

Naturalizations in the United States: 2007

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Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon foreign citizens or nationals after fulfilling the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy nearly all the same benefits, rights and responsibilities that the Constitution gives to native born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote. Naturalized citizens can also apply for a U.S. passport to travel overseas and 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 aged 18 years and over who were naturalized during 2007.¹

Data were 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 2007, the total number of persons naturalizing was 660,477 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (122,258), India (46,871), Philippines (38,830), China (33,134), and Vietnam (27,921). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (181,684), New York (73,676), and Florida (54,563).

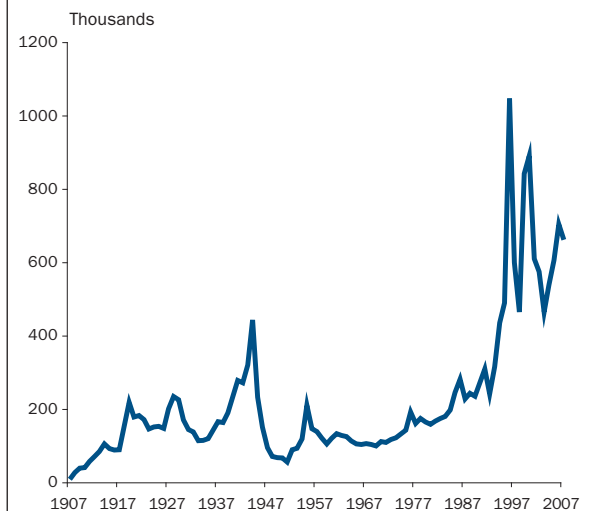
THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

To be naturalized, an applicant 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 or LPR); 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 history; and good moral character.

Special provisions of naturalization law exempt certain applicants from one or more 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. Foreign-born children under 18 years of age, including adopted children, acquire U.S. citizenship automatically without applying, if they meet certain requirements. Among the requirements, the children must be lawful permanent residents and have at least one U.S. citizen parent. Persons who served honorably during wartime and in other conflicts may naturalize under certain conditions without prior admission to permanent resident status or having resided in the United States for a particular length of time. Aliens with lawful permanent resident

Figure 1.
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1907 to 2007



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, Fiscal Years 1907 to 2007.

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



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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 and the history and government of the United States. Those applicants found qualified are scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or before an officer delegated the authority to administer the oath by the Director of USCIS.

DATA

The data presented in this report consist of demographic information taken from N-400 applications. This information includes: date and country of birth; gender; marital status; state and ZIP Code of 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. Caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the demand to naturalize. Year-to-year fluctuations in the number of naturalizations are not uncommon and reflect volatility in the volume of applications filed with USCIS and related impacts on application processing. Annual averages of persons naturalizing over a period of years provide a more accurate indication of long term trends in the propensity to naturalize.

RESULTS

The number of persons naturalized in the United States decreased 6 percent from 702,589 in 2006 to 660,477 in 2007. This decrease followed annual increases from 2003 through 2006, the last year of the backlog elimination effort at USCIS. The number of naturalization applications filed with USCIS doubled from 730,000 in 2006 to 1,380,000 in 2007 due to several factors including a fee increase² and efforts by Hispanic media and grass-roots organizations to encourage eligible residents to apply for U.S. citizenship. The number of naturalization applications pending a decision increased from 470,000 at the end of 2006 to 1,130,000 by the end of 2007.

Historical Trend

The average annual number of persons naturalizing increased from less than 120,000 during the 1950s and 1960s to 210,000 during the 1980s, 500,000 during the 1990s and to 630,000 during 2000 to 2007 (see Figure 1). Naturalizations rose sharply during the mid 1990s primarily as a result of 1) the 2.7 million undocumented immigrants legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 becoming eligible for citizenship,

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007

(Countries ranked by 2007 persons naturalized)

Region/country of birth	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
REGION:						
Africa	41,652	6.3	50,397	7.2	38,830	6.4
Asia	238,797	36.2	257,125	36.6	237,724	39.3
Europe	86,742	13.1	107,459	15.3	97,482	16.1
North America	241,163	36.5	223,086	31.8	180,572	29.9
Caribbean	68,577	10.4	90,979	12.9	64,672	10.7
Central America	41,814	6.3	38,463	5.5	30,965	5.1
Other North America	130,772	19.8	93,644	13.3	84,935	14.1
Oceania	3,342	0.5	3,657	0.5	3,898	0.6
South America	48,133	7.3	59,985	8.5	44,504	7.4
Unknown	648	0.1	880	0.1	1,270	0.2
COUNTRY:						
Mexico	122,258	18.5	83,979	12.0	77,089	12.8
India	46,871	7.1	47,542	6.8	35,962	6.0
Philippines	38,830	5.9	40,500	5.8	36,673	6.1
China, People's Republic	33,134	5.0	35,387	5.0	31,708	5.2
Vietnam	27,921	4.2	29,917	4.3	32,926	5.4
Dominican Republic	20,645	3.1	22,165	3.2	20,831	3.4
Korea	17,628	2.7	17,668	2.5	19,223	3.2
El Salvador	17,157	2.6	13,430	1.9	12,174	2.0
Cuba	15,394	2.3	21,481	3.1	11,227	1.9
Jamaica	12,314	1.9	18,953	2.7	13,674	2.3
Colombia	12,089	1.8	15,698	2.2	11,396	1.9
Haiti	11,552	1.7	15,979	2.3	9,740	1.6
Iran	10,557	1.6	11,363	1.6	11,031	1.8
Poland	9,320	1.4	10,230	1.5	9,801	1.6
Pakistan	9,147	1.4	10,411	1.5	9,699	1.6
Ukraine	8,594	1.3	10,184	1.4	9,343	1.5
Canada	8,473	1.3	9,607	1.4	7,815	1.3
Guatemala	8,181	1.2	6,551	0.9	6,250	1.0
Bosnia-Herzegovina	8,175	1.2	9,686	1.4	8,921	1.5
Nicaragua	8,164	1.2	9,283	1.3	5,080	0.8
All other countries	214,073	32.4	262,575	37.4	223,717	37.0

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

- 2) legislative efforts to restrict public benefits for noncitizens, and
- 3) implementation of a mandatory program requiring replacement of permanent resident cards.

Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in European countries. With increased legal immigration from Asian countries, the arrival of Indochinese 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 was the leading region of origin of new citizens in every year from 1976 to 2006, except 1996-2000 when IRCA legalization immigrants, 90 percent of whom were from North American countries, naturalized in large numbers. In 2007, however, the number of naturalizations of immigrants from North American countries slightly exceeded those of Asian immigrants.

² The filing fee for the N-400 naturalization application increased from \$330 to \$595 effective July, 2007.

Table 2.**Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007**

(Ranked by 2007 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
California	181,684	27.5	152,836	21.8	170,489	28.2
New York	73,676	11.2	103,870	14.8	84,624	14.0
Florida	54,563	8.3	90,846	12.9	42,999	7.1
Texas	53,032	8.0	37,835	5.4	38,553	6.4
Illinois	38,735	5.9	30,156	4.3	27,739	4.6
New Jersey	35,235	5.3	39,801	5.7	33,160	5.5
Massachusetts	20,952	3.2	22,932	3.3	22,685	3.8
Washington	14,671	2.2	12,762	1.8	14,817	2.5
Georgia	14,181	2.1	19,785	2.8	7,903	1.3
Virginia	14,171	2.1	20,401	2.9	17,653	2.9
Other	159,577	24.2	171,365	24.4	143,658	23.8

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

Region and Leading Countries of Birth

North America and Asia were each the regions of origin of 36 percent of persons naturalizing in 2007, followed by Europe with 13 percent (see Table 1). The leading country of birth was Mexico (19 percent), followed by India (7 percent), the Philippines (6 percent), the People's Republic of China (5 percent), and Vietnam (4 percent). When combined, the 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 53 percent of all new citizens in 2007.

The number of naturalizations of Mexican-born immigrants increased 46 percent from 2006 to 2007 and was spread across all major immigrant metropolitan destinations. The only other leading countries of origin with increases in naturalizations between 2006 and 2007 were El Salvador and Guatemala.

Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

Seventy-six percent of all persons naturalizing in 2007 resided in 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest percentage

of persons naturalizing (28 percent), followed by New York (11 percent) and Florida (8 percent). Over one-half (56 percent) of all new citizens in 2007 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (see Table 3).³ The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (15 percent), Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (12 percent), and Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI (6 percent).

States with the largest percentage increases in naturalizations from 2006 to 2007 included

Texas, Illinois, and California. Metropolitan areas with the largest percentage increases included Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX, Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX, San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA, and Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI. In these geographic areas, Mexicans accounted for one-third to one-half of all naturalizations in 2007. The largest percentage decreases in naturalizations from 2006 and 2007 occurred in New York and Florida and in the metropolitan areas of New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL. These areas had relatively fewer Mexican immigrants and experienced above average increases in naturalizations from 2005 to 2006.

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 2005 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/inforeg/statpolicy.html#fs>.

Table 3.**Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007**

(Ranked by 2007 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan areas of residence	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	99,009	15.0	132,326	18.8	108,440	17.9
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	78,454	11.9	65,813	9.4	78,183	12.9
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	37,736	5.7	29,047	4.1	27,054	4.5
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	36,159	5.5	63,623	9.1	24,112	4.0
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	25,873	3.9	24,042	3.4	25,492	4.2
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria-Rockville, DC-VA-MD-WV	19,364	2.9	26,462	3.8	22,473	3.7
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	18,398	2.8	13,893	2.0	13,401	2.2
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	18,070	2.7	12,112	1.7	12,749	2.1
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	17,924	2.7	12,682	1.8	12,265	2.0
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	16,960	2.6	18,585	2.6	18,274	3.0
Other	292,530	44.3	304,004	43.3	261,837	43.3

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

Table 4.**Persons Naturalized by Gender:
Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007**

Gender	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . .	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
Male	294,244	44.6	313,771	44.7	267,556	44.3
Female . . .	365,807	55.4	387,773	55.2	335,427	55.5
Unknown . . .	426	0.1	1,045	0.1	1,297	0.2

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

Table 5.**Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007**

Age	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
18 to 24 years	65,592	9.9	74,289	10.6	65,195	10.8
25 to 34 years	167,320	25.3	186,445	26.5	160,588	26.6
35 to 44 years	192,811	29.2	200,151	28.5	166,718	27.6
45 to 54 years	108,277	16.4	111,837	15.9	100,631	16.7
55 to 64 years	74,352	11.3	73,097	10.4	63,834	10.6
65 years and over	52,125	7.9	56,769	8.1	47,313	7.8
Unknown	0	-	1	-	1	-
Median age	39	NA	38	NA	39	NA

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

Table 7.**Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Median Years in Legal Permanent Resident Status:
Selected Fiscal Years 1965 to 2007**

Region of birth	Year														
	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Total	8	7	8	8	8	8	9	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa	6	6	7	7	7	7	10	8	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America	11	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania	9	8	9	9	9	9	10	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America	7	7	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 2007.

Gender, Age, and Marital Status

In 2007, females accounted for 55 percent of all persons naturalizing (see Table 4). More than one-half (55 percent) of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing was 39 years. Persons 65 years and over accounted for 8 percent of naturalizations in 2007 (see Table 5). Two-thirds (66 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2007 were married and 21 percent were single (see Table 6).

Years in Immigrant Status

Persons naturalizing in 2007 spent a median of eight years in legal permanent resident status before naturalizing (see Table 7). At the

Table 6.**Persons Naturalized by Marital Status:
Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007**

Marital status	2007		2006		2005	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	660,477	100.0	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0
Single	140,971	21.3	154,003	21.9	132,924	22.0
Married	438,805	66.4	459,718	65.4	397,688	65.8
Other	80,701	12.2	88,868	12.6	73,668	12.2

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007.

regional level, African, Asian, and European-born immigrants spent the least time in legal immigrant status (6 years), followed by immigrants from South America (7 years), Oceania (9 years), and North America (11 years). Between 2006 and 2007, the median years spent in legal permanent resident status increased by one year among all persons naturalizing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about immigration and immigration statistics, visit the Office of Immigration Statistics web page at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics>