

# U.S. Naturalizations: 2021

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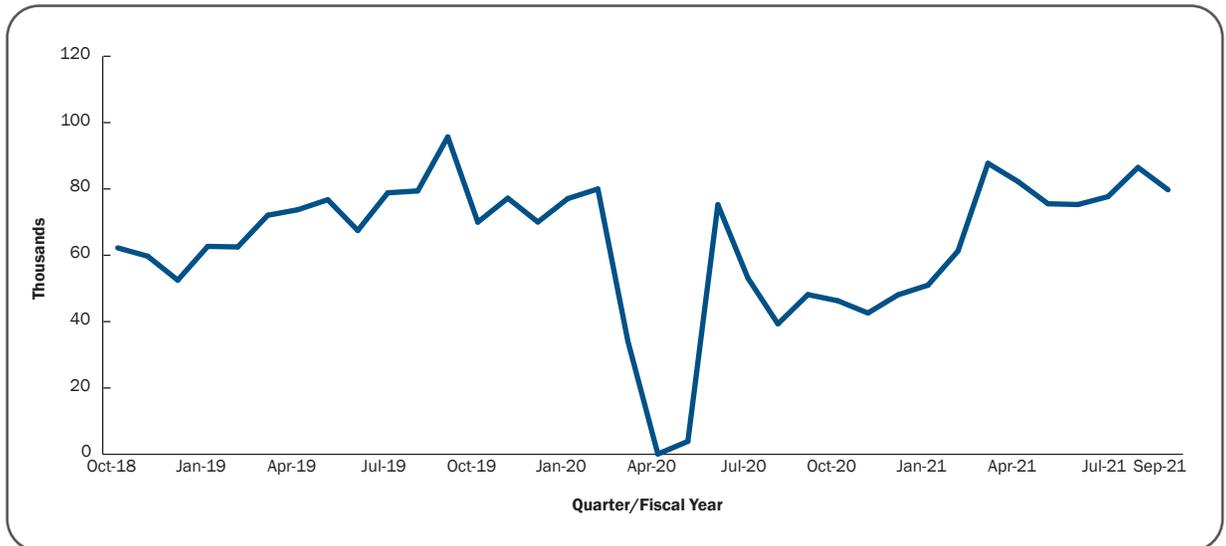
The naturalization process confers U.S. citizenship upon applicants who have fulfilled the requirements established in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy almost all the same benefits, rights, and responsibilities that the U.S. Constitution gives to U.S. citizens at birth, including the right to vote. The 2021 U.S. Naturalizations Annual Flow Report, authored by the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), presents information on the number and characteristics of applicants aged 18 years and over who naturalized during 2021.<sup>1,2</sup>

## SUMMARY

The number of U.S. naturalizations rose to 814,000 persons in 2021, up 30 percent from 628,000 in 2020 (Table 1) (Figure 2) and up 10 percent from the 2011-2019 average of 742,000.<sup>3</sup> The suspension of in-person naturalization services from March 18, 2020 to June 4, 2020 to help slow the spread of COVID-19 contributed to the lower number of naturalizations in 2020 (Figure 1). The number of applications for citizenship in 2021 decreased to 789,000 from 968,000 applications in 2020 and was down from the 2011-2019 average of 846,000 applications. The number of naturalizations does not match the number of applications due to previously

Figure 1.

Persons Naturalized by Month: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

<sup>1</sup> In this report, “years” refer to fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30. Numbers in the text of this report are rounded to the nearest thousand; please refer to data tables for precise figures.

<sup>2</sup> This report does not include data on children acquiring citizenship based upon the citizenship status of a parent. The child of a U.S. citizen parent may acquire citizenship using the N-400 (naturalization) or the N-600K (expedited naturalization), but they are not required to do so and most do not. Therefore, naturalizations described in this report, obtained from N-400 records and limited to applicants who are 18 years of age or older, do not represent a complete count of persons who obtained citizenship status during the reporting year.

<sup>3</sup> Naturalization numbers reflect changes in the numbers of naturalization applications received as well as the number processed, which may be affected by applications pending from previous years and available resources. As a result, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the underlying demand to naturalize. Average naturalization totals over a period of years provide a more accurate indication of long-term trends in naturalization.

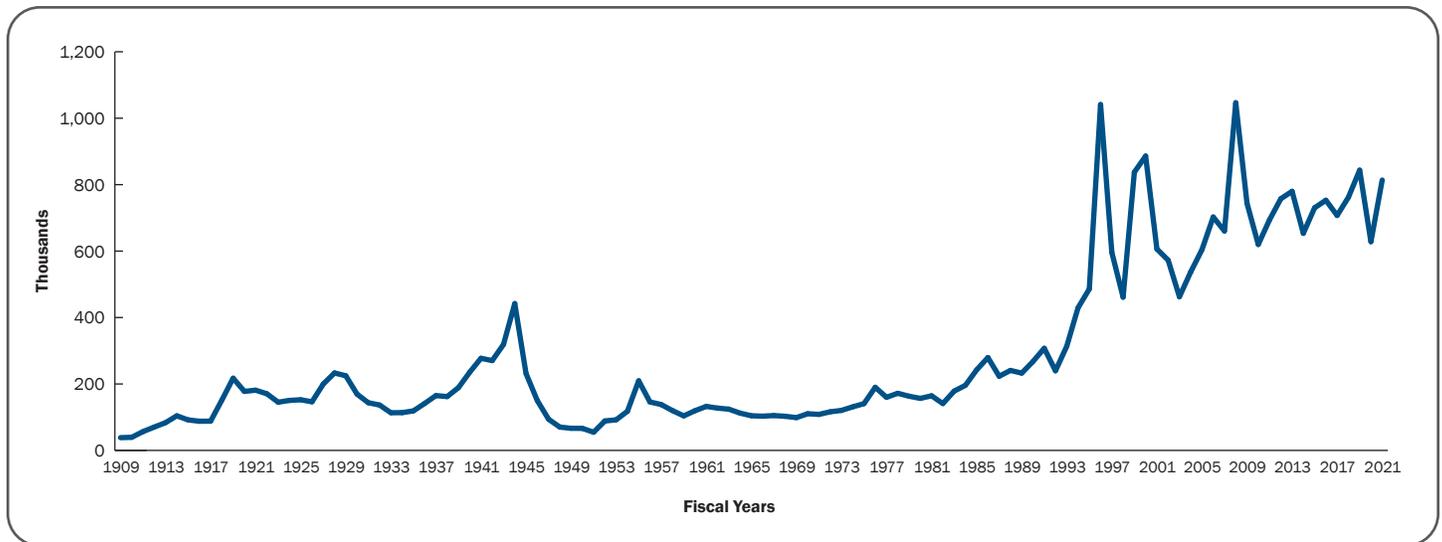


**Homeland Security**

Office of Immigration Statistics  
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Figure 2.

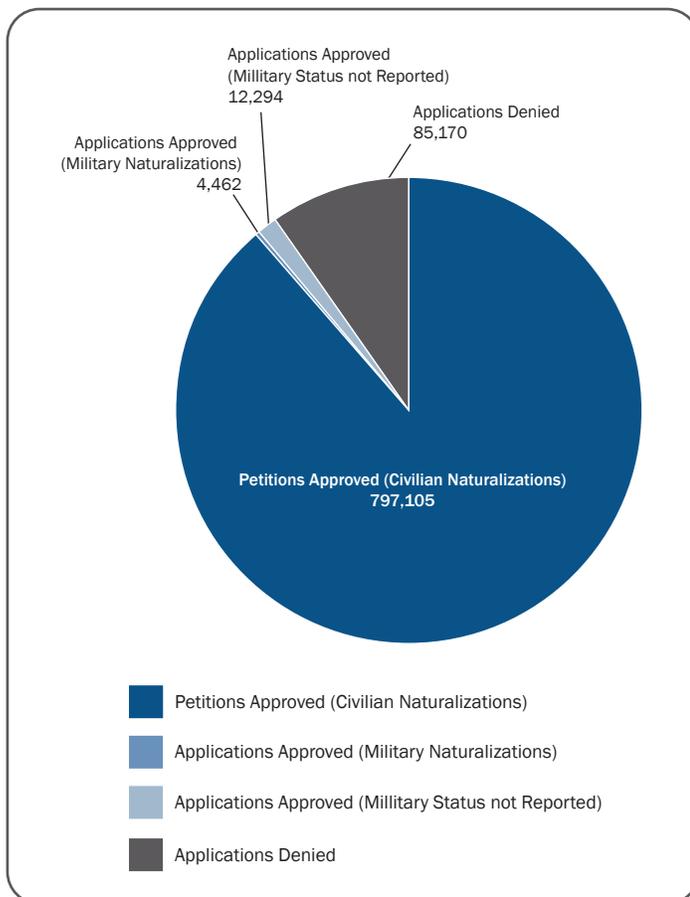
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1909 to 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

Figure 3.

Applications for U.S. Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

adjudicated applications, denials, and delays in application processing (Figure 3).<sup>4</sup> The leading countries of birth of newly naturalized citizens for 2021 were Mexico (113,000), India (57,000), the Philippines (48,000), Cuba (48,000), and the People’s Republic of China (China) (29,000) (Table 1). The top three states of residence of persons naturalizing were California (172,000), Florida (109,000), and New York (90,000) (Table 2).

THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for naturalization, an applicant must meet INA requirements and file such documentation on a Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reviews the application and interviews all applicants to determine their eligibility to naturalize. Following approval, USCIS schedules applicants for a required oath ceremony before a judge or USCIS official.

Generally, to naturalize, applicants must be at least 18 years of age, establish that they have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence at the time of filing the naturalization application, and have resided continuously in the United States for at least 5 years<sup>5</sup> as a lawful permanent resident (LPR) immediately preceding the date of filing the application and up to the time of admission to citizenship. The applicant generally must be physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately preceding the date of filing the application and must have lived within the state or district with jurisdiction over the applicant’s place of residence for at least 90 days prior to

<sup>4</sup> See 2021 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics; Table 20: Applications for Naturalization Filed, Persons Naturalized, and Applications for Naturalization Denied.

<sup>5</sup> Certain permanent residents who are married to U.S. citizens and with evidence of continuous residency are eligible for naturalization after 3 years instead of the normally required 5 years as a permanent resident applying for citizenship. In addition, certain persons with qualifying military service may be eligible to apply for naturalization without any period of continuous residence in the United States. For more information, please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/military/naturalization-through-military-service> and <https://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/citizenship-through-naturalization> for citizenship through military service and naturalization, respectively.

the date of filing. Additional requirements for applicants include the ability to speak, read, and write in the English language; knowledge of U.S. Government and its history; attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution;<sup>6</sup> and being of good moral character. Special provisions of naturalization law generally exempt spouses of U.S. citizens employed abroad and persons with qualifying military service in the U.S. Armed Forces from some of these requirements.

## TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

### Historical Trend

The average number of persons naturalizing increased from fewer than 113,000 per year during the 1950s and 1960s to 210,000 per year during the 1980s, 500,000 during the 1990s, 680,000 during the 2000s, and 730,000 per year between 2010 and 2019 (Figure 2). While annual naturalization rates have gradually increased, short-term naturalization rates since the mid-1990s have varied substantially due to dynamics related to election years, USCIS fee increases, and proposed legislative or actual statutory

changes.<sup>7</sup> USCIS was particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 because the agency is fee-funded and experienced a budget shortfall following the suspension of in-person services and the reduction of worldwide travel. Spending reductions impacted all USCIS operations, including naturalizations.

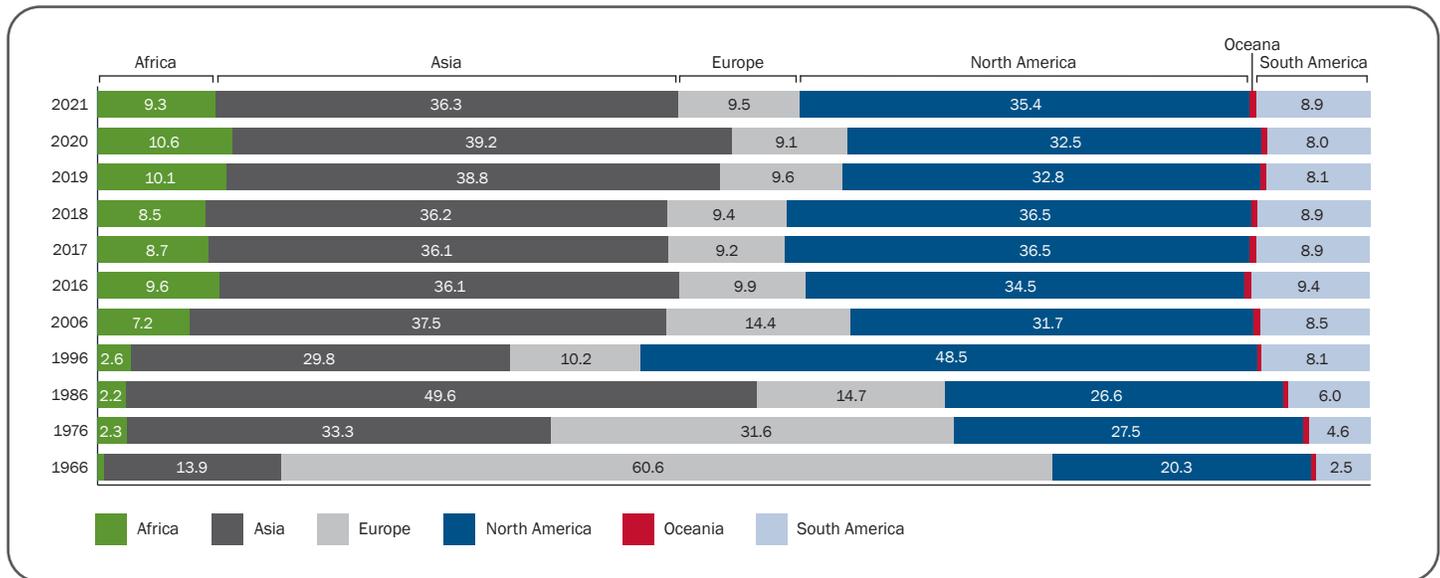
### Region and Leading Countries of Birth

Until the early 1970s, persons naturalizing were predominately from Europe. Asia overtook Europe as the leading region of origin for newly naturalized citizens following increased Asian immigration pursuant to the 1965 amendments to the INA. Other factors include the arrival of large numbers of Indochinese refugees in the 1970s along with a pattern of higher-than-average naturalization rates among Asian immigrants. Asia has continued to be the leading region of origin in recent decades (Figure 4) and is closely followed by the North American region. From 2020 to 2021, the number of naturalizations varied from these regions, though their respective proportions remained similar to recent years. Caribbean naturalizations increased by the largest proportion to 49 percent, followed by persons from South America with 44 percent, and Central America with 41 percent (Table 1). The 2021 recovery to more normal levels of

<sup>6</sup> On July 19, 2019, USCIS announced plans to revise the naturalization civics test. On December 1, 2020, USCIS implemented the 2020 civics test but after determining the 2020 civics test's development and implementation "may inadvertently create potential barriers to the naturalization process," reverted to the 2008 version of the civics test starting on March 1, 2021. Applicants had the option to take either exam until the 2020 test was phased out on April 19, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Since 1990 the numbers of naturalizations were notably higher than the long-term trend in 1996, 1999, and 2008 and demonstrated smaller spikes in 1994, 2006, and 2019 (Figure 2). Several of these spikes coincided with announcements of upcoming USCIS fee increases (including in 1998, 2007, 2010, and 2016) as higher shares of eligible LPRs naturalized in advance of rate increases and/or with election years, as eligible LPRs opted to obtain citizenship in time to participate in national elections. In August 2020, USCIS proposed fee increases but a lawsuit blocked implementation days before they would have gone into effect on October 2, 2020. On December 28, 2020, the Federal Government voluntarily moved to dismiss its appeal, ending the fee increases along with the form and policy changes that were included in the proposed rule.

**Figure 4.**  
Percent of Total Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth (Select Years prior to 2006 and 2016 to 2021)



Note: Oceania has an average value of 0.5 percent over the last 5-year period. Africa had a value of 0.5 percent in 1966.  
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

naturalizations (after the 2020 drop in naturalizations – the lowest since 2010) exceeded those of 2019, but was uneven across regions. The total numbers of newly naturalized citizens from North America, South America, and Oceania exceeded their 2019 counts and Asia, Africa, and Europe’s numbers of naturalizations were less.

Among the top 10 countries of birth for persons naturalizing in 2021, Mexico was the leading country (14 percent of the total), followed by India (7.0 percent), the Philippines (6.0 percent), Cuba (5.9 percent), and China (3.6 percent) (Table 1). The top five countries of birth for persons naturalizing were unchanged from 2020. The 10 top countries of origin accounted for 50 percent of all naturalizing citizens in 2021, essentially unchanged from 2020. The largest numeric increase in naturalizations between 2020 and 2021 occurred among immigrants born in Mexico (29,000), Cuba (17,000), the Philippines (15,000), the Dominican Republic (9,000), and India (9,000). The largest percentage increase in naturalizations between 2020 and 2021 was experienced by immigrants born in Jamaica (54 percent), Cuba (53 percent), the Dominican Republic (50 percent), Brazil (50 percent), and Bangladesh (47 percent).

### Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

In 2021, 595,000 people, or 73 percent of all persons naturalizing, resided in 10 states. California was home to the largest number of persons naturalizing with 172,000 (21 percent of the total), up from 113,000 in 2020; Florida followed with 109,000 (13 percent), up from 79,000 in 2020; and New York with 90,000 (11 percent), up from 56,000 in 2020 (Table 2). The largest percentage increases among states of residence of newly-naturalized citizens between 2020 and 2021 occurred in New Jersey (80 percent), New York (60 percent), California (52 percent), and Pennsylvania (52 percent), while Maryland was about the same in 2021 as 2020. In 2021, 52 percent of all newly naturalized citizens lived in 10 metropolitan areas (Table 3).<sup>8</sup> The leading metropolitan areas were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, with 116,000 persons (14 percent of the total), up from 69,000 in 2020; Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA with 81,000 persons (9.9 percent),

<sup>8</sup> The most current Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) definitions are available from OMB at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro.html>.

**Table 1.**

### Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021

(Countries ranked by 2021 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>REGION</b>						
Total.....	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
Africa.....	85,014	10.1	66,450	10.6	76,009	9.3
Asia.....	327,434	38.8	246,215	39.2	295,224	36.3
Europe.....	81,051	9.6	57,410	9.1	77,084	9.5
North America.....	276,969	32.8	204,269	32.5	288,431	35.4
Caribbean.....	101,342	12.0	80,888	12.9	120,601	14.8
Central America.....	42,085	5.0	30,704	4.9	43,379	5.3
Other North America.....	133,542	15.8	92,677	14.8	124,451	15.3
Oceania.....	4,311	0.5	3,393	0.5	4,304	0.5
South America.....	68,687	8.1	50,442	8.0	72,701	8.9
Unknown.....	127	-	75	-	108	-
<b>COUNTRY</b>						
Total.....	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
Mexico.....	122,305	14.5	84,090	13.4	113,269	13.9
India.....	64,638	7.7	48,111	7.7	57,043	7.0
Philippines.....	43,675	5.2	33,422	5.3	48,478	6.0
Cuba.....	36,253	4.3	31,371	5.0	47,919	5.9
China, People's Republic.....	39,492	4.7	26,111	4.2	29,227	3.6
Dominican Republic.....	23,105	2.7	18,675	3.0	28,103	3.5
Vietnam.....	25,652	3.0	22,707	3.6	24,224	3.0
Jamaica.....	18,019	2.1	13,466	2.1	20,716	2.5
El Salvador.....	18,263	2.2	12,606	2.0	18,340	2.3
Colombia.....	17,128	2.0	12,768	2.0	17,539	2.2
Korea, South.....	16,299	1.9	11,350	1.8	14,996	1.8
Haiti.....	14,314	1.7	10,867	1.7	14,882	1.8
Brazil.....	10,451	1.2	8,323	1.3	12,448	1.5
Pakistan.....	13,080	1.6	9,975	1.6	12,377	1.5
United Kingdom.....	12,195	1.4	8,842	1.4	11,407	1.4
Canada.....	11,061	1.3	8,423	1.3	10,928	1.3
Nigeria.....	11,364	1.3	8,930	1.4	10,921	1.3
Iran.....	11,311	1.3	8,830	1.4	10,798	1.3
Venezuela.....	9,317	1.1	6,993	1.1	10,215	1.3
Bangladesh.....	9,069	1.1	6,883	1.1	10,110	1.2
All other countries.....	316,602	37.5	235,511	37.5	289,921	35.6

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 2.**

### Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021

(States ranked by 2021 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
California.....	148,765	17.6	112,738	17.9	171,863	21.1
Florida.....	96,149	11.4	78,641	12.5	109,235	13.4
New York.....	85,444	10.1	56,273	9.0	89,989	11.1
Texas.....	97,675	11.6	66,942	10.7	77,025	9.5
New Jersey.....	36,661	4.3	22,185	3.5	39,953	4.9
Massachusetts.....	22,894	2.7	20,367	3.2	24,085	3.0
Illinois.....	30,472	3.6	19,835	3.2	22,684	2.8
Virginia.....	23,345	2.8	17,360	2.8	20,732	2.5
Maryland.....	19,349	2.3	19,878	3.2	19,797	2.4
Pennsylvania.....	21,014	2.5	12,925	2.1	19,693	2.4
Other*.....	261,825	31.0	201,110	32.0	218,805	26.9

\*Includes unknown, U.S. territories, and U.S. armed forces posts.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 3.****Persons Naturalized by Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) of Residence: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

(CBSA ranked by 2021 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	107,964	12.8	68,933	11.0	116,201	14.3
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	56,850	6.7	43,381	6.9	80,727	9.9
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	60,590	7.2	52,921	8.4	68,880	8.5
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	30,808	3.7	26,306	4.2	30,089	3.7
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	30,521	3.6	22,371	3.6	26,151	3.2
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	33,826	4.0	21,462	3.4	24,369	3.0
San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	20,903	2.5	23,479	3.7	21,909	2.7
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	29,049	3.4	18,588	3.0	21,729	2.7
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	17,786	2.1	15,817	2.5	19,015	2.3
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	11,330	1.3	8,015	1.3	16,645	2.0
Other, including unknown	443,966	52.6	326,981	52.0	388,146	47.7

Notes: Metropolitan areas defined based on the 2020 update of Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) definitions. As a result, numbers for previous years may differ from previously published figures.  
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

up from 43,000 persons in 2020; and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL with 69,000 persons (8.5 percent), up from 53,000 persons in 2020. The leading metropolitan areas of residence was largely the same as in 2020, but Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA replaced Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA in the top 10 for 2021. The largest numeric increase in among states of residence for newly naturalized citizens occurred in New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (47,000) and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (37,000), exceeding their 2020 numbers both numerically and in their percentages relative to the total. The largest percentage increases among states of residence for newly naturalized citizens between 2020 and 2021 among metropolitan areas occurred in Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA (108 percent), Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (86 percent), and New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (69 percent), while San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA saw a decrease of 7 percent.

**Sex, Age, and Marital Status**

Naturalization proportions by sex, age, and marital status varied only very slightly between 2020 and 2021 (Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively). In 2021, females accounted for the majority of naturalizations at 56 percent of all persons naturalizing, essentially unchanged from 2020 (Figure 5). Fifty-one percent of newly naturalized adults were ages 25 to 44 years, almost unchanged from 2020. Twenty-two percent were ages 55 years and older, the same as in 2020, and 7.4 percent

**Table 4.****Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Sex	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
Female	464,561	55.1	348,333	55.4	456,025	56.0
Male	378,793	44.9	279,832	44.5	357,768	44.0
Unknown	239	-	89	-	68	-

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 5.****Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Age	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
18 to 24 years	69,013	8.2	51,421	8.2	60,056	7.4
25 to 34 years	196,412	23.3	149,900	23.9	190,634	23.4
35 to 44 years	229,217	27.2	171,844	27.4	225,886	27.8
45 to 54 years	157,821	18.7	115,667	18.4	156,454	19.2
55 to 64 years	107,926	12.8	80,548	12.8	109,131	13.4
65 years and over	83,204	9.9	58,874	9.4	71,700	8.8
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-
Median age (years)	41	X	41	X	41	X

X Not applicable.

- Figure rounds to 0.0 or 0.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 6.****Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021**

Marital status	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0	813,861	100.0
Married	543,672	64.4	411,725	65.5	543,627	66.8
Single	177,418	21.0	131,044	20.9	164,532	20.2
Other*	122,503	14.5	85,485	13.6	105,702	13.0

\*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

were ages 18 to 24 years, a slight decrease from 2020 (Figure 6). The median age of those naturalizing in 2021 was 41, unchanged from 2020.<sup>9</sup> Nearly 67 percent of individuals naturalizing were married in 2021, up from 66 percent in 2020, and 20 percent were single, a slight decrease from 2020 (Table 6).

### Years in Immigrant Status

Persons naturalizing in 2021 spent a median of 7 years in LPR status before becoming U.S. citizens, down from 8 years in 2019 (Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa spent the least number of years in LPR status (6 years), followed by immigrants from Asia (7 years), South America (7 years), Europe (8 years), North America (9 years), and Oceania (9 years), the ordering largely unchanged over the last decade. Europe, North America, and Oceania had their time spent in LPR status decline, reversing years-long trends of increasing time spent in LPR status.

### DATA

This report is based on data from USCIS administrative records of new U.S. citizens<sup>10</sup> who naturalized in 2021. These records consist of information taken from Form N-400 applications, such as the date and country of birth, sex, marital status, and state of residence. The Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) provided slightly more than 99 percent of the data while the Central Index System provided 0.8 percent.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

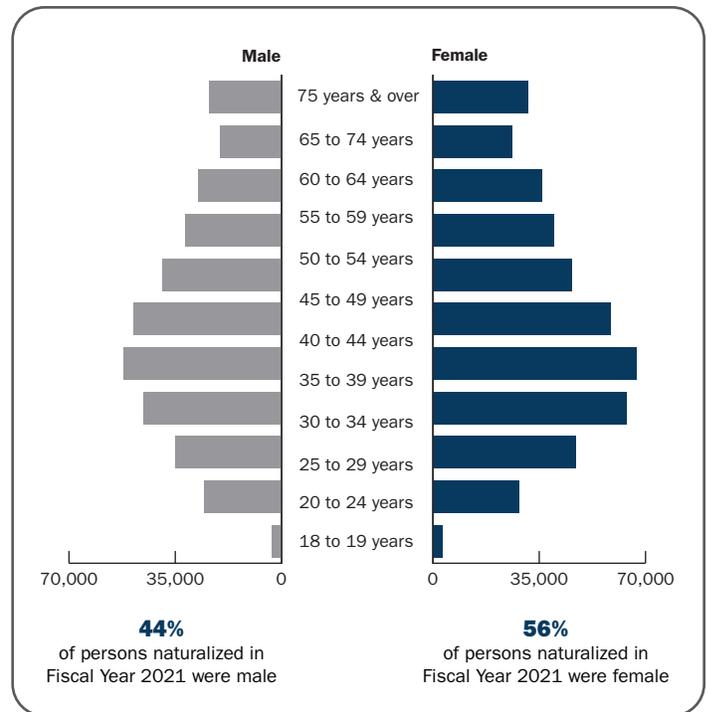
For more information about immigration and immigration statistics, visit the OIS web page at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics>.

<sup>9</sup> This report excludes data on children acquiring citizenship based on the citizenship of a parent; see footnote 2.

<sup>10</sup> A lawful permanent resident becomes a naturalized U.S. citizen only after the oath ceremony date.

**Figure 5.**

### Naturalizations by Age and Sex: Fiscal Year 2021



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

**Table 7.**

### Median Years in Lawful Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Fiscal Years 2012 to 2021

Region of birth	Fiscal Year									
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	7	7
Africa	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	6	7
Europe	7	7	8	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
North America	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	10	9
Caribbean	9	9	9	9	9	10	9	9	8	7
Central America	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	10	10
Other North America	11	11	12	11	11	14	15	13	13	11
Oceania	8	8	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	9
South America	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	7	7

Note: Excludes persons who were not required to be lawful permanent residents prior to naturalization.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.