

U.S. Immigration Basic Facts

From the [Migration Policy Institute \(MPI\)](#) – See their website for more information

U.S. immigrant population stood at almost 40.8 million, or 13 percent of the total U.S. population of 313.9 million.

This is comparable to numbers from 1860 to 1920. The lowest point was 1970 when our population was 5% immigrants

The median age of immigrants was 42.6 years, compared to 35.9 years among the native born.

Thirty percent of the 40.8 million foreign born residing in the United States in 2012 entered between 2000 and 2009, 7 percent entered since 2010

In 2012, close to 46 percent of immigrants (18.7 million) were naturalized U.S. citizens. The remaining 54 percent (22.1 million) included lawful permanent residents, unauthorized immigrants, and legal residents on temporary visas, such as students and temporary workers

In 2012, 46 percent (18.9 million) immigrants reported having Hispanic or Latino origins, Of the 53 million people in 2012 who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, 36 percent (18.9 million) were immigrants

In 2012, there were 25 million Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals ages 5 and older in the United States, accounting for 8.5 percent of the 294 million people ages 5 and older. Spanish speakers - accounted for 64 percent (16.1 million) of the total LEP population.

In 2012, approximately 50 percent (20.3 million) of the 40.6 million immigrants ages 5 and older were LEP.

Between 2000 and 2012, the five states with the largest percent growth* of the immigrant population were South Carolina (91 percent), Alabama (87 percent), Tennessee (83 percent), Arkansas (75 percent), and Wyoming (74 percent),

Number of Mexican residents who immigrate to the U.S. varies between 3.3 and 5.4 migrants per 1,000 people

Immigrants accounted for more than 16 percent (25.7 million) of the 157.6 million workers in the civilian labor force in 2012.

In 2012, 17.4 million children under age 18 lived at home with at least one immigrant parent.

They accounted for 25 percent of the 70.2 million children under age 18 in the United States. 12% of these children were born outside the U.S.

In 2012, 1,031,631 foreign nationals became lawful permanent residents (LPRs), also known as green-card holders, according to DHS data.

47% of these people were new arrivals; 53% were already here

Of the roughly 1 million new LPRs in 2012, 46 percent were an immediate relative of a U.S. citizen, 20 percent entered through a family-sponsored preference, and 14 percent entered through an employment-based preference. Another 15 percent adjusted from refugee or asylee status, and 4 percent were diversity-lottery winners

There are roughly 50,000 diversity visas available each year to countries around the world. This is only 4% of the annual total of 1 million new LPRs

The total number of nonimmigrant (temporary) admissions for 2012 was approximately 165.5 million, including primarily tourists, business travelers, and international students.

The government issued 9 million visas in 2012; 77% of these were for travel or business.

In 2012, 58,179 refugees were admitted to the United States, a roughly 3 percent increase from 2011 (56,384). Bhutan, Burma, and Iraq were the primary countries of nationality for refugees admitted in 2010, 2011, and 2012. The nationals of these three countries made up 71 percent (41,393) of all refugees admitted in 2012. The next seven countries of origin for refugee resettlements in 2012 were Somalia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Altogether, nationals of these ten countries totaled 94 percent (54,916) of all refugee arrivals in 2012.

For fiscal year (FY) 2014 the ceiling was set at 70,000, same as 2013 (down from 80,000 between 2008 and 2011). The Near East/South Asia regions received 47 percent (33,000) of the total regional allocations in response to the refugee crises in Iraq and Burma

In 2012, 29,484 principal applicants and their spouses and/or unmarried children under the age of 21 were granted asylum after seeking protection upon arriving or after arrival in the United States. An additional 13,049 individuals outside of the United States were approved for asylum status as immediate family members of principal applicants. (Note that this number reflects travel documents issued to these family members, not their arrival to the United States.)

Asylees from the top five countries of origin for asylum seekers made up 55 percent (16,228) of all asylees in 2012. China was the top country of origin, with 10,151 Chinese receiving asylum in 2012, accounting for 34 percent of all asylum grants that year. The next four largest origin groups were from Egypt (2,882), Ethiopia (1,122), Venezuela (1,099), and Nepal (974).

Together, nationals of these five countries made up more than half of all individuals who received asylum status in 2012

About 5.5 million children living in the United States in 2010 (the most recently available estimates) had at least one parent who was an unauthorized immigrant, according to the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project. Of this group, about 82 percent (4.5 million) were U.S. citizens by birth and 18 percent (1 million) were unauthorized immigrants themselves. T

There were more than 600,000 apprehensions in 2012 (643,474) by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the two agencies within DHS responsible for the identification and removal of inadmissible noncitizens. The leading countries of nationality of those apprehended in 2012 were Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Nationals from these four countries comprised 92 percent of all apprehensions, with Mexican nationals comprising the overwhelming majority—70 percent—in 2012 (down from 76 percent in 2011)

There were 649,352 removals and returns in 2012, a 9 percent drop from 2011 (710,573 removals and returns)

On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain unauthorized immigrants who entered the United States as children would be able to apply for deferred action, granting relief from deportation and work authorization for two years. MPI estimates that approximately 1.9 million people could be eligible for the DACA initiative. Prospective beneficiaries have to meet a series of requirements, including the following:

- Entered the United States before the age of 16
- Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007
- Are currently in school, have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or are honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. armed forces (including the Coast Guard)
- Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors; or otherwise pose a threat to public safety or national security.

MPI estimated that about 1.09 million unauthorized youths and young adults were eligible to apply because they met both age and education criteria. Between August 15, 2012, when U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began accepting applications, and December 2013 a total of 610,694 of applications were accepted for consideration by the agency. Thus, as of December 2013 (the most recent data offered by USCIS at the time of this article's publication), about 56 percent of the currently eligible population had applied.

In 2012, 18.7 million immigrants were naturalized U.S. citizens, accounting for 46 percent of the foreign-born population (40.8 million) and 6 percent of the total U.S. population (313.9 million) according to ACS estimates

According to DHS data, USCIS naturalized 757,434 LPRs in 2012. The total number of immigrants naturalized increased by 9 percent between 2011 and 2012.

From a historical perspective, the number of naturalizations has increased dramatically in recent decades. On average, 141,000 LPRs naturalized each year between 1970 and 1979, 205,000 in the 1980s; 498,000 in the 1990s, and 682,000 during the 2000s.

According to the latest available USCIS estimates, 13.3 million LPRs resided in the United States in January 1, 2012. Of them, about 8.8 million were eligible to naturalize

The government caps employment-based, permanent visas for foreign workers and their families at 140,000 per year world-wide. Family-sponsored preferences are limited to 226,000 visas per year. Also, no country can receive more than 7 percent of the total annual number of family-sponsored and employment-based visas (approximately 25,600 visas).

In May 2014, the government was processing some family-related visas applications filed as far back as July 1990, and it was still processing some employment-related visa applications from October 2003