

U.S. Naturalizations: 2015

KATHERINE WITSMAN AND RYAN BAUGH

The naturalization process confers U.S. citizenship upon foreign citizens or nationals who have fulfilled 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 the Constitution gives to native-born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote. This Office of Immigration Statistics Annual Flow Report presents information on the number and characteristics of foreign nationals aged 18 years and over who naturalized during 2015.¹

In 2015, a total of 730,259 persons naturalized (See Figure 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (105,958), India (42,213), the Philippines (40,815), and the People’s Republic of China (31,241). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (155,979), New York (90,368), and Florida (81,960).

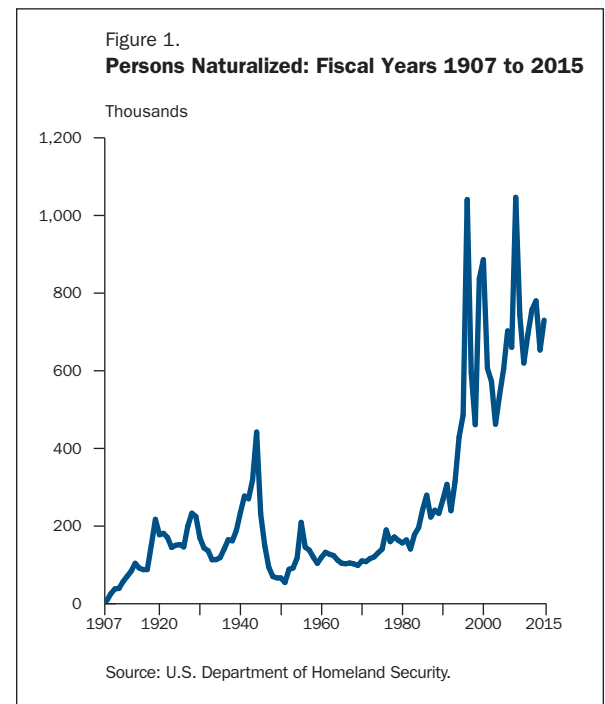
THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

An applicant filing Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, must fulfill certain general requirements set forth in the INA. The general naturalization provisions specify that a foreign national must be at least 18 years of age; be a U.S. lawful permanent resident (LPR); and have resided in the country continuously for at least five 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 some of these general requirements. Some types of applicants who may, under certain conditions, be eligible for specific exemptions include spouses of U.S. citizens, and persons with qualifying military service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Every applicant for naturalization must file an N-400 *Application for Naturalization*. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration

Services (USCIS) must interview all applicants to determine their eligibility to naturalize including reviewing documents to support that case. Following approval, USCIS schedules applicants for an oath ceremony before a judge or USCIS.



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



DATA

This report uses data from USCIS administrative records. These records consist of information taken from Form N-400 applications, such as date and country of birth; sex; marital status; and state of residence. USCIS' Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS 4) provides nearly all the data, while a small number of records are from the Central Index System of USCIS.

Caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the demand to naturalize. Changes occur yearly in the number of applications for naturalization received and the number processed. Applications pending from previous years and resources available also may impact processing time. Averages of persons naturalizing over a period of years provide a more accurate indication of long-term trends in naturalization.

TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

The number of U.S. naturalizations increased to 730,259 in 2015 following a decrease from 779,929 in 2013 to 653,416 in 2014. The number of applications for naturalization filed increased slightly from 2014 to 2015, while the number of applications processed and persons naturalized increased more significantly.²

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 680,000 between 2000 and 2009. Since 2010, the average annual number of naturalizations has increased to 706,000 (see Figure 1). Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in European countries. The regional origin of new citizens shifted from Europe to Asia due to increased legal immigration from Asian countries, the arrival of Indochinese refugees in the 1970s, and the historically higher naturalization rate of Asian immigrants. Consequently, Asia has been the leading region of origin of new citizens in most years since 1976.

Region and Leading Countries of Birth

Thirty-six percent of persons naturalizing in 2015 were born in Asia, followed by 34 percent born in North America, and 11 percent born in Europe (see Table 1). Mexico was the leading country of birth of persons naturalizing in 2015 (15 percent), followed by India (5.8 percent), the Philippines (5.6 percent), and the People's

²See Table 20: Petitions for Naturalization Filed, Persons Naturalized, and Petitions for Naturalizations Denied in the 2015 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015

(Countries ranked by 2015 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
REGION						
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
Africa	71,492	9.8	62,175	9.5	71,872	9.2
Asia	261,374	35.8	233,163	35.7	275,700	35.3
Europe	78,074	10.7	71,325	10.9	80,333	10.3
North America	247,492	33.9	222,547	34.1	271,807	34.9
Caribbean	92,807	12.7	83,376	12.8	120,995	15.5
Central America	39,160	5.4	35,866	5.5	42,682	5.5
Other North America	115,525	15.8	103,305	15.8	108,130	13.9
Oceania	3,811	0.5	3,399	0.5	3,849	0.5
South America	67,927	9.3	60,665	9.3	76,167	9.8
Unknown	89	—	142	—	201	—
COUNTRY						
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
Mexico	105,958	14.5	94,889	14.5	99,385	12.7
India	42,213	5.8	37,854	5.8	49,897	6.4
Philippines	40,815	5.6	34,591	5.3	43,489	5.6
China, People's Republic	31,241	4.3	30,284	4.6	35,387	4.5
Dominican Republic	26,665	3.7	23,775	3.6	39,590	5.1
Cuba	25,770	3.5	24,092	3.7	30,482	3.9
Vietnam	21,976	3.0	18,837	2.9	24,277	3.1
Colombia	17,207	2.4	16,478	2.5	22,196	2.8
El Salvador	16,930	2.3	15,598	2.4	18,401	2.4
Jamaica	16,566	2.3	13,547	2.1	16,442	2.1
Iraq	14,899	2.0	12,377	1.9	7,771	1.0
Korea, South	14,230	1.9	13,587	2.1	15,786	2.0
Haiti	14,053	1.9	13,676	2.1	23,480	3.0
Pakistan	11,912	1.6	11,210	1.7	12,948	1.7
Peru	10,701	1.5	9,572	1.5	11,782	1.5
Brazil	10,516	1.4	8,625	1.3	9,565	1.2
Nigeria	10,363	1.4	8,667	1.3	9,545	1.2
Iran	10,344	1.4	9,620	1.5	11,623	1.5
United Kingdom	10,095	1.4	8,906	1.4	9,459	1.2
Bangladesh	9,750	1.3	7,475	1.1	9,571	1.2
All other countries	268,055	36.7	239,756	36.7	278,853	35.8

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Republic of China (4.3 percent). The 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 47 percent of all naturalizing citizens in 2015.

From 2014 to 2015, the number of naturalizations increased among immigrants from all regions. Among leading countries of birth, the largest numeric increase in naturalizations occurred among immigrants born in Mexico (11,069), the Philippines (6,224), India (4,359), and Vietnam (3,139). As in 2014, Iraq saw a continued increase (2.8 percent) in naturalizations following an increase in Iraq-born LPRs after 2008. Among leading countries of birth, the largest percentage increases in naturalizations were Bangladesh (30 percent), Jamaica (22 percent), Brazil (22 percent), and South Korea (20 percent).

Table 2.**Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015**

(Ranked by 2015 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
California	155,979	21.4	140,234	21.5	164,792	21.1
New York	90,368	12.4	77,717	11.9	107,330	13.8
Florida	81,960	11.2	79,637	12.2	101,773	13.0
Texas	65,467	9.0	52,879	8.1	57,947	7.4
New Jersey	34,857	4.8	32,939	5.0	41,173	5.3
Illinois	25,722	3.5	26,224	4.0	27,706	3.6
Massachusetts	23,554	3.2	21,608	3.3	21,404	2.7
Georgia	20,794	2.8	15,242	2.3	19,534	2.5
Virginia	18,391	2.5	19,646	3.0	22,279	2.9
Maryland	18,390	2.5	13,707	2.1	17,752	2.3
Other*	194,777	26.7	173,583	26.6	198,239	25.4

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

Seventy-three percent of all persons naturalizing in 2015 resided in 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest percentage of persons naturalizing (21 percent), followed by New York (12 percent) and Florida (11 percent). More than 50 percent of all new citizens in 2015 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (see Table 3).³ The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (16 percent); Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (9.5 percent); and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL (7.3 percent).

From 2014 to 2015, the largest percentage increases in the number of naturalizations among leading states of residence occurred

³The most current CBSA definitions are available from OMB at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/bulletins/2014/b-13-01.pdf>.

Table 3.**Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015**

(Ranked by 2015 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	113,758	15.6	100,257	15.3	137,513	17.6
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	69,017	9.5	57,674	8.8	70,188	9.0
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	53,448	7.3	52,544	8.0	66,925	8.6
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	27,084	3.7	24,649	3.8	30,097	3.9
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	25,735	3.5	17,547	2.7	22,575	2.9
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	24,201	3.3	24,617	3.8	26,173	3.4
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	20,620	2.8	19,842	3.0	23,506	3.0
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	19,626	2.7	16,581	2.5	16,304	2.1
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	18,385	2.5	17,311	2.6	17,383	2.2
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	17,105	2.3	13,342	2.0	16,763	2.1
Other, including unknown	341,280	46.7	309,052	47.3	352,502	45.2

Note: Metropolitan areas defined based on the 2013 update of Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) definitions. As a result, numbers for previous years may differ from previously published figures.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

in Georgia (36 percent), Maryland (34 percent), and Texas (24 percent). Among leading metropolitan areas of residence, the largest percentage increases from 2014 to 2015 occurred in Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (47 percent), and Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA (28 percent). Of the leading metropolitan areas of residence, only Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI experienced a decrease from 2014 to 2015 (-1.7 percent).

Sex, Age, and Marital Status

The percentage breakdown by sex, age, and marital status remained largely unchanged from recent years (see Tables 4, 5, and 6). In 2015, females accounted for 56 percent of all persons naturalizing. Slightly more than one-half (52 percent) of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years, 21 percent were ages 55 years and older, and fewer than 10 percent were ages 18 to 24 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing

was 40 years. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2015 were married, and nearly one-quarter (23 percent) were single.

Years in Immigrant Status

As in the previous three years, persons naturalizing in 2015 spent a median of seven years in LPR status before becoming citizens (see Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa and Asia spent the least time in lawful immigrant status (6 years), followed by immigrants from South America (7 years), Europe and Oceania (both 9 years), and North America (10 years).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

Table 4.

Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015

Sex	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
Female	408,064	55.9	360,547	55.2	431,427	55.3
Male	322,164	44.1	292,858	44.8	348,486	44.7
Unknown	31	—	11	—	16	—

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 6.

Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015

Marital status	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
Married	463,779	63.5	417,117	63.8	496,262	63.6
Single	167,024	22.9	147,369	22.6	175,367	22.5
Other*	99,456	13.6	88,930	13.6	108,300	13.9

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 5.

Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2015

Age	2015		2014		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0	779,929	100.0
18 to 24 years	66,806	9.1	59,431	9.1	71,714	9.2
25 to 34 years	186,115	25.5	163,264	25.0	195,472	25.1
35 to 44 years	190,366	26.1	173,413	26.5	208,008	26.7
45 to 54 years	133,561	18.3	121,187	18.5	142,245	18.2
55 to 64 years	87,655	12.0	78,058	11.9	93,053	11.9
65 years and over	65,756	9.0	58,063	8.9	69,436	8.9
Unknown	—	—	—	—	1	—
Median age	40	X	40	X	40	X

X Not applicable.

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 7.

Median Years in Lawful Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Fiscal Years 2006 to 2015

Region of birth	Year									
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Total	7	7	7	7	6	6	7	9	8	7
Africa	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	7	6	6
Europe	9	8	7	7	6	6	7	7	6	6
North America	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	12	11	10
Oceania	9	9	8	8	7	7	8	9	9	8
South America	7	7	6	6	6	5	6	8	7	7

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.