

Trends in Naturalization by Provision of Law: 1975 to 2005

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Naturalization is the process through which foreign nationals become U.S. citizens. Naturalized citizens are granted the same rights and privileges as all citizens of the United States. To become a naturalized citizen, foreign nationals must fulfill certain requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act. There are primarily three legal provisions in which a person can become naturalized. The majority of applicants apply under the general naturalization provisions, which require that they be: at least 18 years of age; have been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States (i.e., be a legal permanent resident, LPR); and have resided in the country continuously for at least 5 years. However, there are special provisions that exempt applicants from one or more of the general requirements. Of those applicants naturalizing under a special provision, the majority are either spouses of U.S. citizens or members of the U.S. Armed Forces¹. This Office of Immigration Statistics Fact Sheet examines trends in the number and proportion of persons ages 18 years and over naturalizing under various provisions between 1975 to 2005².

DATA

Every applicant for naturalization who is 18 years of age or older must file an N-400 *Application for Naturalization*. The data presented in this Fact Sheet were obtained from information taken from N-400 applications, maintained in administrative record keeping systems of the Department of Homeland Security.

KEY FINDINGS

- During the three decades between 1975 and 2005, the vast majority of naturalizations (83 percent to 93 percent) were under the general provisions (see Figure 1).
- The spouses of U.S. citizens provision accounted for a declining share of naturalizations from 1975 (11 percent) through 1996 (3 percent) and a rising share through 2005 (13 percent). This trend partly

¹ For more information on the naturalization process and special provisions see J. Simanski and N. Rytina (2005) *Naturalizations in the United States: 2005*. This report is available on the OIS website at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/2005NatFlowRpt.pdf>

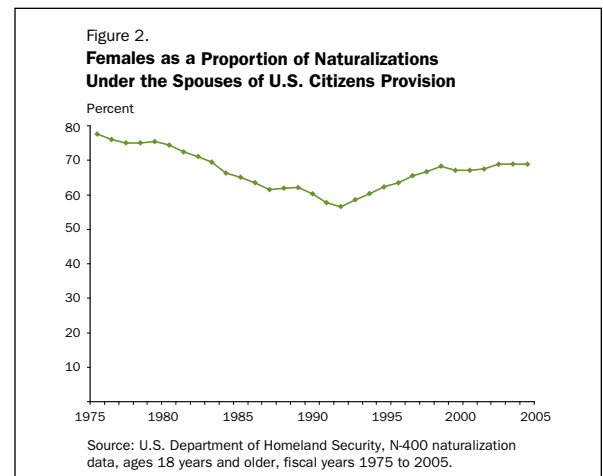
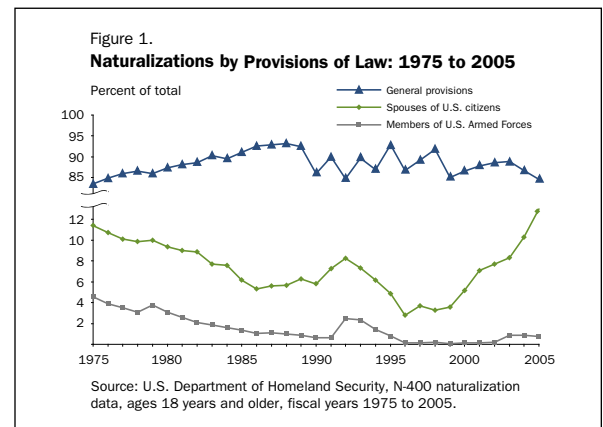
² In this fact sheet, years refer to fiscal year (October 1 to September 30).

reflects changes in the number of persons obtaining LPR status as U.S. citizen spouses. The majority of naturalizations under the spouses provision were female; this percentage ranged from 80 percent in 1975 to 56 percent in 1992 and increased to 70 percent in 2005 (see Figure 2).

- The proportion of naturalizations from members of the U.S. Armed Forces declined from nearly five percent of the total in 1975 to less than one percent in 2005 (see Figure 1).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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



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