, *Educational Attainment and Enrollment around the World*, Development Research Group, The World Bank, Datasheet, Mexico, 1994 and Mexico 2002, Washington, DC, July 31, 2007, http://iresearch.worldbank.org/edattain/index.htm.

be attributable to the large proportion of unauthorized aliens from that country, a group with lower average education levels than other foreign born.[44]

English Language Ability

Like education, English language ability positively influences labor market outcomes and social and cultural integration in the United States.[45] Characteristics associated with higher education levels are also associated with English language ability, as shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. English Language Proficiency by Socio-demographic Characteristics, 2010

		% Speaking English "Well" or "Very Well"	
Characteristic	**Category**	**Naturalized Citizen**	**Noncitizen**
All Persons		**83%**	**60%**
Birth Region	Mexico	71%	44%
	Central America	81%	44%
	Caribbean	82%	61%
	South America	87%	68%
	Asia	82%	74%
	Eastern Europe	83%	74%
	Middle East	87%	71%
	Africa	95%	86%
	Western Europe	93%	89%
	Oceania & Canada	98%	97%
Education	Less than HS	61%	44%
	HS diploma	81%	58%
	Some college	92%	79%
	Bachelor's degree	95%	87%
Age Group	Ages 0-4	100%	100%
	Ages 5-17	97%	88%
	Ages 18-24	96%	69%
	Ages 25-34	94%	61%

[44] Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *A Portrait of the Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, DC, April 14, 2009, http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf.

[45] Sherrie A. Kossoudji, "English Language Ability and the Labor Market Opportunities of Hispanic and East Asian Immigrant Men," *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1988), pp. 205-228; Hoyt Bleakley and Aimee Chin, "Language Skills and Earnings: Evidence from Childhood Immigrants." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 86, no. 2, (2004), pp:481–496; Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Hoyt Bleakley, "Age at Arrival, English Proficiency, and Social Assimilation Among U.S. Immigrants," *American Economic Journal: Applied*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January 2010), pp. 165-192.

Characteristic	Category	% Speaking English "Well" or "Very Well"	
		Naturalized Citizen	Noncitizen
	Ages 35-44	89%	58%
	Ages 45-54	84%	51%
	Ages 55-64	78%	45%
	Ages 65-74	71%	42%
	Ages 75+	66%	38%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Research has shown that English language ability tends to improve substantially over time, and second- and third-generation immigrants often lose entirely the native languages of their parents.[46] Such findings are borne out in **Table 5**. Youth, who are much more likely to be enrolled in U.S. schools and who acquire languages more easily than adults,[47] have the highest English language facility of all age groups, with nine out of 10 minors reporting that they speak English "well" or "very well." Two-thirds of all foreign-born working-age adults ages 25 to 64 also report similar English language proficiency. As expected, naturalized citizens exhibit stronger English language skills than noncitizens, reflecting U.S. experience. Among origin regions, foreign-born persons from Mexico and Central America report the lowest average English proficiency, while those from Africa, Western Europe, Canada, and Oceania, where English is typically spoken, report the highest.[48]

Employment

Labor Force Participation

In 2010, the foreign-born population accounted for 25.5 million, or 16.3%, of the total U.S. civilian labor force of 156.0 million.[49] This proportion represents a considerable increase since 2000, when 17.4 million foreign-born persons accounted for 12.4% of the labor force,[50] and mirrors higher foreign-born population growth generally within this age range. Labor force participation rates for foreign-born and native-born workers differ significantly for men and women (**Table 6**). Foreign-born male workers exhibit consistently higher labor force participation

[46] Ruben G. Rumbaut, Douglas S. Massey, and Frank D. Bean, "Linguistic Life Expectancies: Immigrant Language Retention in Southern California," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 32, no. 3 (September 2006), pp. 447-460.

[47] David Birdsong, "Age and Second Language Acquisition and Processing: A Selective Overview," *Language Learning*, vol. 56, no. s1 (July 2006), pp. 9-49.

[48] Some of the difference between groups stems from the different periods when the foreign-born arrive to the United States. For instance, larger proportions of foreign born from Western Europe, Oceania, and Canada arrived to the United States prior to 1990 compared with foreign born from all other regions, giving those individuals greater opportunity to acquire English language skills.

[49] Computed by CRS using 2010 American Community Survey PUMS data. This figure represents the size of the civilian labor force. See notes on **Table 6** for how this is defined.

[50] U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, Current Population Reports, Special Studies P23-206, December 2001, http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-206.pdf.

rates than native-born workers both in total and across all age and education categories. In contrast, foreign-born female workers exhibit lower rates than native-born women except at lower education levels. Among all groups, labor force participation increases with education and from ages 16 to 44.

Table 6. Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) by Sex, Nativity, and Citizenship, 2010

(Employed civilians ages 16 and older)

	Male			Female		
	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Noncitizens	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Noncitizens
Total LFPR	67%	75%	82%	60%	60%	54%
Age						
16-19	36%	39%	32%	34%	38%	26%
20-24	72%	73%	70%	69%	77%	56%
25-44	86%	79%	93%	79%	91%	61%
45-54	84%	77%	92%	79%	89%	67%
55-64	68%	60%	79%	62%	75%	47%
65+	20%	13%	23%	12%	24%	10%
Education						
Less than HS	40%	30%	60%	37%	79%	45%
HS diploma	67%	52%	74%	55%	85%	58%
Some college	72%	67%	77%	67%	78%	61%
Bachelor's degree	80%	75%	82%	72%	86%	64%
Total Workers (millions)	67.3	5.8	8.7	63.2	5.5	5.5

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Following Census Bureau methodology, the labor force participation rate is computed as the proportion of the civilian population ages16 years and older that is in the labor force. The civilian labor force is defined as the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 years and older who are employed (have a job) or who are unemployed (without a job, available for work, and actively seeking work or on layoff). Excluded from this measure of the labor force are students, retirees, persons who are recorded as having permanently left the labor force, institutionalized persons, and military personnel.

Other characteristics among the foreign born significantly affect their labor force participation. As shown in **Table A-1**, male naturalized citizens have lower labor force participation rates than male noncitizens. The reverse is true for women, which may reflect greater employment opportunity for those with citizenship, higher education levels, and more U.S. experience.[51] Labor

[51] Robert F. Schoeni, "Labor Market Outcomes of Immigrant Women in the United States: 1970 to 1990," *International Migration Review*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 57-77; Jennan Ghazal Read and Philip N. Cohen, "One Size Fits All? Explaining U.S.-born and Immigrant Women's Employment across 12 Ethnic Groups," *Social Forces*, vol. 85, no. 4 (June 2007), pp. 1713-1734.

force participation increases during the first 30 years of U.S. experience only slightly for men but substantially for women, before declining significantly as both groups approach retirement. By region, participation is higher for foreign-born men and women from Latin America and Africa and lower for those from Europe, Oceania, and Canada (**Table A-1)**.

Employment by Industrial Sector

Differences between the employment distribution of the native born and foreign born are found among noncitizens.[52] Figures in **Table 7** show that naturalized citizens differ little in this respect when compared with the numerically dominant native-born workforce. The noncitizen workforce, however, is more concentrated in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, other services, and accommodation and food services, and less in retail trade, finance, insurance, and real estate, education, health care, and public administration. To some extent, this difference in concentration may mirror skill requirements, with noncitizens more concentrated in industries employing less-skilled workers. Yet in the highly skilled professional, scientific, and management sector, the noncitizen foreign born are slightly more concentrated than either naturalized citizens or the native born.

Table 7. Industrial Sector Employment by Nativity, and Citizenship, 2010

(Employed civilians ages 16 and older)

	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Non-citizens
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	2%	1%	4%
Construction	6%	5%	13%
Manufacturing	10%	13%	12%
Wholesale trade	3%	3%	3%
Retail trade	12%	10%	9%
Transportation, Warehousing,, Utilities	5%	6%	4%
Information	2%	2%	1%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%	7%	3%
Professional, Scientific, Management	10%	11%	13%
Education, Health Care, Social Assistance	23%	24%	13%
Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation, Food Services	9%	9%	16%
Other Services	5%	6%	7%
Public Administration	5%	4%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Data presented are not broken out by sex; with the exception of less female concentration in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, and greater concentration in education, trends described above apply for both sexes.

[52] For more on the skill distribution of immigrants, see Randy Capps, Michael Fix, and Serena Yi Ying-Lin, *Still an Hourglass? Immigrant Workers in Middle-Skilled Jobs*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2010.

Foreign-born educational attainment and job competition between foreign-born and native-born workers continue to be perennial concerns, particularly during economic recessions.[53] Yet, U.S. dependence on foreign-born workers is widely acknowledged in highly skilled sectors such as science and engineering[54] as well as less-skilled sectors such as labor-intensive agriculture.[55]

Occupational Distribution

The distribution of workers within broad occupation categories displays patterns similar to those found among industrial sectors (**Table 8**). In most occupational categories, the native born and foreign-born naturalized citizens resemble each other closely. Differences appear among foreign-born noncitizens who, on average, concentrate less in higher-skilled services and more in lower-skilled service and industrial occupations. In the one key exception, computer, science, and engineering occupations, noncitizen foreign born are comparable to naturalized citizens and the native born. These descriptive statistics confirm an earlier Census Bureau report which showed that citizens and those with extensive U.S. experience are more likely to resemble the native born in their occupational distribution.[56]

Table 8. Occupational Distribution by Nativity and Citizenship, 2010

(Employed civilians ages 16 and older)

	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Non-citizens
Management, Business, Finance	14%	14%	7%
Computer, Science, Engineering	5%	7%	5%
Social, Education, Entertainment	11%	8%	5%
Medical, Health Services	8%	11%	5%
Security, Protection Services	2%	1%	1%
Food, Cleaning Services	9%	10%	23%
Recreation, Personal Services	3%	5%	4%
Sales	12%	10%	8%
Office	15%	12%	7%
Farming, Construction, Extraction, Maintenance	9%	7%	19%
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	12%	14%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%

[53] For more information, see CRS Report 95-408, *Immigration: The Effects on Low-Skilled and High-Skilled Native-Born Workers*, by (name redacted).

[54] Grant C. Black and Paula E. Stephan, "The Importance of Foreign Ph.D. Students to U.S. Science," in *Science and the University*, ed. Paula E. Stephan and Ronald G. Ehrenberg (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), pp. 113-133; Sharon G. Levin and Paula E. Stephan, "Are the Foreign Born a Source of Strength for U.S. Science?", *Science*, vol. 285, no. 5431 (August 1999), pp. 1213-14; National Research Council, *Foreign and Foreign-Born Engineers in the United States: Infusing Talent, Raising Issues*, Washington, DC, 1988.

[55] For more information, see CRS Report RL30395, *Farm Labor Shortages and Immigration Policy*, by (name redacted).

[56] U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, Current Population Reports, Special Studies P23-206, December 2001, p.41, http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-206.pdf.

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Data presented are not broken out by sex; apart from less female concentration in farming and production and greater concentration in social and medical services and office occupations, trends described above apply for both sexes.

Broad occupation and industrial sector categories can mask the extent to which native-born or foreign-born nationals dominate some occupations. **Table 9** presents, for a group of selected occupations, the proportions held by native and foreign-born men and women, by citizenship status. The table lists these selected occupations according to native-born male proportion, ranked lowest to highest.

Table 9. Sex and Nativity Composition of Selected Occupations, 2010

(Employed civilians ages 16 and older)

	Male			Female			
	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Non-citizens	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Non-citizens	Total
Child care workers	6%	0%	0%	75%	7%	12%	100%
Nurses	6%	1%	1%	82%	7%	3%	100%
Tailors and Dressmakers	7%	10%	8%	39%	20%	16%	100%
Sewing machine operators	10%	2%	11%	37%	15%	25%	100%
Librarians	14%	1%	1%	78%	5%	2%	100%
Bartenders	37%	2%	3%	55%	1%	2%	100%
Agricultural workers	38%	4%	38%	8%	1%	10%	100%
All U.S. Workers	**40%**	**5%**	**14%**	**31%**	**4%**	**6%**	**100%**
Physical Scientists	43%	6%	11%	27%	6%	7%	100%
Physicians and surgeons	49%	12%	5%	24%	7%	3%	100%
Meat processing workers	50%	6%	18%	14%	3%	7%	100%
Computer scientists [a]	53%	9%	12%	18%	4%	4%	100%
Dishwashers	54%	3%	22%	13%	1%	6%	100%
Financial Analysts	54%	8%	4%	27%	4%	3%	100%
Construction laborers	64%	5%	28%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Construction Inspectors	81%	4%	3%	11%	1%	0%	100%
Locomotive Engineers	92%	2%	1%	4%	1%	0%	100%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Figures for all U.S. workers are shown in bold for the sake of comparison, and figures are summed by rows instead of columns to facilitate comparison across population groups. Note that (a) includes computer engineers, computer programmers, and systems analysts.

Native and foreign-born workers shown in **Table 8** represent 84% and 16%, respectively, of the U.S. labor force. Differences between this national average and figures shown in **Table 9** indicate cases of occupational imbalance by gender, nativity, or citizenship. In some heavily unionized occupations such as locomotive engineers and construction inspectors, native-born workers

dominate. In other, less-skilled occupations with low barriers to entry, such as sewing machine operators, agricultural workers, and meat processing workers, the foreign-born noncitizen population is represented in numbers that far exceed their total averages. Yet the foreign born also exceed their national average proportion in certain specialty occupations that require substantial education, such as physical scientists, physicians and surgeons, and computer scientists reflecting the bifurcated education profile discussed earlier and presented in **Figure 11**.

Economic Well-Being

Median Income

Policymakers frequently rely on median income as an indicator of economic assimilation and productive output.[57] On average, median incomes of native-born workers are higher than foreign-born workers. These differences vary substantially by citizenship and sex (**Table 10**) but at higher education levels, they become minimal. In fact, no nativity gap in median income appears for female workers with at least a bachelor's degree. Among the foreign born, naturalized U.S. citizen incomes exceed noncitizen incomes by an average of 62%,[58] reflecting higher educational attainment, and greater U.S. experience (see **Table 10**).

Table 10. Median Income by Education, Nativity, and Citizenship, 2010

(2010 dollars)

	Male			Female		
	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Noncitizens	Native Born	Naturalized Citizens	Noncitizens
All Education Levels	**50,381**	**48,366**	**28,213**	**38,290**	**38,290**	**24,183**
Less than HS	30,229	31,136	22,067	22,168	23,175	18,137
HS diploma	38,290	35,267	25,191	29,020	28,213	21,160
Some college	46,351	43,328	30,229	35,267	35,267	26,198
Bachelor's degree	75,572	80,610	65,496	53,404	60,457	48,366

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Note: Figures are computed for non-institutional, full-time, year-round workers.

[57] Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008*, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, Washington, DC, September 2009, pp. 1-4, http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p60-236.pdf.

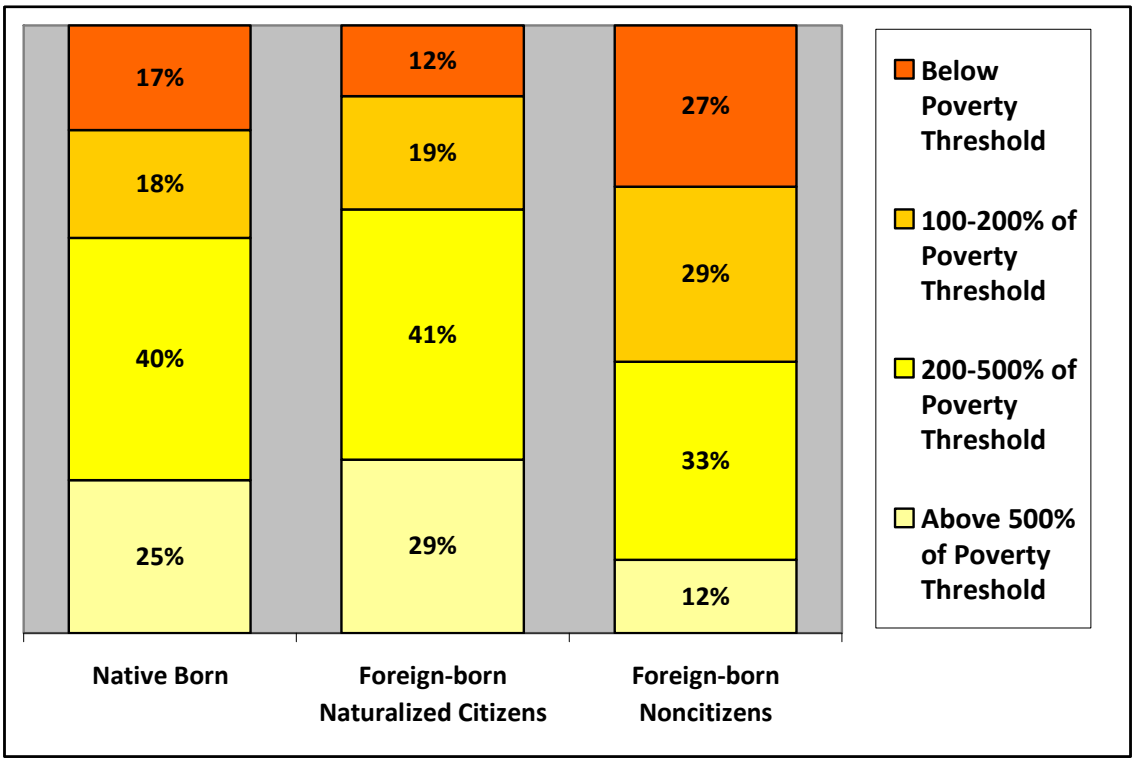
[58] Computed by taking the average of the male and female earnings gap between naturalized citizens and noncitizens across all education levels.

Poverty

The poverty threshold, another measure of economic well-being, is an income figure set annually by the Census Bureau, above or below which an individual or family is officially classified as poor.[59] Poverty for the foreign born varies by citizenship status, with relatively smaller proportions of naturalized citizens and greater proportions of noncitizens falling below the poverty threshold (**Figure 13**). The difference in poverty level between the native born and foreign-born noncitizens is 10%. If those below poverty and those earning 100-200% of the poverty threshold are combined (the "poor" plus the "near-poor"), then the difference between the native born (35%) and foreign-born noncitizens (56%) expands to 21%.

Figure 13. Poverty Status by Nativity and Citizenship, 2010

(Individual income in relation to the 2010 poverty threshold)



Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Notes: Average poverty levels determined by the Census Bureau in 2010 were $11,139 for individuals (with variation according to whether persons were above or below age 65) and $22,314 for a family with two children under age 18. The federal poverty definition for statistical purposes varies by family size and composition and does not include noncash benefits or account for taxes. Poverty status (in poverty or not in poverty) of a family is assigned to each family member. The Census Bureau does not define poverty status for unrelated individuals under age 15 (e.g., foster children). For a more extensive discussion poverty rates, see CRS Report RL33069, *Poverty in the United States: 2010*, by (name redacted).

[59] For more information, see CRS Report RL33069, *Poverty in the United States: 2010*, by (name redacted). For an example of how the Census Bureau determines family poverty status, see "How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty" on the Census Bureau's website at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/methods/measure.html.

Poverty rates among the foreign born relative to the native born (**Table 11**) follow patterns borne out by much previous research.[60] Relatively higher poverty rates are reported by women, persons in the early working age groups, and the less educated. The proportion of children falling below the poverty line is considerably higher than that of working-age adults for all groups. Among the foreign born, poverty rates are relatively higher for persons who arrived in the United State more recently. Persons from the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Mexico exhibit relatively high rates while those from Oceania, Canada, and Western Europe exhibit the lowest.[61]

Table 11. Poverty by Nativity, Citizenship, and Demographic Characteristics, 2010

Characteristic	Category	Native Born	Naturalized Citizen Foreign Born	Noncitizen Foreign Born
All Persons		**17%**	**12%**	**27%**
Sex	Male	17%	10%	24%
	Female	18%	13%	29%
Age Group	0-17	23%	14%	37%
	18-24	33%	25%	37%
	25-44	15%	10%	25%
	45-64	11%	9%	20%
	65+	11%	16%	23%
Education	Less than high school	25%	18%	34%
	High school diploma	17%	13%	25%
	Some college	16%	11%	23%
	4 yr college degree+	5%	6%	13%
Decade of Arrival	Before 1950	n/a	12%	22%
	1950-1959	n/a	9%	14%
	1960-1969	n/a	9%	16%
	1970-1979	n/a	10%	19%
	1980-1989	n/a	11%	22%
	1990-1999	n/a	13%	26%
	2000-2009	n/a	17%	29%

[60] See for example, CRS Report RL33069, *Poverty in the United States: 2010*, by (name redacted).

[61] Note that poverty rates shown in **Table 11** are independent of other traits. Hence, for example, while women have higher average poverty rates than men, more educated women may have lower rates of poverty than less educated men.

Characteristic	Category	Native Born	Naturalized Citizen Foreign Born	Noncitizen Foreign Born
Region of Birth	Oceania & Canada	n/a	9%	15%
	Western Europe	n/a	9%	13%
	Asia	n/a	10%	20%
	South America	n/a	10%	17%
	Central America	n/a	12%	27%
	Eastern Europe	n/a	13%	19%
	Africa	n/a	14%	30%
	Mexico	n/a	15%	34%
	Caribbean	n/a	15%	28%
	Middle East	n/a	16%	39%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Concluding Observations

The 39.9 million foreign born (in 2010) make up roughly one-eighth of the U.S. population, but between 2000 and 2010, they accounted for nearly one-third of all U.S. population growth. They include not only an estimated 14.8 million naturalized citizens (37% of all foreign born) but also 11.2 million unauthorized aliens. Of the 16.9 million children with at least one foreign-born parent in 2010, 14.5 million, or 86%, were born in the United States. Recent estimates indicate that unauthorized aliens, legal residents (permanent and temporary) and naturalized citizens made up 28%, 35% and 37%, respectively, of the foreign-born population. Years of U.S. experience and educational attainment are positively associated with citizenship status. Origins of the foreign born have shifted from Europe (74% in 1960) to Latin America and Asia (81% in 2010). While many foreign-born persons have settled recently in new urban and rural destinations, two-thirds of the foreign-born population lives in California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey. Almost two thirds of all foreign born arrived to the United States after 1990.

Between 2000 and 2010, foreign-born workers accounted for almost all the growth in the U.S. workforce between ages 25-54. As this CRS analysis illustrates, their labor force contributions to the U.S. economy range from low-skilled occupations in the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors to highly skilled occupations in science, engineering, medicine, nursing, defense, and other critical industrial sectors. The foreign born have lower average educational attainment and a higher proportion of persons without a high school diploma than the native born. However, the foreign-born and native-born populations possess the same proportion with at least a bachelor's degree.

Lower education levels and differences in industrial sector and occupational distributions partly explain income and poverty differences between foreign-born and native-born workers; for those with at least a four-year college degree, earnings differences by nativity are minimal. Among the foreign born, median incomes of naturalized citizens are roughly 60% higher than those of noncitizens, reflecting higher education levels, older ages, and greater U.S. labor market

experience. Poverty status is linked to the lack of citizenship, a difference that is magnified after including the "near-poor," who earn between 100% and 200% of the poverty threshold.

Changes in the age composition of the American population can have a considerable impact on the U.S. labor force, on public sector expenditures, and consequently on U.S. public policy. Political debates over immigration policy may sometimes originate because of different priorities for public spending, as younger foreign-born persons and their children tend to demand different public services (e.g., public education and affordable housing) than older native-born residents (e.g., affordable health care).

Appendix.

Data Sources and Limitations

Unless indicated otherwise, data for this report come primarily from the Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) of the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS). This survey is sent to roughly 250,000 households every month (or 3 million households every year) and replaces the long form questionnaire of the decennial census. As with the decennial census long form, the ACS collects information on socio-demographic characteristics, disability, English and native language use, income, and housing characteristics. The ACS has the advantage of continuous measurement by producing new data every year rather than every 10 years for the decennial census. However, because it is sent to far fewer households (1 in 100) compared to the decennial census (1 in 6) ACS estimates of the population and population characteristics have a relatively greater margin of error, particularly for smaller geographic areas. This report avoids that obstacle because it presents computations at a sufficiently large geographic unit of analysis, often at the national level. For instance, the 2010 ACS PUMS contains about 2,714,000 observations representing the native born, and 348,000 observations representing the foreign born, before weighting. As such, descriptive statistics presented herein are based upon sufficiently large sample sizes that support statistical validity at the 95% probability level. The PUMS is a publically available dataset that contains no personal identifiers and permits analysis of micro-level data across characteristics of one's choosing.

Key Definitions

Nativity, which refers to whether someone is native born or foreign born, generally refers to place of birth, but not exclusively. The Census Bureau defines native-born persons as those who were U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals at birth.[62] Hence, in addition to persons born in the United States, the term native-born also includes persons born in a U.S. Commonwealth or other territories (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands), or born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents. Anyone not born a U.S. citizen or U.S. national is defined as foreign born, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization.

Naturalized citizens are defined by the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) as persons admitted as legal residents who have lived in the United States continuously for at least five years; demonstrated good moral character as well as English reading, writing, and speaking ability; and passed an examination on U.S. history and government.[63] If these legal permanent residents have their petitions for naturalization approved, they become U.S. citizens.

[62] Elizabeth M. Grieco, *Race and Hispanic Origin of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2007*, U.S. Census Bureau, January 2010.

[63] These rules apply in most but not all cases. For example, the residency requirement is only three years in the case of spouses of U.S. citizens. Another example: the language requirement may be waived for permanent resident aliens age 50 and older who have lived in this country for at least 20 years, or who are age 55 and older and have lived in this country for at least 15 years. The civics requirement may be waived for permanent resident aliens over age 65 who have lived in the United States for at least 20 years.

Table A-1. Labor Force Participation, Foreign Born, by Gender, 2010

(Employed civilians age 16 and older)

	Male		Female	
	LFPR	**Workers (millions)**	**LFPR**	**Workers (millions)**
Citizenship categories				
Naturalized citizen	75%	5.8	60%	5.5
Noncitizen	82%	8.7	54%	5.5
Period of Arrival to U.S.				
Before 1950	18%	0.0	8%	0.0
1950 - 1959	37%	0.2	23%	0.1
1960 - 1969	54%	0.5	38%	0.5
1970 - 1979	74%	1.5	58%	1.3
1980 - 1989	84%	3.2	67%	2.4
1990 - 1999	84%	4.3	63%	3.4
2000 - 2009	81%	4.8	54%	3.2
Region of Birth				
Western Europe	66%	1.0	47%	0.9
Eastern Europe	71%	0.4	57%	0.4
Asia	76%	3.3	59%	3.1
Middle East	73%	0.3	45%	0.2
Mexico	85%	5.0	53%	2.7
Central America	88%	1.3	65%	0.9
Caribbean	72%	1.2	62%	1.2
South America	82%	1.0	64%	0.9
Africa	82%	0.6	68%	0.5
Oceania & Canada	70%	0.3	51%	0.3

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data

Table A-2. Proportion of Naturalized Foreign Born by Region of Origin and Decade of Arrival to the United States, 2010

Region of Origin	Decade of Arrival to United States							
	Before 1950	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	All Decades
Western Europe	95%	90%	80%	70%	62%	51%	16%	60%
Eastern Europe	96%	91%	90%	89%	86%	75%	34%	65%
Asia	93%	90%	92%	91%	85%	67%	18%	57%
Middle East	96%	89%	97%	93%	90%	76%	24%	63%
Mexico	79%	74%	69%	57%	36%	15%	5%	23%
Central America	84%	91%	83%	74%	52%	24%	8%	30%
Caribbean	84%	94%	89%	82%	70%	52%	19%	54%
South America	86%	87%	90%	84%	74%	46%	14%	44%
Africa	100%	86%	91%	86%	78%	64%	21%	46%
Oceania & Canada	90%	75%	65%	61%	52%	38%	10%	43%
All Regions	92%	86%	82%	76%	63%	43%	14%	44%

Source: CRS presentation of 2010 ACS PUMS data.

Table A-3. Selected State-Level Characteristics, 2010

State	Native-Born Population			Foreign-Born Population			Percent Foreign Born of the Total Population	Percent Foreign Born Who:			
	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010		Are Naturalized Citizens	Arrived in the U.S. Since 2000	Fall Below the Poverty Line	Have a Bachelor's Degree
Alabama	4,040,587	4,614,967	14%	43,533	170,331	291%	4%	28%	57%	22%	27%
Alaska	550,043	667,334	21%	24,814	46,651	88%	7%	50%	34%	11%	26%
Arizona	3,665,228	5,552,513	51%	278,205	861,224	210%	13%	36%	32%	28%	18%
Arkansas	2,350,725	2,788,774	19%	24,867	132,832	434%	5%	29%	50%	27%	19%
California	29,760,021	27,210,000	-9%	6,458,825	10,143,659	57%	27%	46%	28%	19%	25%
Colorado	3,294,394	4,558,196	38%	142,434	490,875	245%	10%	37%	39%	22%	24%
Connecticut	3,287,116	3,104,347	-6%	279,383	472,726	69%	13%	48%	38%	13%	30%
Delaware	666,168	829,904	25%	22,275	69,865	214%	8%	48%	40%	17%	41%
District of Columbia	606,900	524,576	-14%	58,887	79,877	36%	13%	38%	45%	16%	49%
Florida	12,937,926	15,180,000	17%	1,662,601	3,667,840	121%	19%	48%	35%	20%	24%
Georgia	6,478,216	8,772,767	35%	173,126	939,820	443%	10%	35%	44%	24%	29%
Hawaii	1,108,229	1,120,079	1%	162,704	243,542	50%	18%	56%	30%	12%	24%
Idaho	1,006,749	1,482,063	47%	28,905	89,387	209%	6%	33%	38%	27%	16%
Illinois	11,430,602	11,080,000	-3%	952,272	1,759,453	85%	14%	43%	33%	17%	29%
Indiana	5,544,159	6,190,506	12%	94,263	300,115	218%	5%	36%	48%	26%	30%
Iowa	2,776,755	2,909,075	5%	43,316	140,808	225%	5%	38%	47%	27%	26%
Kansas	2,477,574	2,671,836	8%	62,840	187,333	198%	7%	33%	39%	21%	26%
Kentucky	3,685,296	4,199,508	14%	34,119	146,758	330%	3%	36%	52%	25%	30%
Louisiana	4,219,973	4,377,261	4%	87,407	166,967	91%	4%	38%	47%	21%	26%
Maine	1,227,928	1,279,663	4%	36,296	47,904	32%	4%	58%	32%	20%	32%
Maryland	4,781,468	4,980,224	4%	313,494	805,758	157%	14%	45%	41%	12%	41%
Massachusetts	6,016,425	5,582,222	-7%	573,733	975,032	70%	15%	48%	38%	17%	34%

State	Native-Born Population			Foreign-Born Population			Percent Foreign Born of the Total Population	Percent Foreign Born Who:			
	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010		Are Naturalized Citizens	Arrived in the U.S. Since 2000	Fall Below the Poverty Line	Have a Bachelor's Degree
Michigan	9,295,297	9,295,027	0%	355,393	582,547	64%	6%	49%	38%	22%	37%
Minnesota	4,375,099	4,932,480	13%	113,039	378,104	234%	7%	42%	42%	25%	34%
Mississippi	2,573,216	2,907,055	13%	20,383	62,981	209%	2%	32%	50%	27%	27%
Missouri	5,117,073	5,763,229	13%	83,633	233,002	179%	4%	42%	46%	23%	35%
Montana	799,065	971,042	22%	13,779	19,856	44%	2%	60%	32%	16%	28%
Nebraska	1,578,385	1,721,160	9%	28,198	109,269	288%	6%	39%	40%	26%	19%
Nevada	1,201,833	2,196,425	83%	104,828	508,217	385%	19%	42%	32%	18%	19%
New Hampshire	1,109,252	1,246,061	12%	41,193	70,698	72%	5%	53%	32%	13%	39%
New Jersey	7,730,188	6,955,512	-10%	966,610	1,846,112	91%	21%	50%	34%	13%	36%
New Mexico	1,515,069	1,857,778	23%	80,514	208,154	159%	10%	34%	35%	33%	16%
New York	17,990,455	15,090,000	-16%	2,851,861	4,301,158	51%	22%	52%	31%	18%	28%
North Carolina	6,628,637	8,841,912	33%	115,077	719,646	525%	8%	30%	46%	27%	26%
North Dakota	638,800	657,843	3%	9,388	16,656	77%	2%	45%	35%	22%	37%
Ohio	10,847,115	11,070,000	2%	259,673	469,067	81%	4%	49%	41%	22%	40%
Oklahoma	3,145,585	3,551,881	13%	65,489	209,821	220%	6%	31%	47%	26%	20%
Oregon	2,842,321	3,464,596	22%	139,307	374,361	169%	10%	38%	35%	24%	24%
Pennsylvania	11,881,643	11,980,000	1%	369,316	727,013	97%	6%	49%	40%	18%	38%
Rhode Island	1,003,464	922,258	-8%	95,088	130,628	37%	12%	49%	34%	23%	21%
South Carolina	3,486,703	4,423,101	27%	49,964	213,211	327%	5%	30%	51%	27%	26%
South Dakota	696,004	795,281	14%	7,731	21,182	174%	3%	45%	49%	21%	35%
Tennessee	4,877,185	6,067,128	24%	59,114	289,769	390%	5%	34%	51%	26%	26%
Texas	16,986,510	21,120,000	24%	1,524,436	4,139,412	172%	16%	32%	36%	25%	20%
Utah	1,722,850	2,545,654	48%	58,600	230,815	294%	8%	32%	39%	25%	20%
Vermont	562,758	597,981	6%	17,544	27,979	59%	4%	62%	35%	23%	37%

State	Native-Born Population			Foreign-Born Population			Percent Foreign Born of the Total Population	Percent Foreign Born Who:			
	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010	1990	2010	% Change 1990-2010		Are Naturalized Citizens	Arrived in the U.S. Since 2000	Fall Below the Poverty Line	Have a Bachelor's Degree
Virginia 3/	6,187,358	7,121,307	15%	311,809	903,310	190%	11%	46%	41%	12%	38%
Washington	4,866,692	5,850,232	20%	322,144	894,264	178%	13%	46%	37%	20%	30%
West Virginia 3/	1,793,477	1,831,429	2%	15,712	22,544	43%	1%	43%	43%	33%	42%
Wisconsin	4,891,769	5,439,284	11%	121,547	251,763	107%	4%	40%	41%	20%	31%
Wyoming	453,588	547,881	21%	7,647	16,579	117%	3%	41%	52%	23%	42%
National Average	**4,876,664**	**5,283,125**	**14%**	**387,594**	**782,684**	**175%**	**9%**	**42%**	**40%**	**21%**	**29%**

Source: CRS presentation of 1990 Decennial Census and 2010 ACS PUMS data.

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