
NATURALIZATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2001

This report will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming *2001 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*. All references to Appendices, Charts, Tables, and other sections of the *Statistical Yearbook*, as well as detailed table numbers, appear as they will in the final *Yearbook* edition.

V. NATURALIZATIONS

This section presents information on the number and characteristics of persons who naturalize in the United States.

Naturalization refers to the conferring of U.S. citizenship, by any means, upon a person after birth. (See Appendix 2, p. A.2-8.) There are five ways of becoming a U.S. citizen: naturalization in a court ceremony; naturalization through an administrative hearing; derivation through the naturalization of parents; acquisition at birth abroad to citizen parents; and legislation conferring citizenship upon certain groups of persons (see Limitations of Data). As part of the naturalization process, applicants pledge an oath of allegiance to the United States, thereby renouncing allegiance to their former countries of nationality.

U.S. Naturalization Program

To naturalize, an immigrant 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 an alien must: be at least 18 years of age; have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence; 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. In fiscal year 2001, immigrants naturalizing under the general provisions accounted for 92 percent of those for whom the nationality law provision was reported (Table 46). (Provision of the law was not reported for 5 percent of naturalizations.)

The special provisions of naturalization law exempt aliens 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. Of all new citizens in 2001 with naturalization law provision reported, 8 percent naturalized under the special provisions

(Table 46). Children who immigrate with their parents generally do not apply to naturalize, but derive U.S. citizenship through the naturalization of their parents. Children adopted by U.S. citizens are eligible for administrative naturalization by the INS. These children may be naturalized in court ceremonies prior to reaching age 18—there are no residency requirements. Under certain conditions, aliens who served honorably during war time 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.

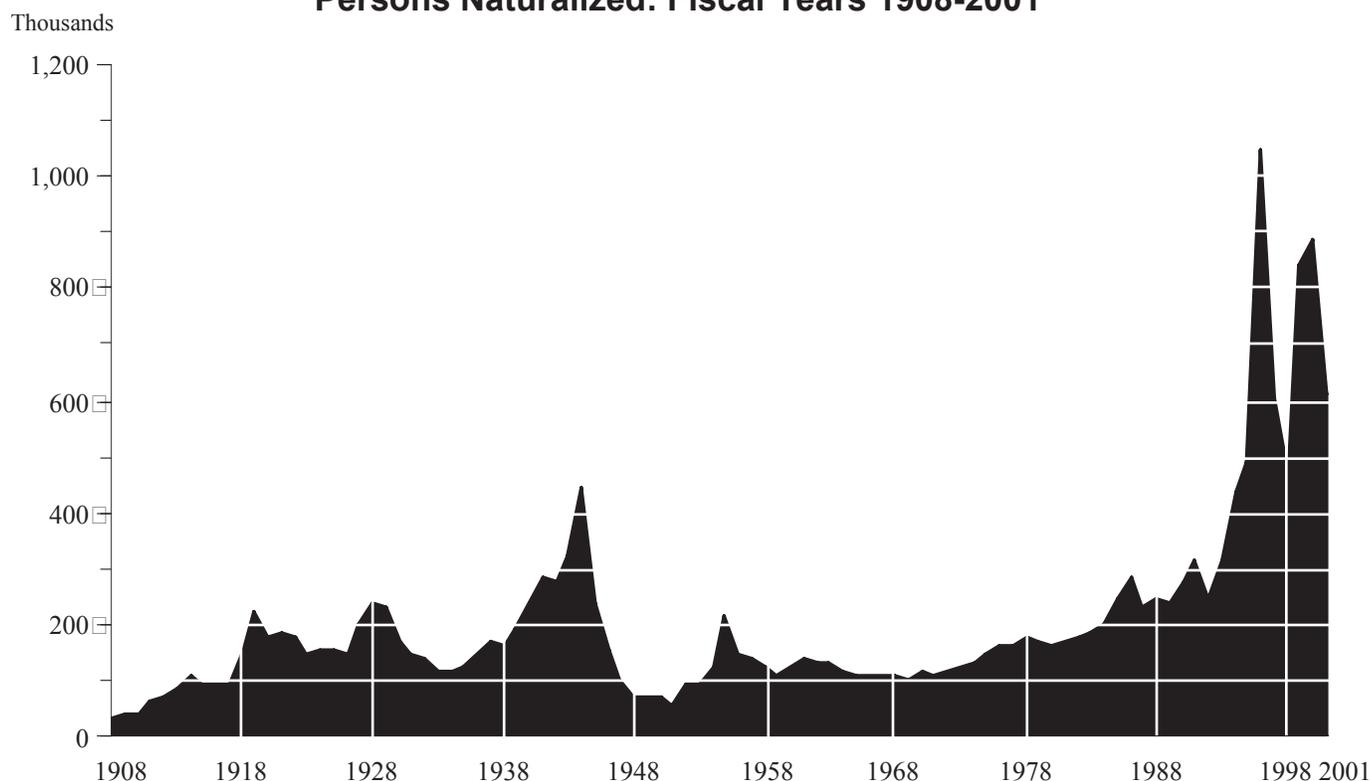
Every applicant for naturalization (age 18 and over) must file an application, Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization*. All aliens filing these applications who meet the preliminary documentary requirements must be interviewed by INS officers to determine their eligibility to naturalize. During the interview the officer discerns the applicant's knowledge and understanding of the English language, as well as of the history and government of the United States. Recently, applicants have been allowed to take standardized tests that are used to determine knowledge and reading and writing capabilities. Those applicants found qualified are scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or district director.

More than 608,000 people were naturalized during 2001.

Data Overview

The INS naturalized 608,205 persons in fiscal year 2001. This figure was less than the number of naturalizations in

Chart K
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1908-2001



Source: 1961-2001, Table 45; 1908-60, previous *Yearbooks*.

2000 (888,788) and 1999 (839,944) but greater than the number in 1998 (463,060) and 1997 (598,225). These fluctuations are due primarily to an application backlog and related workflow issues since the number of applications submitted for naturalization declined from 1997 to 2001. Because the impact of the backlog with respect to the annual number of naturalizations and demographic composition of new citizens cannot be determined with certainty, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from the data.

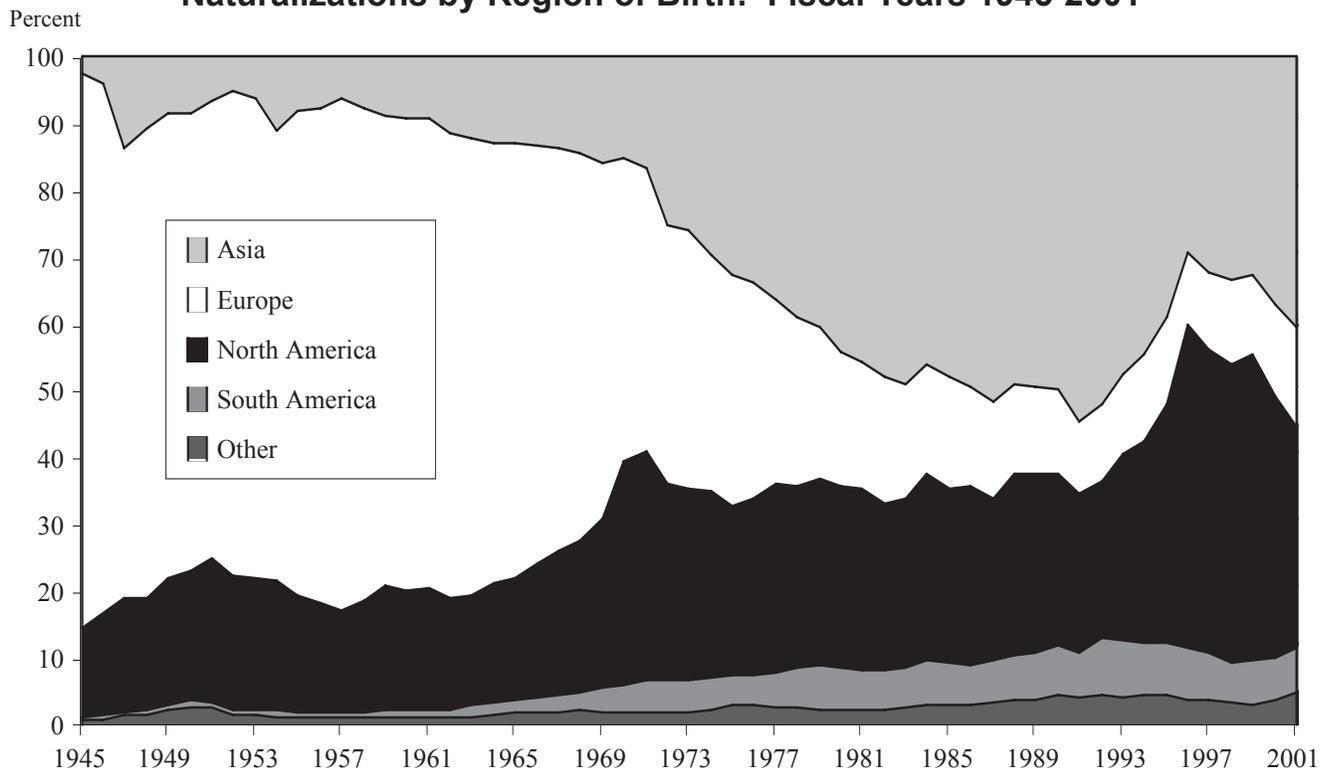
Between 1908 and 1990, the number of persons naturalizing each year exceeded 300,000 only twice, in 1943 and 1944, during World War II (Chart K and Table 45). Since 1990, naturalizations have exceeded 300,000 in every year except 1992. Naturalizations rose sharply during the 1990s due to several factors. A mandatory Green Card Replacement program put into effect in 1992 led some permanent residents to naturalize who otherwise might not have done so. In 1994, the first of the 2.7 million illegal aliens who were granted legal permanent residence under the provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 became eligible to

naturalize. Also during the mid 1990s, an unknown number of immigrants naturalized in response to legislative efforts restricting public benefits for the noncitizen population, including Proposition 187 in California (1994), the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996), and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA, 1996).

Region and country of birth (Tables 49; 52-56)

Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in Europe because the country quotas in immigration law favored those countries (Chart L). Once the quotas ended with the INA amendments in 1965, the regional origin of persons immigrating and naturalizing shifted from European to Asian countries. Asian immigrants also had historically higher naturalization rates than other immigrants. Between 1976 and 1995, Asia was the leading region of birth among persons naturalizing. Increased legal immigration from North American countries, especially due to IRCA, reduced Asia's share of naturalizations. In 1996, 49 percent of persons becoming U.S. citizens were born in North American countries compared to 29 percent in Asian countries. Between 1997 and 2001, North

Chart L
Naturalizations by Region of Birth: Fiscal Years 1945-2001



Source: 1992-2001, Table 48; 1945-91, previous *Yearbooks*.

America's share of naturalizations declined. By 2001, Asia was the leading region of birth of persons naturalizing. Forty-one percent of persons naturalized in 2001 were born in Asian countries compared to 33 percent from North American countries.

Mexico was the leading country of birth of persons naturalizing in 2001. However, the number of new Mexican-born citizens decreased to 103,234 (17 percent of the total) in 2001 from 189,705 (21 percent of the total) in 2000 as the number of IRCA legalized aliens naturalizing declined (see the Immigration Reform and Control Act section below). Other major countries of birth for persons naturalizing in 2001 were Vietnam (41,596), the Philippines (35,431), the People's Republic of China (34,423), India (34,311), Korea (18,053), the Dominican Republic (15,010), Jamaica (13,978), Iran (13,881), and El Salvador (13,663). These ten sending countries (including Mexico) represented 53 percent of new citizens in 2001.

State and metropolitan area of residence
(Tables 51-53)

California was the residence of 203,415 or 33 percent of persons naturalizing in 2001 followed by New York with

99,022, or 16 percent. Other top states of residence included Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey. These six states were home to 75 percent of new citizens in 2001. They were the same top destination states for legal immigrants in 2001.

Ten metropolitan areas accounted for the residence of 52 percent of persons naturalizing in 2001. These areas included New York, NY (85,377), Los Angeles, CA (77,331), Chicago, IL (30,087), Houston, TX (21,102), Miami, FL (20,587), Orange County, CA (19,940), Oakland, CA (19,247), San Jose, CA (15,884), San Diego, CA (14,252), and San Francisco, CA (13,462).

Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)

Aliens legalized under IRCA accounted for 74,869 naturalizations, or 12 percent of all naturalized citizens in fiscal year 2001. The annual number of naturalizations among IRCA legalized aliens peaked in 1996 (227,905). Of all IRCA legalized aliens who naturalized in 2001, 68 percent were born in Mexico. By the end of 2001, 889,033 or 33 percent of the total 2.7 million IRCA legalized aliens had naturalized.

Table M
Median Years of Residence by Year of Naturalization and Region of Birth: □
Selected Fiscal Years 1965-2001 □

Region of birth	2001	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Persons naturalized	9	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa	10	8	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe	7	8	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania	10	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America	9	10	10	9	8	9	10	7	7

Years in immigrant status

The median number of years of residence between the date of legal permanent residence and the date of naturalization was 9 years among aliens who naturalized in 2001. European immigrants spent the least time in immigrant status (7 years), followed by immigrants from Asia (8 years), South America (9 years), Africa and Oceania (10 years), and North America (11 years) (Table M).

Understanding the Data

Data Collection

The INS compiles two types of data on naturalizations: workload statistics and demographic statistics on the characteristics of persons who naturalize. Workload data include the number of naturalization applications received, the number of petitions filed, and the number of aliens approved for naturalization during a fiscal year.

Demographic data come from the naturalization application and include: date and country of birth, gender, marital status, state and metropolitan area of residence, occupation, date of admission for permanent residence, and section of naturalization law. These data are obtained from either an automated case-tracking system in operation in the larger INS offices, manually coded records from the smaller offices, and, if not otherwise available, from the Central Index System (CIS) of INS.

Limitations of Data

Data on naturalization shown in the *INS Statistical Yearbook* are obtained from information reported on Form N-400, the application for naturalization for persons ages 18

and over. Beginning in 2001, persons ages 17 and under are excluded from *Yearbook* tables since nearly all the data for persons in this age group come from applications for certificates of citizenship. The N-600 form is used to provide evidence of citizenship for children under age 18 who derive or acquire citizenship through their parents. The N-643 form is used for adopted children. Most N-600 records were excluded beginning in 1998.

Aliens who become U.S. citizens through the legislative process also are not covered in the naturalization data collected by the INS. A recent example of the legislative procedure occurred upon the dissolution of the Trust Territory of the Pacific through which the Northern Mariana Islands became a commonwealth of the United States, making its residents U.S. citizens.

The 2001 naturalization data do not necessarily reflect the demand to naturalize because of the backlog of applications pending a decision. The demographic characteristics of aliens whose cases were in the backlog are unknown.

In addition, the number of cases with missing data has increased since 1995. This is largely because the Central Index System (CIS), the source of data for approximately 5 percent of naturalization records in 2001 (a higher percentage in earlier years), does not maintain information on state and metropolitan area of intended residence, marital status, occupation, provision of naturalization law, country of former allegiance, and, in some instances, gender. Cases with information supplied by the CIS come from areas where INS offices use manual coding systems, that is, primarily states and metropolitan areas with low concentrations of immigrants.