Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States

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The United States is in the midst of an historic period in its immigration history, facing a changing composition of the immigrant population, pandemic-related pent-up demand for permanent and temporary visas resulting in extensive backlogs, record pressure at the U.S.-Mexico border, and somewhat decreasing public support for expanded immigration.

Legal permanent and temporary immigration rose in 2022 after a few years of chill brought about by the COVID-19 public-health crisis and the Trump administration's restrictive policies and rhetoric. Amid crises around the world, the Biden administration extended or expanded Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for certain eligible immigrants already in the United States and announced special humanitarian parole programs allowing some migrants from several countries to enter the United States and stay temporarily.

At the southwest border, record numbers of migrant encounters in 2022 accompanied court orders preventing the Biden administration from revoking the Title 42 public-health order authorizing the rapid expulsion of asylum seekers and other migrants. The administration has proposed a revised system to govern asylum at the border, but as of this writing the situation remains in flux. To promote orderly arrival and processing of asylum seekers and expedite the expulsion of unauthorized migrants, in January 2023 the Biden administration announced another humanitarian parole program to include up to 30,000 authorized newcomers from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela every month if they have a U.S. sponsor. This program was followed by controversial proposed changes to U.S. asylum system.

Worldwide, the United States is home to more international migrants than any other country, and more than the next four countries—Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United Kingdom—combined, according to the UN Population Division's mid-2020 data. While the U.S. population represents about 5 percent of the total world population, close to 20 percent of all global migrants reside in the United States.

This Spotlight offers information about the approximately 45.3 million immigrants in the United States as of 2021, by compiling the most authoritative and current data available. It provides an overview of historic immigration trends in the United States, sociodemographic information about who is immigrating, through which channels, and how many immigrants become naturalized citizens. It also provides data on the government's enforcement actions and adjudication efforts to process visas.

This article draws on statistics from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI); the U.S. Census Bureau (using its 2021 American Community Survey [ACS], 2022 Current Population Survey [CPS], and 2000 decennial census); and the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State. (Note: DHS and State Department data refer to fiscal years that begin on October 1 and end on September 30; ACS and CPS data refer to calendar years). For more detailed information on U.S. and global immigration data sources and one-click access to these datasets, see the MPI report *Immigration Data Matters* (bit.ly/MPIDataMatters). All the data tools and maps in this article also can be accessed through MPI's Migration Data Hub, online at bit.ly/MigrationDataHub.

This Spotlight has information on the following topics:

- ► **Immigrants Now and Historically**
- ► **Demographic, Educational, and Linguistic Characteristics**
- ► **Immigrant Destinations**
- ► **Immigrants in the Labor Force**
- ► **Income and Poverty**
- ► **Health Insurance Coverage**
- ► **Children of Immigrants**
- ► **Permanent Immigration**
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- ► **Naturalization Trends**
- ► **Visa Backlogs**

Definitions

"**Foreign born**" and "**immigrant**" are used interchangeably and refer to persons with no U.S. citizenship at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, persons on certain temporary visas, and unauthorized immigrants.

Geographical regions: MPI follows the definition of Latin America as put forth by the United Nations and the U.S. Census Bureau, which spans Central America (including Mexico), the Caribbean, and South America. For more information about geographical regions, see the U.S. Census Bureau and United Nations Statistics Division.

Immigrants Now and Historically

How many immigrants reside in the United States?

Nearly 45.3 million immigrants lived in the United States in 2021, the most since census records have been kept. In 2021, immigrants comprised 13.6 percent of the total U.S. population, a figure that remains short of the record high of 14.8 percent in 1890 and slightly below the 13.7 percent share they comprised in 2019.

Figure 1. Size and Share of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 1850-2021
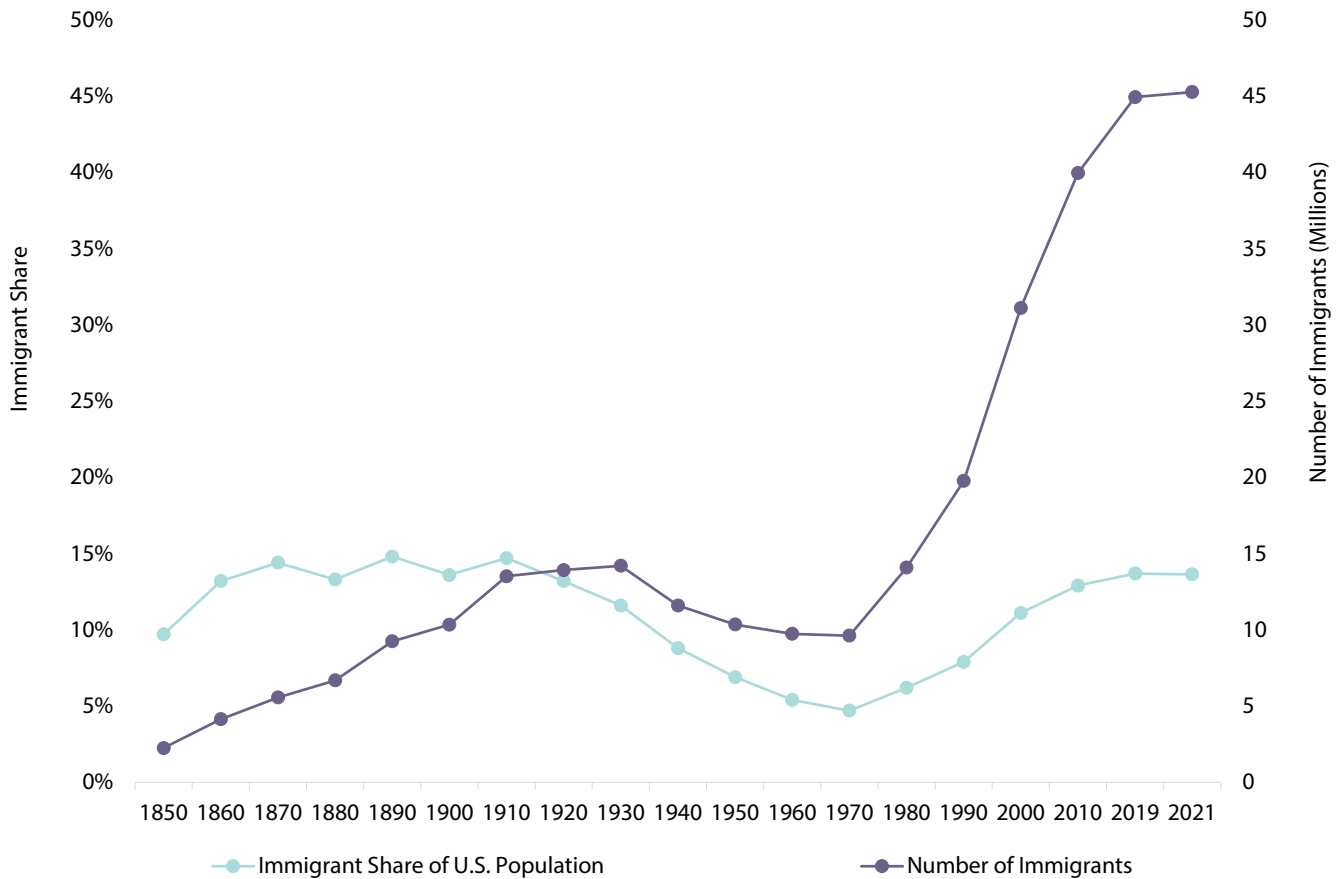
Sources: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-21 American Community Surveys (ACS), and 1970, 1990, and 2000 decennial census. All other data are from Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (Working Paper no. 29, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999).

The foreign-born population remained largely flat between 2019 and 2021, with an increase of 337,000 people, or growth of less than 1 percent. While the immigrant population has generally been growing, the increase over the last two years was smaller than the change from 2017 to 2019 (407,000) and much smaller than between 2014 and 2016 (1.3 million). The slowing growth of the immigrant population over the past few years is mirrored by the slowing growth of the overall U.S. population since 2015.

Note: 2020 was an unusual year in many ways, including in immigration flows and in data collection efforts. Many fewer people were able to move across international borders because of pandemic-related border restrictions and policies of sending and receiving countries alike. At the same time, the U.S. Census Bureau experienced significant challenges collecting data in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and released only a few data points from its 2020 ACS. Because of these data challenges, it is difficult to assess the real extent of the changes in the last couple of years.

How have the number and share of immigrants changed over time?

In 1850, the first year the United States began collecting nativity data through the census, the country had 2.2 million immigrants, representing nearly 10 percent of the total population.

Between 1860 and 1920, immigrants' share of the population fluctuated between 13 percent and 15 percent, peaking at 14.8 percent in 1890 amid high levels of immigration from Europe. Restrictive immigration laws in 1921 and 1924 limited permanent immigration almost exclusively to those from Northern and Western Europe. Combined with the Great Depression and onset of World War II, this led to a sharp drop in new arrivals from the Eastern Hemisphere. The foreign-born share steadily declined, hitting a record low of 4.7 percent (or 9.6 million immigrants) in 1970 (see Figure 1).

Since 1970, the share and number of immigrants had increased rapidly, mainly because of increased immigration from Latin America and Asia following important shifts in U.S. immigration law such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished national-origin admission quotas, the creation of a formal refugee resettlement program with the Refugee Act of 1980, and the Cold War-era grant of preferential treatment to Cuban immigrants. Other factors were the United States' growing economic and military presence in Asia and Latin America, as well as economic and social ties with the United States' southern neighbors, and major economic transformations and political instability in countries around the world. It remains unclear whether the recent leveling off represents a change in the long-term trend or a temporary blip.

► Want more information about historical immigration to the United States? Check out the U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850-Present data tool, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

► Get a comprehensive understanding of U.S. historical immigration trends and policies in the article "Immigration Has Been a Defining, Often Contentious, Element Throughout U.S. History," understand the impact of the 1965 law in "Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States," and read more about the end of national-origin quotas in "The Geopolitical Origins of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965," online at bit.ly/MPI-US-Resources.

Where are most immigrants from originally?

Mexicans are the largest group of U.S. immigrants, comprising 24 percent of the total immigrant population in 2021, which is a decline from 30 percent in 2000. India and China (including Hong Kong and Macao but not Taiwan) were the next two largest sending countries, accounting for approximately 6 and 5 percent,

respectively, of the overall foreign-born population. Other top countries of origin include the Philippines (4 percent); El Salvador, Vietnam, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (each 3 percent); and Guatemala and Korea (each 2 percent).

Together, these ten countries accounted for 56 percent of all immigrants in the United States in 2021.

▶ To learn more about key immigrant populations, check out the *Migration Information Source's* Spotlights archive. These articles provide data profiles of a range of individual immigrant groups in the United States including Mexicans, Chinese, Indians, and Filipinos, as well as more recent groups such as Afghans, Ukrainians, and more. Find them online at bit.ly/ImmigrantSpotlights.

How do today's top countries of origin compare to those of the past?

The large numbers of immigrants from Latin America and Asia in recent decades represent a sharp turn-around from the mid-1900s, when immigration largely came from Europe. In the 1960s, no single country accounted for more than 15 percent of the U.S. immigrant population, but Italians were the top origin group, making up 13 percent of the foreign born in 1960, followed by Germans and Canadians (about 10 percent each).

Immigrants from Mexico have been the most numerous since 1980, but the composition of new arrivals has changed since 2010. Now, immigrants are more likely to come from Asia, especially India and China. In fact, these two nations displaced Mexico as the top origin countries for new arrivals from 2013 to 2021, but amid the pandemic and related mobility restrictions Mexico has regained its position as the origin of most new arrivals.

In terms of the total size, the immigrant population from India increased by 929,000 and from China/Hong Kong by 572,000 between 2010 and 2021. In contrast, the number of Mexican immigrants in the United States declined by more than 1 million during the same period, representing the largest absolute decline of all immigrant groups.

The number of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil, Nigeria, Colombia, the Philippines, and El Salvador has increased by at least 200,000 each since 2010. Among the groups numbering at least 100,000 in 2021, the Venezuelan immigrant population increased by the fastest rate between 2010 and 2021 (by 196 percent), followed by immigrants from Nepal (151 percent), Afghanistan (127 percent), Myanmar (also known as Burma, 111 percent), and Nigeria (102 percent). In comparison, the total foreign-born population grew by 13 percent between 2010 and 2021.

▶ See how immigrants' regions of origin of have changed with the Regions of Birth for Immigrants in the United States, 1960-Present data tool, see immigration trends from individual countries with the Countries of Birth for U.S. Immigrants, 1960-Present data tool, and compare the top ten origin countries in different decades with the interactive Largest U.S. Immigrant Groups over Time, 1960-Present data tool. Find them online at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

▶ Read more about "Immigrants from New Origin Countries in the United States." Online at bit.ly/ImmigrantSpotlights.

How long have current immigrants resided in the United States?

Forty-eight percent of all immigrants in the United States in 2021 arrived prior to 2000 (28 percent entered before 1990 and 20 percent between 1990 and 1999), 24 percent entered between 2000 and 2009, and 28 percent have come since 2010.

How many U.S. residents are from immigrant families?

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children number approximately 87.7 million people, or close to 27 percent of the U.S. population in the 2022 CPS, an increase of approximately 14.7 million (or 20 percent) from 2010.

Demographic, Educational, and Linguistic Characteristics

What is the median age for immigrants?

The immigrant population's median age in 2019 was 45.7 years, making it older than the U.S.-born population, which had a median age of 36.5 years. One reason for this is that the immigrant population is comprised of people who arrive largely as adults, whereas immigrants' children born in the United States contribute to the younger median age of the U.S.-born population.

Fewer than 1 percent of immigrants were under age 5 in 2019, compared to 7 percent of the U.S.-born population in this age group. Children and youth ages 5 to 17 years accounted for 5 percent of immigrants and 18 percent of the U.S. born. People of working age (18 to 64 years) comprised 78 percent of the immigrant population, a much higher figure than the 59 percent of those born in the United States. Approximately 17 percent of immigrants were 65 years and older, similar to the 16 percent of the U.S. born in this age group.

What is the sex ratio of the immigrant population?

Definitions
College-educated persons are defined as adults 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher.
Race as used by the U.S. Census Bureau reflects the race or races with which individuals most closely self-identify. Race categories include both racial and national-origin groups.
Hispanic and Latino are ethnic, not racial, categories. They include individuals who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the decennial census and American Community Survey questionnaire— "Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano," "Puerto Rican," or "Cuban"—as well as those who indicate that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin." Persons who indicated that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino" include those whose origins are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, the Dominican Republic, or people who self-identify more generally as Spanish, Spanish-American, Hispanic, Hispano, Latino, and so on.
Read more about the U.S. Census Bureau's definitions on its website.

Slightly more immigrants are women and girls than men or boys; in 2019, about 52 percent of all U.S. immigrants were female. The share has fluctuated slightly over the past four decades, but females tend to be a slight majority. They accounted for 53 percent of the immigrant population in 1980, 51 percent in 1990, 50 percent in 2000, and 51 percent in 2010.

What is the racial makeup of immigrants?

In 2021, 27 percent as Asian of immigrants reported their race as single-race Asian, 21 percent as White, 9 percent as Black, and 20 percent as some other race. About 22 percent reported having two or more races.

Note: *These statistics reflect changes in how the Census Bureau asks about race that have been made since the 2020 decennial census.*

> ▶ Use the State Immigration Data Profiles from MPI's Migration Data Hub to learn more about the demographic characteristics of immigrants and the U.S. born (including age, race, and ethnicity) in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and nationwide. Find them online at bit.ly/StateImmProfiles.

How many immigrants are Hispanic or Latino?

In 2021, 44 percent of U.S. immigrants (19.9 million people) reported having Hispanic or Latino ethnic origins.

Note: *The Census Bureau classifies Hispanic and Latino as ethnic categories, separate from the racial categories listed above (see Definitions box for more information).*

How many Hispanics in the United States are immigrants?

Most U.S. Hispanics are U.S. born. Of the 62.5 million people in 2021 who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, 32 percent (19.9 million) were immigrants and 68 percent (42.6 million) were native born.

Which languages are most frequently spoken at home?

Regardless of nativity, in 2021 approximately 78 percent (245.5 million) of all 313.2 million U.S. residents ages 5 and older reported speaking only English at home. The remaining 22 percent (67.8 million) reported speaking a language other than English at home.

Among those who reported speaking a language other than English at home, 61 percent spoke Spanish. Other top languages were Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese, 5 percent); Tagalog (almost 3 percent); and Vietnamese, Arabic, French (including Cajun), and Korean (about 2 percent each) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top Languages Spoken at Home Other than English (ages 5 and older), 2021

	Estimate	Share of All Speakers of Foreign Languages
TOTAL	67,754,000	100.0%
Spanish	41,255,000	60.9%
Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese)	3,405,000	5.0%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1,715,000	2.5%
Vietnamese	1,523,000	2.2%
Arabic	1,391,000	2.1%
French (incl. Cajun)	1,175,000	1.7%
Korean	1,073,000	1.6%
Russian	1,045,000	1.5%
Portuguese	937,000	1.4%
Haitian	895,000	1.3%
Hindi	865,000	1.3%
German	857,000	1.3%
Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, other languages of Western Africa	640,000	0.9%
Amharic, Somali, other Afro-Asiatic languages	596,000	0.9%
Yiddish, Pennsylvania Dutch, other West Germanic languages	574,000	0.8%
Polish	533,000	0.8%
Italian	513,000	0.8%
Urdu	508,000	0.7%

Note: Table shows languages with at least 500,000 speakers.
Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 ACS.

Not including English, Spanish was the most common language spoken at home in all but three states: Hawaii (Ilocano) and Maine and Vermont (French). Not including English or Spanish, Chinese, German, French and Vietnamese were among the commonly spoken languages (see Figure 2)

Figure 2. Map of Most Commonly Spoken Languages other than English and Spanish by State, 2021

Notes: Chinese includes Mandarin and Cantonese; Dakota+ includes Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and Sioux; French includes Cajun; German includes Pennsylvania Dutch and Swiss; and Tagalog includes Filipino.
Sources: MPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 ACS for the United States.

How many immigrants are Limited English Proficient (LEP)?

In 2021, approximately 46 percent (20.8 million) of the 45 million immigrants ages 5 and older were Limited English Proficient (LEP). Immigrants accounted for 80 percent of the country's 25.9 million LEP individuals.

Note: *The term "Limited English Proficient" refers to persons ages 5 and older who indicated on the ACS questionnaire that they spoke English less than "very well."*

► MPI has compiled information on the size of the LEP population across the United States and by state in the data table Limited English Proficient Population: Number and Share, by State, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2019, and 2021, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

What share of the immigrant population has a college education?

In 2021, 34 percent (13.6 million) of the 40.2 million immigrants ages 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, a rate similar to that of U.S.-born adults (see Figure 3). However, newer arrivals tend to be better educated; 47 percent of immigrants who entered the country between 2017 and 2021 held at least a bachelor's degree.

Figure 3. Educational Attainment of U.S.-Born, Immigrant, and Recently Arrived Immigrant Adults, 2021
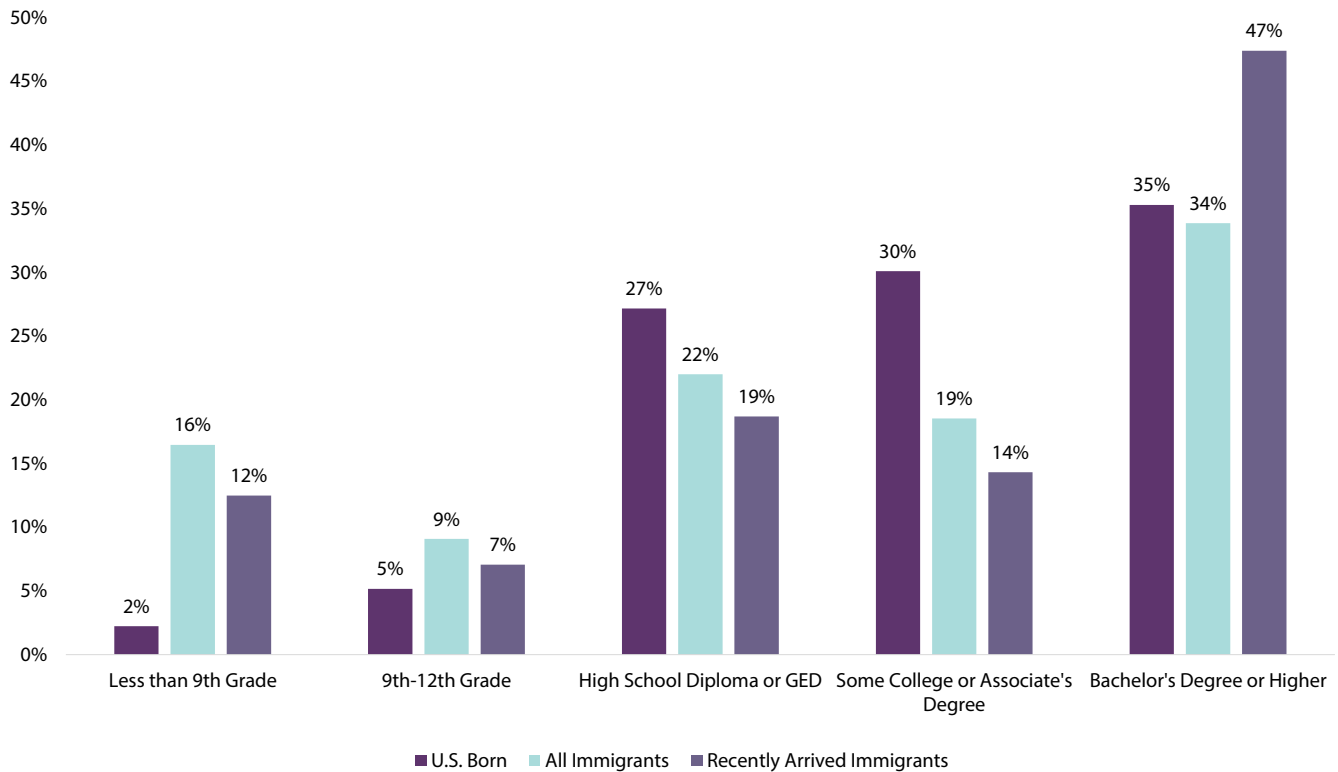
Note: Data are for adults ages 25 and older. Recently arrived immigrants are those who entered the United States between 2017 and 2021.
Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 ACS.

Educational attainment levels vary by immigrants' countries of origin. Approximately 80 percent of immigrant adults from India had a bachelor's degree or more in 2021, more than any other origin country. Other top countries were the United Arab Emirates (78 percent), Saudi Arabia (77 percent), Taiwan (73 percent), Bulgaria, France, and Singapore (67 percent each). Among immigrants who arrived between 2017 and 2021, the share who were college graduates was the highest among Indians (86 percent), followed by those from France, Taiwan, and Spain (between 81 percent and 82 percent). The college-educated share is also high among Venezuelans, who represent the fastest growing U.S. immigrant group. Fifty-seven percent of all Venezuelan immigrant adults and 62 percent of recent arrivals have at least a bachelor's degree.

▶ Find information for all origin countries in the MPI dataset Educational Attainment Among U.S.-Born Adults and All Immigrant Adults by Country of Birth in 2021, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

► Read more about the socioeconomic characteristics of highly educated immigrants in "College-Educated Immigrants in the United States," which you can find online at bit.ly/ImmigrantSpotlights.

Immigrant Destinations

Which U.S. states have the largest numbers of immigrants?

The U.S. states with the most immigrants in 2021 were California (10.5 million), Texas (5.1 million), Florida (4.6 million), New York (4.4 million), and New Jersey (2.1 million).

As a percentage of the total population, immigrants made up the largest shares in California (27 percent), New Jersey (23 percent), New York (22 percent), Florida (21 percent), Hawaii (19 percent), and Nevada (18 percent).

► For more information on the top states of residence for the foreign born, see the interactive tool Immigrant Population by State, 1990-Present, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

► Want to know where immigrants from a particular region or country of origin settled in the United States? Use the Migration Data Hub's interactive maps to see top immigrant concentrations at state and county or metropolitan-area levels. Find them at bit.ly/MPI-US-Maps.

Which states have experienced the fastest growth of their immigrant populations?

Traditional immigrant destinations have the largest absolute number of new immigrants, but other states have seen much larger relative growth in their immigrant populations. In some cases, this is because the states' initial foreign-born populations were quite small, so a relatively small absolute increase has translated into high-percent growth (see Table 2). For instance, more immigrants moved to Florida between 2010 and 2021 than any other state (951,000), but the size of the immigrant population in North Dakota grew by the largest relative share (103 percent).

Table 2. Top States by Absolute and Percent Growth in Immigrant Population, 2010-21

Rank	Absolute Growth		Percent Change	
1	Florida	951,000	North Dakota	103%
2	Texas	950,000	Delaware	41%
3	California	301,000	South Dakota	39%
4	New Jersey	290,000	Idaho	32%
5	Washington	257,000	Kentucky	29%
6	Massachusetts	244,000	Washington	29%

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2021 American Community Surveys (ACS).

Immigrants in the Labor Force

How many immigrants are in the U.S. civilian labor force?

Immigrants constituted 17 percent (28.6 million people) of the civilian labor force (166.9 million) in 2021, which comprises both employed and unemployed people. Immigrants' share of the labor force has more than tripled since 1970, when they accounted for approximately 5 percent of the civilian labor force.
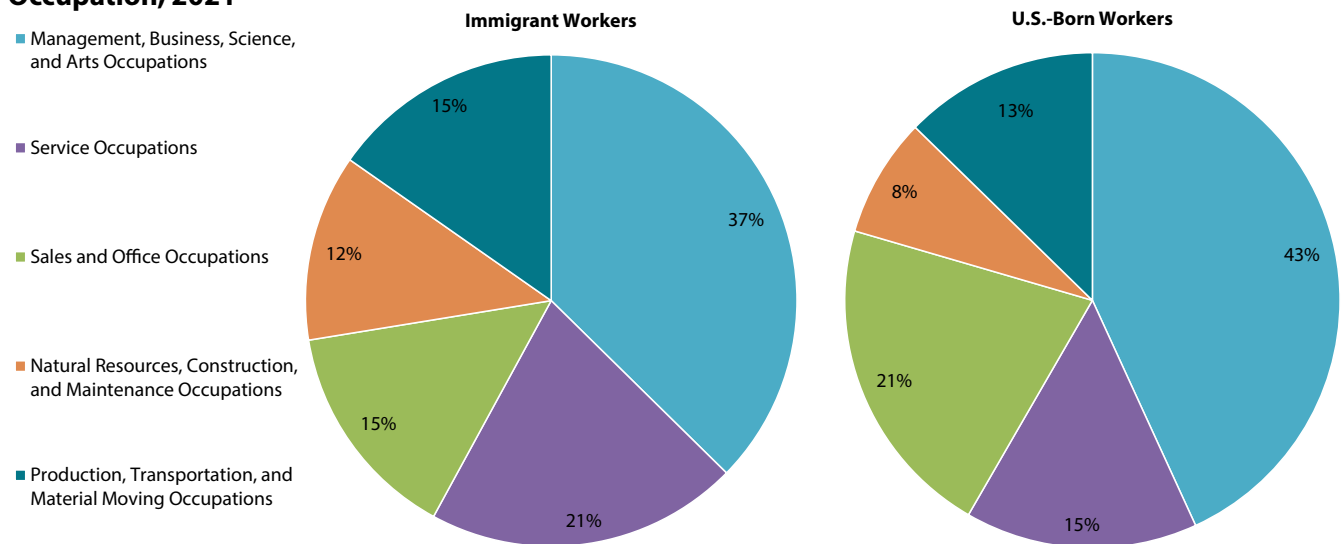
> **Definition**
>
> The **civilian labor force** is comprised of civilians ages 16 and older who were either employed or unemployed but looking for work in the week prior to participation in the American Community Survey or decennial census.

▶ Understand immigrants' evolving composition in the labor force nationwide and by state with the Immigrant Share of the U.S. Population and Civilian Labor Force, 1980-Present data tool, available online at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

What types of jobs do immigrants perform?

Of the 26.8 million employed foreign-born workers ages 16 and older in 2021, the largest share (37 percent) worked in management, professional, and related occupations (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Employed Workers in the U.S. Civilian Labor Force (ages 16 and older), by Nativity and Occupation, 2021

- Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations
- Service Occupations
- Sales and Office Occupations
- Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations
- Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations

Immigrant Workers: 37%, 21%, 15%, 12%, 15%

U.S.-Born Workers: 43%, 15%, 21%, 8%, 13%

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 as they are rounded to the nearest whole number.
Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 ACS.

▶ Check out the Migration Data Hub's State Immigration Data Profiles for more information on the labor force participation of immigrants and the U.S. born in the United States, each of the 50 states, and the District of Columbia. Find them online at bit.ly/StateImmProfiles.

Income and Poverty

Immigrants tend to have very similar incomes to the native born. Immigrant households in 2021 had a median income of $69,622, compared to $69,734 for native-born households.

Fourteen percent of immigrants were poor (that is, with family incomes below the official poverty threshold of $27,500 for a family of four with two children in 2021), compared to 13 percent of the U.S. born.

Health Insurance Coverage

What share of immigrants have health insurance?

Approximately 57 percent of immigrants had private health insurance in 2021 (compared to 69 percent of the U.S. born), and 32 percent had public health insurance coverage (compared to 38 percent of the U.S. born). Meanwhile, 19 percent lacked health insurance (compared to 7 percent of the U.S. born).

Since implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2014, health insurance coverage rates have improved for the U.S. population as a whole. In 2013, 32 percent of immigrants were uninsured (compared to 12 percent for the native born), a number that fell to 20 percent in 2017 (and 7 percent for the native born). The Trump administration made multiple changes to ACA policies, including eliminating the individual coverage mandate penalty, ending cost-sharing subsidies to insurers, and cutting funding for navigator programs. The rates of those uninsured have since remained mostly level.

Note: Health insurance coverage is calculated only for the civilian, noninstitutionalized population. Since some people may simultaneously hold both private and public health insurance coverage, estimates of those with public health insurance and those with public coverage may overlap. The sum of these rates therefore may be greater than the total share of people with health insurance.

Children of Immigrants

How many U.S. children live with immigrant parents?

Approximately 18 million U.S. children under age 18 lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2021. They accounted for 26 percent of the 69.7 million children under age 18 in the United States, up from 19 percent in 2000 and 13 percent in 1990.

Most of these children are native born. Second-generation immigrant children born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent accounted

Definitions

First-generation immigrant children are any foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent.

Second-generation immigrant children are any U.S.-born children with at least one foreign-born parent.

Children with immigrant parents are both first- and second-generation immigrant children.

for 88 percent (15.8 million) of all children with immigrant parents. The remaining 12 percent (2.2 million) were born outside the United States.

Note: The data here include only children between ages 0 and 17 (regardless of nativity) who reside with at least one parent. This means that the number of children shown here is smaller than the overall number of U.S. children under 18. Since 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau includes children of same-sex married couples in its count of children in families and subfamilies.

► For information on children living with immigrant parents by age and in different states, see the Children in U.S. Immigrant Families data tool, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

How has the number of children in immigrant families changed over time?

Between 2010 and 2021, the number of children ages 17 and under with immigrant parents grew by 6 percent, from 17 million to 18 million. This was a significantly smaller rate of growth than during the era from 2000-2010, when the number grew by 30 percent, from 13.1 million.

This growth has been driven by the steadily increasing number of U.S.-born children born with immigrant parents. Their numbers increased by 9 percent between 2010 and 2021, from 14.6 million up to 15.8 million. This followed rapid growth of 40 percent between 2000—when their population was 10.4 million—to 2010.

Meanwhile, the population of first-generation immigrant children has declined over the last 20 years. It dropped by 8 percent between 2010 and 2021, from 2.4 million to 2.2 million, after a 12 percent decline from 2000 to 2010, at the start of which there were 2.7 million first-generation immigrant children.

How many children living with immigrant parents are in low-income families?

Regardless of nativity, 25.1 million children under 18 lived in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold in 2021 (amounting to $55,000 for a family of four with two children). Of them, 7.7 million (or 31 percent) had one or more foreign-born parent.

Of the 18 million children of immigrants, 43 percent were in low-income families, a higher rate than for children of U.S.-born parents (34 percent of the 51.6 million).

► For state-level estimates of children of immigrants and share in low-income families, see the Demographic and Social Profiles in the State Immigration Data Profiles, online at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

In which states do most children in immigrant families live?

In terms of absolute numbers, the top states for children under age 18 living with immigrant parents in 2021 were California (3.8 million), Texas (2.4 million), New York and Florida (1.4 million each), and New Jersey (803,000). These states accounted for 55 percent of the 18 million U.S. children with immigrant parents.

In terms of the share of children who had immigrant parents, the top states in 2021 were California (where 46 percent of all children had immigrant parents), New Jersey (41 percent), New York (37 percent), and Florida and Nevada (35 percent each).

Which states have experienced the fastest growth of the number of children in immigrant families?

Traditional immigrant destinations such as Florida and Texas experienced the largest absolute growth in the number of children with immigrant parents between 2010 and 2021, but other states have seen much larger relative growth (see Table 3). In states such as North Dakota, the initial number of children with immigrant parents was quite small, so relatively small absolute increases have translated into high-percent growth.

Table 3. Top U.S. States by Absolute and Percent Growth in Children with Immigrant Parents, 2010-21

Rank	Absolute Growth		Percent Change	
1	Florida	251,000	North Dakota	95%
2	Texas	230,000	Montana	77%
3	New Jersey	124,000	South Dakota	70%
4	Pennsylvania	101,000	Wyoming	66%
5	Maryland	92,000	District of Columbia	63%

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2021 ACS.

Permanent Immigration

How many immigrants obtain lawful permanent residence (also known as getting a green card)?

In fiscal year (FY) 2021, 740,000 immigrants became lawful permanent residents (LPRs, also known as green-card holders). This was a 5 percent increase over the 707,000 new green cards issued in FY 2020, which covered the end of the Trump administration and the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic and marked the lowest number since 2003 and the first time the figure dropped below 1 million since 2013, when 991,000 people obtained green cards. The number of new LPRs in FY 2021 represented a decrease of 444,000 (37 percent) from the recent high of almost 1.2 million in FY 2016.

Much of the recent decline in new LPRs is due to the fewer granted to individuals living outside the country, as result of processing and other delays during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past decade, immigrants obtaining LPR status have been about evenly divided between those already living in the United States who are adjusting their status and those applying from abroad. But in FY 2021, the 227,000 new green cards issued to applicants abroad represented just 31 percent of the total, and an almost 50 percent decline from the nearly 454,000 issued in FY 2019. The overwhelming majority of these new arrivals (83 percent) were immediate family members of U.S. citizens and LPRs.

Meanwhile, approximately 69 percent (513,000) of the 740,000 new LPRs in FY 2021 received green cards from within the United States. Most of these new permanent residents were spouses, children, and parents of U.S. citizens and LPRs, followed by people who obtained their green cards through employment or after initially entering the country as refugees and asylees.

► Trace changing trends in permanent immigration over time with the Legal Immigration to the United States, 1820-Present data tool, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

► For more on the impact of immigration backlogs during the COVID-19 pandemic, read the U.S. Policy Beat article "After a Slump, Legal Immigration to the United States Is Returning to Pre-Pandemic Levels," which you can find at bit.ly/USPolicyBeat.

Under which categories are permanent immigrants admitted?

There are four main pathways to obtain a green card: through a family relationship, employment sponsorship, humanitarian protection (for refugees and asylees), and the Diversity Visa (DV) lottery (also known as the green-card lottery). Some categories within these pathways are capped at the number of new green cards that can be issued each year.

Of the 740,000 immigrants receiving green cards in FY 2021, 52 percent were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (an uncapped visa category), followed by 9 percent who were family-related immigrants (whose admission is limited by visa and country caps). About 26 percent of new LPRs were sponsored by their employers or self-petitioned, including investors who create jobs, a jump from 21 percent of new LPRs in FY 2020 and 14 percent in FY 2019. Meanwhile, 8 percent adjusted from refugee or asylee status and approximately 2 percent were diversity lottery winners.

What are the most common countries of origin for new permanent immigrants?

The top six countries of birth for new LPRs in FY 2021 were Mexico (14 percent), India (13 percent), mainland China (7 percent), the Philippines (4 percent), and the Dominican Republic and Cuba (3 percent apiece). Together, these countries represented about 44 percent of all new green-card recipients in FY 2021.

How many people are selected in the Diversity Visa lottery and where do they come from?

The Diversity Visa lottery is available to individuals from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. Created in 1990, the lottery sets aside 55,000 green cards annually, of which 5,000 must be used for applicants under the Nicaraguan and Central America Relief Act of 1997.

Interest in the lottery is significantly higher than the amount of available visas; about 6.7 million qualified applications were filed for the DV-2021, covering 11.8 million applicants plus their spouses and minor children. This number was down from 14.7 million applications in DV-2020 and 14.4 million in DV-2019. (The number of applications varies each year in part because the list of eligible countries is modified annually.) Before receiving permission to immigrate, lottery winners must provide proof of a high school education or its equivalent or show two years of work experience within the past five years in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience. They also must pass a medical exam and a background check.

In FY 2021, 15,000 people received a green card as diversity immigrants, representing approximately 2 percent of the 740,000 new LPRs. The two leading countries of birth of DV recipients were Nepal and Ukraine, together accounting for about 13 percent of the 15,000 DV recipients in FY 2021. Other top countries of origin were Morocco and Algeria (5 percent each), followed by Albania, Cameroon, Venezuela, and Turkey (4 percent each).

For some countries, the Diversity Visa lottery represents a major share of all new LPRs. For example, 40 percent of all nationals of Fiji and 38 percent of those from Algeria who obtained LPR status in FY 2021 did so through the green-card lottery. Shares were also high for nationals of Tajikistan (31 percent), Djibouti (27 percent), and Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Albania (26 percent).

► Read the most recent State Department Visa Bulletin for more on the DV lottery.

► For more information on the Diversity Visa program, read *The Diversity Visa Program Holds Lessons for Future Legal Immigration Reform*, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-VisaPolicy.

Temporary Visas

How many nonimmigrant visas does the State Department issue each year?

The 6.8 million nonimmigrant visas issued by the State Department in FY 2022—which include tourists and other short-term visitors—represented a non-surprising, post-pandemic rapid increase of 144 percent from the 2.8 million issued in FY 2021, the lowest number since 1996.

Sixty-six percent of nonimmigrant visas issued in FY 2022 were temporary business and tourist visas (B and BCC visas). The next largest visa class was for academic students and exchange visitors and their family members (F and J visa categories) and temporary workers and trainees and their family members (H visa categories), which each comprised about 11 percent.

Definition
Nonimmigrants are citizens of other countries who come to the United States temporarily for a specific purpose, such as education or tourism. There are more than 80 classes of nonimmigrant visas, including temporary workers and trainees, religious workers, intracompany transferees, foreign students, visitors for business or for pleasure, international representatives, and foreign government officials. Most classes of nonimmigrants must have a permanent home abroad and most can be accompanied by a spouse and minor children. Nonimmigrants are restricted to the activities allowed by their visa while in the United States.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Trump administration's travel ban were some of the reasons for the sharp decline in nonimmigrant visa issuances in FY 2021. In FY 2022, the State Department began to issue visas at a rate surpassing pre-COVID levels in categories for students as well as temporary workers, trainees, and their family members. For these nonimmigrant visas (temporary workers, research scholars, short-term scholars, and specialists included), the State Department has waived the interview requirement in an attempt to reduce wait times to enter the country.

Note: *The number of visas issued does not necessarily match the number of foreign nationals who entered the United States that year because some nonimmigrant visas may not be used.*

How many nonimmigrant admissions does DHS grant each year?

Roughly 1 million foreign nationals (along with their immediate family members) receive employ-ment-based temporary visas each year. In FY 2022, the Department of State issued a total of 1.1 million such visas in multiple categories, up from 965,000 in FY 2019. Among these were approximately 298,000 H-2A seasonal agriculture workers visas, 208,000 H-1B specialty occupation worker visas, 125,000 H-2B seasonal nonagricultural worker, and 73,000 L-1 intracompany transferee visas.

Note: Temporary workers and trainees include workers in specialty occupations (H-1B visa), seasonal agricultural workers (H-2A), seasonal nonagricultural workers (H-2B), workers with extraordinary ability or achievements (O-1 and O-2), athletes and artists (P-1, P-2, and P-3), intracompany transferees (L-1), treaty traders and investors (E-1, E-2, and E-3), people working for employers in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and their immediate families (CW-1 and CW-2), representatives of foreign information media (I-1), workers in international cultural exchange programs (Q-1), workers in religious occupations (R-1), and TN visas reserved for Canadian and Mexican professionals, as well as their spouses and minor children.

► Want more information about temporary nonimmigrant population trends? Read "Temporary Visa Holders in the United States," which you can find at bit.ly/ImmigrantSpotlights.

► Understand the post-pandemic trend in U.S. immigration with the article "After a Slump, Legal Immigration to the United States Is Returning to Pre-Pandemic Levels," online at bit.ly/USPolicyBeat.

► Read the State Department's Annual Reports of the Visa Office and fact sheet on Visa Refusals.

How many nonimmigrant admissions does DHS grant each year?

Foreign nationals were admitted into the United States for nonimmigrant purposes 35.3 million times in FY 2021—a 59 percent decrease from the 86.1 million in FY 2020 and an 81 percent decrease from the 186.2 million in FY 2019. Of the 35.3 million admissions, 21.7 million were admissions of Canadians and Mexicans traveling for business or pleasure, who are exempt from completing the I-94 arrival/departure form at the port of entry; DHS does not provide characteristics for this group.

The remaining 13.6 million temporary admissions of nonimmigrants who filled out the I-94 form were 63 percent fewer than the 37.2 million admissions a year earlier and 83 percent fewer than the 81.6 million in 2019.

Most of the I-94 admissions in FY 2021 were those of tourists (66 percent) or temporary workers and their families (14 percent), followed by business travelers (10 percent; see Table 4).

These data are for the number of times people were admitted into the country—not the number of individuals who were admitted (in other words, a single individual can be admitted multiple times in a year). Often, temporary visitors stay in the United States for only a short period, such as for the duration of their vacation or business trip.

Table 4. Nonimmigrant Admissions by Category, FY 2021 (I-94 only)

	Number of Admissions	**Share of Total**
TOTAL	13,623,000	100.0%
Tourists	9,055,000	66.5%
Temporary workers and families	1,844,000	13.5%
Temporary visitors for business	1,346,000	9.9%
Students and families	799,000	5.9%
Exchange visitors	174,000	1.3%
Transit admissions	211,000	1.6%
Diplomats and other representatives	161,000	1.2%
Fiancé(e) and child admissions	19,000	0.1%
Other	13,000	0.1%

Notes: Nonimmigrant admissions represent the number of entries. Individuals may have multiple entries within the year. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics only reports characteristics of nonimmigrants who must complete an I-94 arrival/departure form at entry.
Source: MPI tabulation of data from DHS, *2021 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2022).

Only once has the DHS Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) estimated the number of individuals who came temporarily, in FY 2016. For that year, DHS estimated that 42.7 million individuals entered as I-94 nonimmigrants on various temporary visas, each of whom was admitted 1.8 times on average. Of these nonimmigrants, 34.2 million entered as tourists and 3.7 million entered as business visitors; 15 million tourists and 1.7 million business travelers were from Visa Waiver Program countries, meaning they did not need a visa to enter the United States. An additional 1 million international students entered on F-1 visas. OIS additionally estimated that about 290,000 individuals were admitted on high-skilled worker H-1B visas (mostly from India, China, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Mexico) and nearly 82,00 on nonagricultural temporary or seasonal worker H-2B visas (mostly from Mexico, Jamaica, Guatemala, South Africa, and Canada)

Note: Nonimmigrant admissions represent the number of entries. Individuals may have multiple entries within the year.

► Read the DHS fact sheet on *Nonimmigrant Admissions and Estimated Nonimmigrant Individuals*.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

How many refugees enter the United States each year, and where were they from?

Every year, the president in consultation with Congress sets the annual refugee admissions ceiling and allocations by region of origin. The Biden administration set the ceiling at 125,000 each for FY 2022 and FY 2023, an increase from the revised FY 2021 limit of 62,500 (the Trump administration had originally set the FY 2021 ceiling at 15,000, but the Biden administration modified it after entering office). The lowest limit since the resettlement program was formally created in 1980 was set by the Trump administration for FY 2020, at 18,000.

This number is a ceiling, and the number of resettled refugees does not always reach this limit. Due to the reduced capacity of the resettlement program and COVID-19-related logistic challenges, slightly fewer than 25,500 refugees were resettled in the United States in FY 2022, amounting to 20 percent of the 125,000 allocated spaces for the year. For the first five months of FY 2023 (October 2022 through February 2023), 12,300 refugees arrived in the United States, which is 10 percent of the number of available spaces.

In FY 2022, refugees' primary countries of nationality were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Combined, the nearly 19,400 refugees from these countries accounted for 76 percent of all refugees resettled that year. Another 2,600 refugees were resettled from Guatemala, El Salvador, Moldova, and Iraq. Together, nationals of these ten countries comprised 87 percent (more than 22,000) of all refugee arrivals in FY 2022 (see Table 5).

> **Notes on Refugees and Asylees**
>
> **What is the difference between a refugee and an asylee?** In the United States, the main difference is the person's location at the time of application. Refugees are nearly always outside the United States when they are considered for resettlement, whereas asylum seekers submit their applications while physically present in or at a port of entry to the United States.
>
> **Asylum seekers can submit an asylum request either affirmatively or defensively.** The affirmative asylum process applies to people who initially file an asylum application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as well as those who subsequently have their application referred by USCIS to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). The defensive asylum process applies to people in removal proceedings who appear before EOIR and people who apply for asylum at U.S. borders and points of entry.

Table 5. Top Countries of Refugee Admissions by Nationality, FY 2022

	Refugee Admissions	Share of Total Admissions
TOTAL	25,465	100.0%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	7,810	30.7%
Syria	4,556	17.9%
Myanmar	2,156	8.5%
Sudan	1,669	6.6%
Afghanistan	1,618	6.4%
Ukraine	1,610	6.3%
Guatemala	1,085	4.3%
El Salvador	519	2.0%
Moldova	507	2.0%
Iraq	498	2.0%

Source: MPI tabulation of Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) data from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

► For more data on refugees, including top resettlement states, read the *Migration Information Source* Spotlight on "Refugees and Asylees in the United States," which you can find at bit.ly/MPIRefugeeAsylum.

What is the sex ratio and median age of the admitted refugee population?

About 49 percent of refugees admitted into the United States in FY 2021 were female. The median age of all FY 2021 arrivals was 22 years old.

What are the most common religions of admitted refugees?

Refugees who identified as Christian made up 57 percent of all admitted refugees in FY 2022. Muslim refugees comprised 39 percent of admitted refugees. The remainder included Buddhists (2 percent), Hindus and Jews (less than 0.2 percent combined), and those who reported no religious affiliation or being atheists (about 2 percent).

Overall, the largest share of refugees admitted to the United States have been Christians. Between FY 2010 and FY 2022, Christians represented 48 percent (307,800) of the 637,800 refugees, compared to 34 percent (214,400) who were Muslim. FY 2016 marked the only year since 2010 when the United States resettled more Muslim refugees (38,900 individuals, or 46 percent of the total 85,000 refugees resettled that year) than Christians (37,500 individuals, or 44 percent of the total).

Note: Refugee demographic data is based on self-identification, so religious breakdowns include major religions as well as denominations.

What are the most common languages spoken by refugees?

In FY 2020, the top languages spoken by refugees were Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, and Kiswahili. Rounding out the top ten were Spanish, Kinyarwanda, Sgaw Karen, Kibembe, Tigrinya, and Dari. Speakers of these ten languages made up 71 percent of all refugees resettled that year

How many asylum applications are filed each year?

In FY 2022, nearly 198,000 affirmative applications were filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), representing a 224 percent increase from FY 2021 and the highest number of affirmative applications filed since FY 2017.

Meanwhile, 226,000 defensive asylum applications were filed with the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) in FY 2022. This was the most on record and marks a significant increase from FY 2021, when 65,000 applications were filed.

What is the asylum approval rate?

The approval rate in FY 2022 for asylum applications filed with USCIS was 34 percent, an increase from 28 percent in FY 2021. Approval rates from applications filed through EOIR also increased, to 47 percent in FY 2022 up from 34 percent in FY 2021.

What is the current asylum application backlog?

Due to the large application volume and limited resources, both the affirmative and defensive asylum systems have extensive backlogs. Based on USCIS data, the backlog in September 2022 was 605,000 cases, up from nearly 413,000 at the end of FY 2021. In FY 2022, the total backlog for EOIR (including affirmative and defensive claims) was 703,000, down from 714,000 in FY 2021.

How many people receive asylum status?

In FY 2021, 17,700 individuals were granted asylum after seeking protection upon or after arrival in the United States, including principal applicants, their spouses, and unmarried children under age 21. This represented a 43 percent decrease from the almost 31,000 grants in FY 2020 and a 61 drop from the 46,000 people granted asylum in FY 2019. In FY 2021, an additional 2,150 individuals received derivative asylum status in the United States as immediate family members of principal applicants and 2,170 were approved for derivative status outside the United States. (Note that this number reflects travel documents issued to these family members, not their arrival in the United States.)

Fifty-eight percent of asylum grants came affirmatively through USCIS (rather than defensively through the immigration courts), of which there were 10,300 in FY 2021, down 37 percent from 16,400 in FY 2020 and 62 percent from 27,000 in FY 2019, the highest since FY 2003.

Where are most asylum seekers from?

Venezuela was the top country of origin for those receiving asylum in FY 2021, with 2,100 people (or 12 percent of total asylum grants), followed closely by China, with close to 2,000 individuals (11 percent). Other top countries of origin were El Salvador (with 1,500 individuals), Guatemala (1,300), and Turkey (1,100). Together, nationals of these five countries made up 45 percent of those receiving asylum in FY 2021.

▶ For more information, see the USCIS affirmative asylum quarterly reports, EOIR's workload and adjudication statistics data on asylum cases, and the *Refugees and Asylees Annual Flow Report* from DHS's Office of Immigration Statistics.

▶ For more on the immigration court backlog and asylum share, see the MPI report *The U.S. Asylum System in Crisis: Charting a Way Forward*, which you can find at bit.ly/MPIRefugeeAsylum.

Unauthorized Immigrants

How many unauthorized immigrants are in the United States?

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates there were about 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States in 2019, accounting for 23 percent of the U.S. immigrant population. The unauthorized population was largely stable in size from 2007 to 2019. While more recent data are yet not available, the population has likely increased since 2019, due to the large number of border arrivals in recent years.

Figure 5. Citizenship and Legal Status of the U.S. Foreign-Born Population, 2019
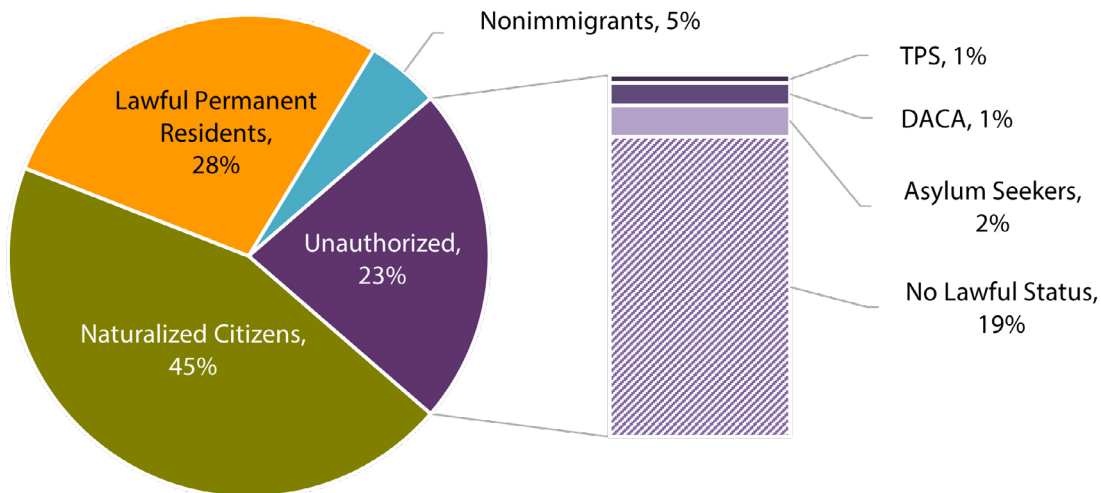
Notes: DACA is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and TPS is Temporary Protected Status.
Sources: These 2019 data result from MPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015–19 American Community Survey (ACS), pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), weighted to 2019 unauthorized immigrant population estimates provided by Jennifer Van Hook. Data on DACA recipients are from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Approximate Active DACA Recipients: As of June 30, 2019," accessed December 8, 2021. Data on TPS beneficiaries are from Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018). Data on asylum seekers are from USCIS, "Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization, All Receipts, Approvals, Denials Grouped by Eligibility Category and Filing Type," accessed December 8, 2021.

Almost half of the 11 million unauthorized immigrants resided in three states as of 2019: California (25 percent), Texas (16 percent), and New York (8 percent). The vast majority (81 percent) lived in 176 counties with 10,000 or more unauthorized immigrants each, of which the top five—Los Angeles County, California; Harris County, Texas; Dallas County, Texas; Cook County, Illinois; and Orange County, California—accounted for 20 percent of all unauthorized immigrants.

► Visit the Migration Data Hub's Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles for detailed sociodemographic information about unauthorized immigrants nationwide, in 41 states and the District of Columbia, and 130 counties as well as topline estimates of unauthorized immigrant populations for 273 counties: bit.ly/MPI-Unauthorized-Profiles.

► MPI estimates of the number of unauthorized individuals who could receive legal status under various policy scenarios, including DREAMers, essential workers, and farmworkers, are in *Back on the Table: U.S. Legalization and the Unauthorized Immigrant Groups that Could Factor in the Debate*. See also *MPI Estimates of Potential Beneficiaries under the DREAM Act of 2021*. Find these publications at bit.ly/MPI-DREAM-DeferredAction.

► See the article "Immigration Has Been a Defining, Often Contentious, Element Throughout U.S. History," available at bit.ly/MPI-US-Resources.

What are unauthorized immigrants' countries of birth?

Mexicans and Central Americans accounted for roughly two-thirds (67 percent, or 7.4 million) of U.S. un-authorized immigrants in 2019, according to MPI estimates. About 1.7 million (15 percent) were from Asia; 907,000 (8 percent) from South America; 440,000 (4 percent) from Europe, Canada, or Oceania; 327,000 (3 percent) from the Caribbean; and 295,000 (3 percent) from Africa.

Unauthorized immigrants' top countries of birth were Mexico (48 percent), El Salvador and Guatemala (7 percent each), India (5 percent), and Honduras (4 percent).

► Use the interactive map, Unauthorized Immigrant Populations by Country and Region, Top States and Counties of Residence, 2019 to view top U.S. concentrations by country or region of origin. Find it at bit.ly/MPI-US-Maps.

How many unauthorized immigrants live with children under age 18?

About 4.3 million unauthorized immigrants (41 percent of all unauthorized immigrants ages 15 and older) lived with one or more children under age 18 in 2019, MPI estimates. Of this group, about 81 percent (3.5 million) resided with at least one U.S.-citizen child under age 18, and 19 percent (806,000) lived with one or more children who were not U.S. citizens.

How many children under age 18 live with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent?

Approximately 5.5 million children under age 18 lived with an unauthorized immigrant parent as of 2019, representing 7 percent of the U.S. child population. About 86 percent (4.7 million) of these children were U.S. citizens, 13 percent (726,000) were themselves unauthorized, and 1 percent (61,000) were legally pres-ent, including LPRs and those with temporary visas.

How many people are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program under original rules and how many applications have been received since its launch in 2012?

The DACA program, announced in 2012, offers two years of deportation relief and work authorization to eligible young unauthorized immigrants. To be eligible, one must be at least 15 years old; have entered the United States before age 16; have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007; be enrolled in school, have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent, or be an honorably discharged veteran; and have not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors; or other-wise pose a threat to public safety or national security.

The Trump administration attempted to terminate DACA in 2017, but after multiple court challenges the program has remained alive, albeit closed to new entrants. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2020 that rescinding DACA violated federal law, and USCIS briefly began accepting new applications. The Biden administration attempted to revive and expand the program, but ongoing court challenges mean that as of this writing DHS is prohibited from granting DACA requests and accompanying requests for employment authorization made by new applicants.

MPI estimates that as of December 2022, 1.5 million individuals were eligible for DACA under its original rules, 1.2 million of whom were immediately eligible under the program's age and educational requirements (the rest were eligible aside from the education requirements or were too young but estimated to be eligible once they reached age 15).

Between August 15, 2012 (when the government began accepting applications) and September 30, 2022, nearly 835,100 applicants were approved, suggesting this is the maximum number of people who have ever held DACA status during the life of the program. USCIS granted 82 percent of the 1 million accepted initial applications; 8 percent (83,600) were denied, and 94,700 remained pending.

Among the 1 million accepted initial applications since the program's inception (as of September 30, 2022), individuals' top states of residence are California (28 percent), Texas (17 percent), Illinois and New York (5 percent each), and Florida (4 percent). The top five countries of origin of accepted applicants are Mexico (79 percent), El Salvador (4 percent), Guatemala (3 percent), Honduras (2 percent), and South Korea (1 percent).

How many people currently have DACA status?

USCIS reports that 589,660 individuals had active DACA status as of September 30, 2022.

The top states of residence for active DACA participants were California (29 percent), Texas (16 percent), and Illinois (5 percent), followed by New York, Florida, North Carolina, and Arizona (about 4 percent each).

Active DACA program participants' top countries of origin of were Mexico (81 percent), El Salvador (4 percent), Guatemala (3 percent), Honduras (2 percent), and Peru, South Korea, Brazil, Ecuador, and Colombia (about 1 percent each).

► View MPI estimates of DACA program participation numbers and the immediately eligible at national and state levels, as well as for top countries of origin, at bit.ly/MPI-DACATools.

► Want a full history of DACA? Read the U.S. Policy Beat article "At Its 10th Anniversary, DACA Faces a Tenuous Future Despite Societal Benefits," which you can find online at bit.ly/USPolicyBeat.

How many people are covered by Temporary Protected Status?

Since the Immigration Act of 1990, the United States has occasionally granted a form of humanitarian relief called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) when the origin countries of foreign nationals in the United States experience natural disasters, armed conflicts, or other circumstances making return unsafe. TPS offers work authorization and protection from deportation for periods of six months to 18 months. El Salvador was the

first country to be designated for TPS in 1990, to protect Salvadorans who had fled its civil war. Since then, more than 20 countries have been designated for TPS.

In 2021, the Biden administration added Myanmar and Venezuela to the list of eligible countries and expanded eligibility for those from Haiti. Certain Liberians and residents of Hong Kong were designated for Deferred Enforced Departure, a similar status offering temporary protection from deportation and work authorization. In 2022, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Ukraine were also added to the list of TPS countries, and eligibility for those from South Sudan and Sudan was expanded. In January 2023, DHS extended and redesignated TPS for eligible nationals of Somalia for an additional 18 months.

Collectively, nearly 537,000 individuals in the United States had TPS as of November 2022. Sixteen countries are currently designated: Afghanistan, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

▶ Read more about the TPS program in the *Migration Information Source* article "Temporary Protected Status in the United States: A Grant of Humanitarian Relief that Is Less than Permanent," available at www.migrationinformation.org.

Immigration Enforcement

How many times are unauthorized immigrants stopped at the border each year?

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported nearly 2.8 million combined enforcement encounters at the southern and northern borders in FY 2022, a major increase from 2 million in FY 2021 and 647,000 in FY 2020, when the pandemic suppressed movement around the world.

The vast majority of these FY 2022 encounters (2.4 million) were at the U.S.-Mexico border. This is the highest number of encounters on record, beating the previous high of 1.6 million in FY 2000. Enforcement encounters at the Southwest border increased significantly starting in March 2021. Motivations for migrants seeking protection in the United States vary, but overall the rapid increase in arrivals reflects uneven economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; crises in the Americas, including major displacement from Cuba Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, as well as ongoing violence in Central America; political persecution and other factors driving emigration from China, India, Russia, and Turkey; the change in U.S. presidential administrations and perception of a unique window of opportunity; ever more sophisticated smuggling networks; and other factors.

Definition
The Department of Homeland Security uses the term **enforcement encounters** for both apprehensions and expulsions of migrants at the Southwest border. The term has been used since a pandemic-related public-health order known as Title 42 took effect in March 2020, allowing for the immediate expulsion of anyone entering the country without authorization, including individuals who Intend to seek asylum.
Encounters are events, not individuals. In other words, the same individual can be encountered more than once, with each encounter counted separately. The recidivism rate has increased sharply since the Title 42 expulsions policy began, given intercepted migrants are not being put into formal removal proceedings that could trigger criminal sanctions upon a future re-entry.

Notably, data on encounters refer to individual actions, not the number of people who attempted to cross the border without authorization. The Title 42 order to immediately expel migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic, which remains in place at least until mid-May 2023, has changed the consequences for individuals crossing the border, and many have responded by repeating attempts on multiple occasions, contributing to higher numbers of encounters.

► Read more about the rapid rise in border encounters in FY 2022 with the MPI commentary *Record-Breaking Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border Overlook the Bigger Story* available at bit.ly/MPIBorderSecurity.

► Find more information about changing U.S. immigration policy in the U.S. Policy Beat articles "Biden at the Two-Year Mark: Significant Immigration Actions Eclipsed by Record Border Numbers" and "Imminent End of Formal U.S. Pandemic Emergencies Marks New Era in Immigration Realm," online at bit.ly/USPolicyBeat.

How many families and unaccompanied children have been detained at the U.S.-Mexico border?

In FY 2022, authorities recorded 561,000 encounters of family units (children and adults travelling as families) at the border, up from 480,000 in FY 2021. There were also 152,000 encounters of unaccompanied minors at the border in FY 2022, up from 147,000 the previous year.

Family units made up 24 percent of encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border in FY 2022, unaccompanied minors comprised 6 percent, and single adults accounted for 70 percent) of all encounters. In FY 2022 the largest number of family units came from Honduras, while the plurality of unaccompanied minors were from Guatemala.

Note: The term "family unit" refers to individuals—either a child under 18 years old, parent, or legal guardian— apprehended with a family member by the U.S. Border Patrol.

How many people are arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) within the United States each year?

ICE made 142,800 administrative arrests in FY 2022, up from 74,100 the year before. The increase in administrative arrests was largely in the "other immigration violation" category, which ICE attributes to the increase in Southwest border apprehensions and the ICE's assistance to CBP in processing those arrivals.

How many people are deported per year?

In FY 2022 ICE conducted nearly 72,200 removals and 117,200 Title 42 expulsions.

► For more information, see *FY 2022 ICE Annual Report*.

Note: Removals and returns, which are carried out both by ICE and CBP, result in the confirmed movement of inadmissible or deportable aliens out of the United States. Title 42 expulsions carried out at the border are not included in these numbers.

Naturalization Trends

How many immigrants are naturalized citizens?

More than 24 million immigrants were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2021, accounting for approximately 53 percent of all 45.3 million immigrants and 7 percent of the total U.S. population (331.9 million).

Of these naturalized citizens, 37 percent were naturalized between 2010 and 2021, 27 percent between 2000 and 2009, and 36 percent prior to 2000.

How many immigrants become U.S. citizens annually?

USCIS naturalized about 814,0000 green-card holders in FY 2021, a 30 percent increase from the 628,000 people who became citizens in FY 2020. There were 789,100 petitions for naturalization filed in FY 2021, a decrease of 18 percent from a year earlier (968,000). At the same time, the number of denied petitions decreased by 6 percent, from 80,600 in FY 2020 to 85,200 in FY 2021.

The amount of time USCIS takes to process naturalization applications increased from an average of 5.6 months in FY 2016 to 11.5 months in FY 2021, but has since declined to 6.7 months as of the end of January 2023.

From a historical perspective, the number of annual naturalizations has increased dramatically in recent decades. On average, fewer than 120,000 LPRs became citizens each year between FY 1950 and FY 1969, 150,000 in the 1970s, 210,000 in the 1980s, 500,000 in the 1990s, 680,000 during the 2000s, and 721,000 between 2010 and 2020.

Naturalizations reached an all-time high in FY 2008, increasing 59 percent from 660,000 the prior year to 1,047,000. This came as a result of impending application fee increases and the promotion of U.S. citizenship in advance of the 2008 presidential election.

► For more historical data on naturalization, see the Naturalization in the United States, 1910-Present data tool, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-US-Immigration-Trends.

► Find more sociodemographic information in the article "Naturalized Citizens in the United States," available online at bit.ly/ImmigrantSpotlights.

► Understand the challenges to naturalization with the MPI report *A Rockier Road to U.S. Citizenship? Findings of a Survey on Changing Naturalization Procedures*. Find it at bit.ly/USnatz2020.

How many foreign nationals become U.S. citizens through military naturalization?

In FY 2021, about 4,500 foreign-born military personnel became U.S. citizens, a 72 percent increase from FY 2020 (2,600) and roughly on par with FY 2018 (4,500).

► For more information on the foreign born in the U.S. military, see *Noncitizens in the U.S. Military: Navigating National Security Concerns and Recruitment Needs*, which you can find at bit.ly/MPI-Citizenship.

Where are newly naturalized citizens from?

Of the new U.S. citizens in FY 2021, 14 percent were born in Mexico, 7 percent in India, and 6 percent each in the Philippines and Cuba (see Table 6). Immigrants from these four countries, together with those from China, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Jamaica, El Salvador, and Colombia accounted for 50 percent of the 814,000 immigrants who naturalized that year.

Where in the United States do newly naturalized citizens live?

Nearly 60 percent of people naturalized as U.S. citizens in FY 2021 lived in one of five states: California (21 percent, or 171,900 individuals); Florida (13 percent, or 109,200); New York (11 percent, or 90,000); Texas (9 percent, or 77,000); and New Jersey (5 percent, or 40,000).

The top metropolitan areas with the largest number of new naturalizations were the greater New York (116,200), Los Angeles (80,700), Miami (68,900), Washington, DC (30,100), and Dallas (26,200) metropolitan areas. These five metro areas were the home to 40 percent of all newly naturalized citizens in FY 2021.

How many green-card holders are eligible to naturalize?

According to the latest available DHS estimates, about 9.2 million of the 12.9 million green-card holders residing in the United States on January 1, 2022 were eligible to become naturalized citizens based on how long they had held LPR status. The top five nationalities of LPRs eligible to naturalize were Mexico (2.5 million), China (490,000), the Philippines (360,000), Cuba (340,000), and the Dominican Republic (330,000).

How long does it take on average for green-card holders to naturalize?

On average, immigrants who became U.S. citizens in FY 2021 had previously held green cards for about seven years, the same length of time as those being naturalized in FY 2020 and a decrease from an average of eight years the three previous years. The time varied by region of origin: immigrants born in Africa spent an average of six years in LPR status before naturalization; those born in Asia, the Caribbean, and South America spent an average of seven years in that status; Europeans spent an average of eight years, new citizens from Oceania spent an average of nine years; and those from Central America spent ten years with a green card.

In general, the requirements for naturalization are being at least 18 years of age, passing English and civic exams, residing in the United States with LPR status continuously for at least five years (three years for those married to a U.S. citizen).

Table 6. Top Ten Countries of Origin of Newly Naturalized Citizens, FY 2021

	Naturalized Persons	Share of Total
TOTAL	814,000	100.0%
Mexico	113,000	13.9%
India	57,000	7.0%
Philippines	48,000	6.0%
Cuba	48,000	5.9%
China, People's Republic	29,000	3.6%
Dominican Republic	28,000	3.5%
Vietnam	24,000	3.0%
Jamaica	21,000	2.5%
El Salvador	18,000	2.3%
Colombia	18,000	2.2%

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, *2021 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.*

At what rate do immigrants naturalize?

The number of green-card holders who naturalize every year depends on many factors, including the number of people who are eligible, application processing times, and stringency and length of background checks. This number can also be affected by barriers to naturalize, such as high application fees, as well as personal motivations. For instance, green-card holders from mainland China may be less inclined to become U.S. citizens because China prohibits dual citizenship, whereas immigrants from countries that allow dual citizenship may have greater incentive.

The share of green-card holders who naturalize within a certain time period, such as within ten years of receiving a green card, varies by country and region of birth and class of admission. This is known as a naturalization rate.

Overall, 53 percent of the immigrant cohort who became LPRs in FY 2008 naturalized by FY 2018, the most recent year for which data are available. A ten-year naturalization rate was the highest for those born in Africa (76 percent) and South America (64 percent) and the lowest for LPRs from North America, including Mexico and Canada (27 percent). The ten-year naturalization rate was nearly 70 percent for Indian-born green-card holders, 60 percent for those from the Philippines, 52 percent for Cubans, 44 percent for LPRs from China, and 27 percent for Mexicans.

In terms of classes of admission, approximately 68 percent of humanitarian migrants and employment-based green-card holders who became LPRs in FY 2008 had become naturalized citizens by FY 2018. Ten-year naturalization rates were lower for those who were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens or other family members of U.S. citizens and LPRs (about 47 percent each).

▶ For more information, read the DHS report *Trends in Naturalization Rates: FY 2018 Update Report*.

Visa Backlogs

How many visa applications for permanent immigration (green cards) are backlogged?

Because of limits on certain visa categories and per-country caps, the U.S. government in some cases is still processing applications that are more than two decades old. In March 2023, the State Department was processing some family-sponsored visa applications dating to November 1997, and employment-related visa applications from June 2012.

Nearly 4.1 million applicants (including spouses and minor children) were on the State Department's immigrant visa waiting list as of November 1, 2022, a 1 percent decline from the more than 4.1 million applicants in the backlog a year previous.

Notes on Visa Backlogs

Two types of backlogs impact the issuance of green cards.

The first is due to visa availability (with caps established in 1990):

► Family-sponsored preferences are limited to 226,000 visas per year.

► Employment-based permanent visas for foreign workers and their families are capped at 140,000 per year worldwide.

► Also, no country can be the origin for more than 7 percent of the total annual number of family-sponsored and employment-based visas (approximately 25,600 visas).

The second type of backlog is due to delays processing applicants' documents, which is related to government capacity as well as increased background and criminal checks.

The overwhelming majority of backlogs were among family-sponsored applicants (more than 3.9 million, including principal applicants and their immediate family members). About 168,000 backlogged applicants were for employment-sponsored channels and their families.

Of the overall 4.1 million applicants, the largest number (1.2 million) were citizens of Mexico, followed by those from the Philippines (296,000), India (294,000), the Dominican Republic (284,000), and Vietnam (229,000). Family- and employment-based prospective immigrants already within the United States who are waiting to adjust their status are not included in the State Department estimates.

USCIS also publishes backlog statistics for petitions approved in one of the five employment-based categories. As of March 2022 (the latest available data as of this writing), nearly 497,000 approved employment-based immigrant petitions were awaiting a priority date. This figure corresponds to the number of primary applicants covered by these petitions but excludes their dependents. To MPI's knowledge, USCIS has not published backlog statistics on other types of green-card applications the agency adjudicates.

In other words, the overall number of people waiting for a green card—within and outside the United States—is likely to be larger than the nearly 4.1 million applicants reported by the State Department (as of November 2022) and 497,000 reported by USCIS (as of March 2022).

► For more details about wait times by immigration category and country of origin, see the State Department's Visa Bulletin.

► Get more information about capped employment- and family-based preference categories with MPI's *Explainer: How the U.S. Legal Immigration System Works*, which you can find at bit.ly/Immigration-Explainers.

► For more on the impact of immigration backlogs during the COVID-19 pandemic, read the U.S. Policy Beat article "Mounting Backlogs Undermine U.S. Immigration System and Impede Biden Policy Changes," available at bit.ly/USPolicyBeat.

► Read *Going to the Back of the Line: A Primer on Lines, Visa Categories, and Wait Times* for more on the green-card backlog: bit.ly/MPI-VisaPolicy.

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bit.ly/topimmigrantstats

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