

Naturalizations in the United States: 2005

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Each year, hundreds of thousands of foreign nationals become naturalized citizens of the United States. Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon a foreign citizen or national after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act. After naturalization, foreign-born citizens can enjoy the same benefits, rights and responsibilities that the Constitution gives to U.S. citizens, such as the right to vote. They can also apply for a U.S. passport to travel overseas. They receive U.S. government protection and assistance when abroad. This Office of Immigration Statistics *Annual Flow Report* presents information on the number and characteristics of foreign nationals ages 18 years and over who were naturalized during 2005¹.

Data was obtained from administrative records of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security. These records consist of information from applications for naturalization.

In 2005, the total number of persons naturalizing was 604,280. The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (77,089), Philippines (36,673), India (35,962), Vietnam (32,926), and the People's Republic of China (31,708). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (170,489), New York (84,624), and Florida (42,999).

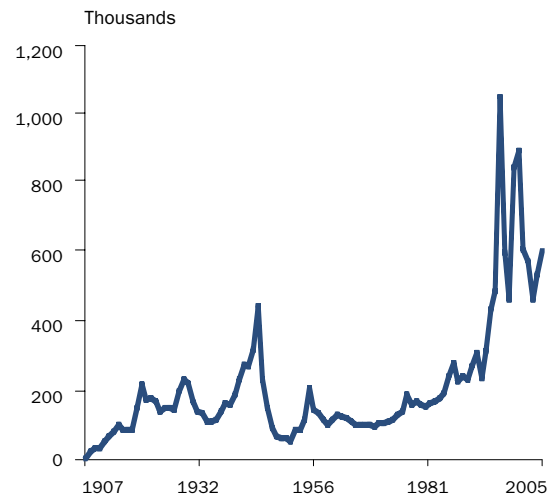
THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

To be naturalized, an applicant generally must fulfill certain requirements set forth in the Immigration and Nationality Act concerning age, lawful admission, and residence in the United States. These general naturalization provisions specify that a foreign national must: be at least 18 years of age; have been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States (be a legal permanent resident); and have resided in the country continuously for at least 5 years. Additional requirements include the ability to speak, read and write the English language; knowledge of the U.S. government and U.S. history; and good moral character.

Special provisions of naturalization law exempt certain applicants from one or more of the requirements of the general provisions. Spouses and children of U.S. citizens

and military classes constitute the main categories of special naturalization. The majority of people naturalizing as spouses of U.S. citizens may do so in 3 years rather than the 5 years prescribed under the general provisions. Under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, foreign-born children under 18 years of age, including adopted children,

Figure 1.
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1907 to 2005



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 1907 to 2005.

¹ In this report, years refer to fiscal years (October 1 to September 30).



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acquire U.S. citizenship automatically if they meet certain requirements. Among the requirements, the children must be lawful permanent residents and have at least one U.S. citizen parent. Acquisition of citizenship means citizenship acquired by law without the need to apply for citizenship. Previously, adopted children were required to apply for citizenship while children who immigrated with their parents derived U.S. citizenship through the naturalization of their parents. In addition, under certain conditions, children of a U.S. citizen who resides abroad may be naturalized. Under certain other conditions, applicants who served honorably during wartime and other conflicts may naturalize without prior admission to permanent resident status. Also, they need not have resided in the United States for a particular length of time. Aliens with lawful permanent resident status who have served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States also are entitled to certain exemptions from the general naturalization requirements.

Every applicant for naturalization who is 18 years of age or older must file an N-400 application for naturalization. All persons filing these applications who meet the preliminary documentary requirements must be interviewed by officers from USCIS to determine their eligibility to naturalize. In most cases, the officer verifies the applicant's knowledge and understanding of the English language as well as the history and government of the United States. Those applicants found qualified are scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or an officer delegated by the Director of USCIS.

DATA

The data presented in this report consist of demographic information taken from the N-400 application. This information includes: date and country of birth; gender; marital status; state and ZIP Code of residence; date of lawful permanent residence; and section of applicable naturalization law. The data were obtained primarily from automated case tracking systems, but if not otherwise available, from the Central Index System of USCIS.

Since 1996, the annual number of persons naturalizing has not always tracked the trend in the number of persons applying for naturalization because of application processing issues. At the end of 2005, there were 552,000 naturalization applications pending a decision. Caution should therefore be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the demand to naturalize and in the demographic composition of persons naturalizing.

RESULTS

The number of persons naturalizing in the United States increased 12 percent from 2004 to 2005. This increase

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005

(Ranked by 2005 persons naturalized)

Region/country of birth	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
REGION:						
Africa	38,830	6.4	34,531	6.4	28,568	6.2
Asia	237,724	39.3	218,974	40.8	192,050	41.5
Europe	97,482	16.1	89,014	16.6	74,186	16.0
North America	180,572	29.9	151,047	28.1	130,848	28.2
Caribbean	64,672	10.7	54,811	10.2	46,154	10.0
Central America	30,965	5.1	24,677	4.6	22,155	4.8
Other North America	84,935	14.1	71,559	13.3	62,539	13.5
Oceania	3,898	0.6	3,551	0.7	2,892	0.6
South America	44,504	7.4	38,676	7.2	33,701	7.3
Unknown	1,270	0.2	1,358	0.3	959	0.2
COUNTRY:						
Mexico	77,089	12.8	63,840	11.9	56,093	12.1
Philippines	36,673	6.1	31,448	5.9	29,081	6.3
India	35,962	6.0	37,975	7.1	29,790	6.4
Vietnam	32,926	5.4	27,480	5.1	25,995	5.6
China, People's Republic	31,708	5.2	27,309	5.1	24,014	5.2
Dominican Republic	20,831	3.4	15,464	2.9	12,627	2.7
Korea	19,223	3.2	17,184	3.2	15,968	3.4
Jamaica	13,674	2.3	12,271	2.3	11,232	2.4
El Salvador	12,174	2.0	9,602	1.8	8,738	1.9
Colombia	11,396	1.9	9,819	1.8	7,962	1.7
Cuba	11,227	1.9	11,236	2.1	7,727	1.7
Iran	11,031	1.8	11,781	2.2	10,807	2.3
Poland	9,801	1.6	10,335	1.9	9,140	2.0
Haiti	9,740	1.6	8,215	1.5	7,263	1.6
Pakistan	9,699	1.6	8,744	1.6	7,431	1.6
Ukraine	9,343	1.5	8,069	1.5	8,239	1.8
Bosnia-Herzegovina	8,921	1.5	8,013	1.5	4,994	1.1
Russia	8,297	1.4	7,586	1.4	6,671	1.4
Taiwan	8,295	1.4	7,889	1.5	6,746	1.5
United Kingdom	8,087	1.3	7,785	1.4	6,733	1.5
Other	218,183	36.1	195,106	36.3	165,953	35.8

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

Table 2.

Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005

(Ranked by 2005 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
California	170,489	28.2	145,594	27.1	135,815	29.3
New York	84,624	14.0	66,234	12.3	63,945	13.8
Florida	42,999	7.1	43,795	8.2	35,170	7.6
Texas	38,553	6.4	35,417	6.6	28,671	6.2
New Jersey	33,160	5.5	30,291	5.6	22,987	5.0
Illinois	27,739	4.6	29,432	5.5	23,425	5.1
Massachusetts	22,685	3.8	16,263	3.0	11,472	2.5
Virginia	17,653	2.9	13,478	2.5	9,593	2.1
Washington	14,817	2.5	12,668	2.4	11,790	2.5
Pennsylvania	13,307	2.2	10,205	1.9	9,448	2.0
Other	138,254	22.9	133,774	24.9	110,888	23.9

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

Table 3.**Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Statistical Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005**

(Ranked by 2005 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan statistical area of residence	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	108,440	17.9	89,926	16.7	82,502	17.8
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	78,184	12.9	66,737	12.4	62,670	13.5
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	27,054	4.5	28,264	5.3	22,808	4.9
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	25,492	4.2	22,934	4.3	23,767	5.1
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL	24,112	4.0	28,853	5.4	24,046	5.2
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria-Rockville, DC-VA-MD-WV	22,473	3.7	19,708	3.7	17,003	3.7
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	18,275	3.0	13,180	2.5	9,209	2.0
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	15,495	2.6	15,409	2.9	10,185	2.2
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	13,417	2.2	8,368	1.6	9,542	2.1
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	13,401	2.2	12,815	2.4	10,377	2.2
Other	257,937	42.7	230,957	43.0	191,095	41.3

Note: Metropolitan areas defined based on Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs).

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

Table 4.**Persons Naturalized by Gender: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005**

Gender	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
Male	267,556	44.3	244,335	45.5	208,930	45.1
Female	335,427	55.5	290,267	54.0	250,832	54.2
Unknown	1,297	0.2	2,549	0.5	3,442	0.7

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

Table 5.**Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005**

Age	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
18 to 24 years	65,195	10.8	60,722	11.3	56,863	12.3
25 to 34 years	160,588	26.6	141,721	26.4	123,564	26.7
35 to 44 years	166,718	27.6	149,662	27.9	127,678	27.6
45 to 54 years	100,631	16.7	88,013	16.4	75,394	16.3
55 to 64 years	63,834	10.6	53,725	10.0	44,301	9.6
65 years and over	47,302	7.8	43,307	8.1	35,400	7.6
Unknown	12	-	1	-	4	-
Median age	39	N/A	38	N/A	38	N/A

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

Table 6.**Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2005**

Marital status	2005		2004		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0	463,204	100.0
Single	132,924	22.0	118,458	22.1	108,013	23.3
Married	397,688	65.8	350,174	65.2	298,361	64.4
Other	73,668	12.2	68,519	12.8	56,830	12.3

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 2003 to 2005.

is primarily attributable to a decline in the number of naturalization applications pending a decision. The number of persons applying for naturalization declined by 60,000 between 2004 and 2005. Although naturalizations have increased since 2003, the average number of naturalizations was approximately 25 percent lower during 2001 to 2005 than in the previous five-year period of 1996 to 2000.

Link with Legal Immigration

The number of persons naturalizing each year is determined partly by trends in legal immigration in preceding years. Because most legal permanent residents become eligible to naturalize after they fulfill a five-year residency requirement, naturalizations typically lag behind legal

immigration. In addition, not all legal permanent residents naturalize. Among all persons ages 16 and over who became legal permanent residents between 1973 and 1989, only 58 percent had naturalized by the end of 2005.²

Historical Trend

Naturalizations increased from an annual average of less than 120,000 during the 1950s to 210,000 during the 1980s (see Figure 1). During the 1990s, naturalizations rose sharply due to several factors. These include the naturalization of nearly 1 million of the 2.7 million undocumented immigrants legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, legislative efforts to restrict public benefits for noncitizens, and a program requiring replacement of permanent resident cards, which led many legal permanent residents to naturalize.

Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in European countries. With increased legal immigration from Asian countries, the arrival of Indo-Chinese refugees in the 1970s, and the historically higher naturalization rate of Asian immigrants, the regional origin of new citizens shifted from Europe to Asia. Asia has been the leading region of origin of new citizens in every year since 1976, except during 1996 to 2000 when IRCA legalization immigrants, nine-tenths of whom were from North American countries, naturalized in large numbers.

Region and Country of Birth

In 2005, 39 percent of persons naturalized were born in Asia compared with 30 percent from North American countries and 16 percent from European countries. The leading country of birth of persons

² Calculated from matched legal immigrant and naturalization records from USCIS.

naturalizing was Mexico (13 percent), followed by the Philippines (6.1 percent), India (6.0 percent), Vietnam (5.4 percent) and the People's Republic of China (5.2 percent). The top 10 countries represented 48 percent of new naturalized citizens in 2005 (see Table 1).

State and Metropolitan Statistical Area of Residence

In 2005, 77 percent of persons naturalized were residents of 10 states. California was home to the largest percentage of persons naturalizing (28 percent), followed by New York and Florida (see Table 2).

Of all new citizens in 2005, 57 percent lived in 10 metropolitan statistical areas (see Table 3)³. The leading metropolitan statistical areas of residence were New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (18 percent), and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (13 percent). Other leading areas of residence were Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI, San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA, and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL.

Gender, Age, and Marital Status

The majority of persons naturalizing are female. In 2005, females accounted for 56 percent of persons naturalizing (see Table 4).

³ Beginning in 2005, the Office of Immigration Statistics redefined metropolitan areas (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas), to conform with new standards issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs). Naturalization data for 2004 and 2003 have been revised to reflect this definitional change. See Federal Register, Vol. 65, No. 249, Wednesday 12/27/2000, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/metroareas122700.pdf>. The most current CBSA definitions are available from OMB at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/infoereg/statpolicy.html#fs>.

Table 7.

Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Median Years in Legal Permanent Resident Status: Selected Fiscal Years 1965 to 2005

Region of birth	Year												
	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Total	8	8	8	8	9	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa	7	7	7	7	10	8	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe	7	7	7	7	7	8	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America	11	11	11	11	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania	9	9	9	9	10	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America	8	8	8	8	9	10	10	9	8	9	10	7	7

Note: Excludes persons who were not required to be legal permanent residents prior to naturalization.
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, fiscal years 1965 to 2005.

More than one-half (54 percent) of new citizens were between ages 25 to 44 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing was 39 years. Persons ages 65 years and over accounted for almost 8 percent of naturalizations in 2005 (see Table 5). Two-thirds (66 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2005 were married and 22 percent were single (see Table 6).

Years in Immigrant Status

The median number of years of residence between the date of legal immigration and the date of naturalization was 8 years among persons naturalized in 2005 (see Table 7). This has remained unchanged since 2002. African and European-born immigrants spent the least time in legal immigrant status (7 years), followed by immigrants from Asia and South America (8 years), Oceania (9 years) and North America (11 years).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Office of Immigration Statistics web page at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics>