

Naturalizations in the United States: 2006

JOHN SIMANSKI

Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon a foreign citizen or national after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act. After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy the same benefits, rights and responsibilities that the Constitution gives to native born U.S. citizens, such as the right to vote. They 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 2006¹.

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 2006, the total number of persons naturalizing was 702,589. The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (83,979), India (47,542), Philippines (40,500), China (35,387), and Vietnam (29,917). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (152,836), New York (103,870), and Florida (90,846).

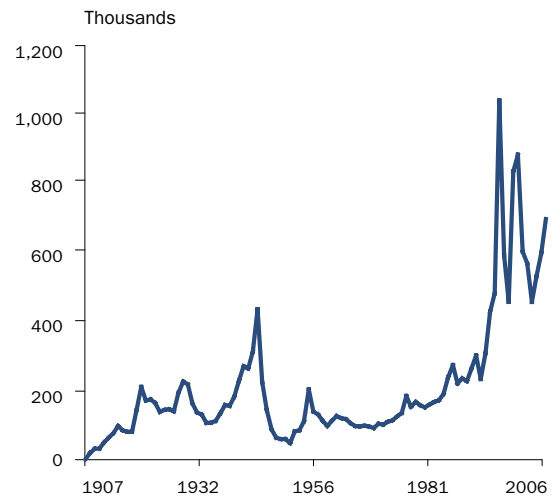
THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

To be naturalized, an applicant generally 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, 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 U.S. history; and good moral character.

Special provisions of naturalization law exempt certain applicants 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. Foreign-born children under 18 years of age, including adopted children, acquire U.S. citizenship automatically (without the need to apply) if they meet

Figure 1.
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1907 to 2006



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data, Fiscal Years 1907 to 2006.

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



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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 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 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 as well as the history and government of the United States. Those applicants found qualified are scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or an officer delegated 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. Prior application processing issues at USCIS previously affected the number of persons naturalizing each year. Caution should therefore be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about recent trends in the demand to naturalize.

RESULTS

The number of persons naturalizing in the United States increased 16 percent from 604,280 in 2005 to 702,589 in 2006. This increase was due to a rise in the number of naturalization applications filed and processed. Between 2005 and 2006, the number of applications filed for naturalization increased by 130,000 and the number completed increased by 100,000.

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 625,000 during 2000 to 2006 (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

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006

(Countries ranked by 2006 persons naturalized)

Region/country of birth	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
REGION:						
Africa	50,397	7.2	38,830	6.4	34,531	6.4
Asia	257,125	36.6	237,724	39.3	218,974	40.8
Europe	107,459	15.3	97,482	16.1	89,014	16.6
North America	223,086	31.8	180,572	29.9	151,047	28.1
Caribbean	90,979	13.0	64,672	10.7	54,811	10.2
Central America	38,463	5.5	30,965	5.1	24,677	4.6
Other North America ..	93,644	13.3	84,935	14.1	71,559	13.3
Oceania	3,657	0.5	3,898	0.6	3,551	0.7
South America	59,985	8.5	44,504	7.4	38,676	7.2
Unknown	880	0.1	1,270	0.2	1,358	0.3
COUNTRY:						
Mexico	83,979	12.0	77,089	12.8	63,840	11.9
India	47,542	6.8	35,962	6.0	37,975	7.1
Philippines	40,500	5.8	36,673	6.1	31,448	5.9
China, People's Republic ..	35,387	5.0	31,708	5.2	27,309	5.1
Vietnam	29,917	4.3	32,926	5.4	27,480	5.1
Dominican Republic	22,165	3.2	20,831	3.4	15,464	2.9
Cuba	21,481	3.1	11,227	1.9	11,236	2.1
Jamaica	18,953	2.7	13,674	2.3	12,271	2.3
Korea	17,668	2.5	19,223	3.2	17,184	3.2
Haiti	15,979	2.3	9,740	1.6	8,215	1.5
Colombia	15,698	2.2	11,396	1.9	9,819	1.8
El Salvador	13,430	1.9	12,174	2.0	9,602	1.8
Iran	11,363	1.6	11,031	1.8	11,781	2.2
Pakistan	10,411	1.5	9,699	1.6	8,744	1.6
Poland	10,230	1.5	9,801	1.6	10,335	1.9
Ukraine	10,184	1.5	9,343	1.5	8,069	1.5
Peru	10,063	1.4	7,904	1.3	6,980	1.3
Bosnia-Herzegovina	9,686	1.4	8,921	1.5	8,013	1.5
Canada	9,607	1.4	7,815	1.3	7,682	1.4
Russia	9,412	1.3	8,297	1.4	7,586	1.4
All other countries	258,934	36.9	218,846	36.2	196,118	36.5

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

Table 2.

Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006

(Ranked by 2006 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
California	152,836	21.8	170,489	28.2	145,593	27.1
New York	103,870	14.8	84,624	14.0	66,234	12.3
Florida	90,846	12.9	42,999	7.1	43,795	8.2
New Jersey	39,801	5.7	33,160	5.5	30,291	5.6
Texas	37,835	5.4	38,553	6.4	35,417	6.6
Illinois	30,156	4.3	27,739	4.6	29,432	5.5
Massachusetts	22,932	3.3	22,685	3.8	16,263	3.0
Virginia	20,401	2.9	17,653	2.9	13,478	2.5
Georgia	19,785	2.8	7,903	1.3	6,880	1.3
Pennsylvania	15,846	2.3	13,307	2.2	10,205	1.9
Other	168,281	24.0	145,168	24.0	139,563	26.0

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

Table 3.**Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Statistical Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006**

(Ranked by 2006 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan statistical area of residence	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	132,326	18.8	108,440	17.9	89,926	16.7
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	65,813	9.4	78,183	12.9	66,737	12.4
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL	63,623	9.1	24,112	4.0	28,852	5.4
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	29,047	4.1	27,054	4.5	28,264	5.3
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria-Rockville, DC-VA-MD-WV	26,462	3.8	22,473	3.7	19,708	3.7
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	24,042	3.4	25,492	4.2	22,934	4.3
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	18,585	2.6	18,274	3.0	13,177	2.5
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	16,824	2.4	6,647	1.1	5,634	1.1
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	14,129	2.0	15,494	2.6	15,408	2.9
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	13,893	2.0	13,401	2.2	12,815	2.4
Other	297,845	42.4	264,710	43.8	233,696	43.5

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

Table 4.**Persons Naturalized by Gender: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006**

Gender	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
Male	313,771	44.7	267,556	44.3	244,335	45.5
Female	387,773	55.2	335,427	55.5	290,267	54.0
Unknown	1,045	0.1	1,297	0.2	2,549	0.5

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

Table 5.**Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006**

Age	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
18 to 24 years	74,289	10.6	65,195	10.8	60,722	11.3
25 to 34 years	186,445	26.5	160,588	26.6	141,721	26.4
35 to 44 years	200,151	28.5	166,718	27.6	149,662	27.9
45 to 54 years	111,837	15.9	100,631	16.7	88,013	16.4
55 to 64 years	73,097	10.4	63,834	10.6	53,725	10.0
65 years and over	56,769	8.1	47,313	7.8	43,308	8.1
Unknown	1	-	1	-	-	-
Median age	38	N/A	39	N/A	38	N/A

- Represents zero or rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

Table 6.**Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006**

Marital status	2006		2005		2004	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	702,589	100.0	604,280	100.0	537,151	100.0
Single	154,003	21.9	132,924	22.0	118,458	22.1
Married	459,718	65.4	397,688	65.8	350,174	65.2
Other	88,868	12.6	73,668	12.2	68,519	12.8

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2004 to 2006.

eligible for citizenship, 2) legislative efforts to restrict public benefits for non-citizens, 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 has been the leading region of origin of new citizens in every year since 1976, except during 1996 to 2000 when IRCA legalization immigrants, 90 percent of whom were from North American countries, naturalized in large numbers.

Region and Country of Birth

In 2006, 37 percent of persons naturalized were born in Asia compared with 32 percent from North American countries and 15 percent from European countries (see Table 1). The leading country of birth was Mexico (12 percent), followed by India (6.8 percent), the Philippines (5.8 percent), the People's Republic of China (5.0 percent), and Vietnam (4.3 percent). When combined, the 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 47 percent of all new citizens in 2006.

Between 2005 and 2006, naturalizations of Cuban born LPRs increased 91 percent, partly reflecting the greater than average increase in applications processed by USCIS's Miami District Office. The only leading countries with a decrease in naturalizations were Vietnam and Korea.

State and Metropolitan Statistical Area of Residence

In 2006, 76 percent of persons naturalized were residents of 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest percentage of persons naturalizing (22 percent), followed by New York (15 percent) and Florida (13 percent). Among leading states, the greatest increases in naturalizations between 2005 and 2006 occurred in Florida and Georgia. Naturalizations more than doubled among residents of Florida partly because of the above average increase in applications processed by USCIS's Miami District Office. Naturalizations in Georgia increased by 150 percent. Of the leading states, California had the largest decrease (10 percent) in naturalizations from 2005 to 2006.

Of all new citizens in 2006, over half (58 percent) lived in 10 metropolitan statistical areas (see Table 3)². The leading metropolitan statistical areas of residence were New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (19 percent), Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (9.4 percent), and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL (9.1 percent). Consistent with state trends, naturalizations more than doubled between 2005 and 2006 among residents of Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL, and Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA.

Gender, Age, and Marital Status

The majority of persons naturalizing were female. In 2006, females accounted for 55 percent of persons naturalizing (see Table 4). More than one-half (55 percent) of new citizens were between ages 25 to 44 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing was 38 years. Persons ages 65 years and over accounted for 8 percent of naturalizations in 2006 (see Table 5). Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2006 were married and 22 percent were single (see Table 6).

² 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 and 2004 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 7.

Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Median Years in Legal Permanent Resident Status: Selected Fiscal Years 1965 to 2006

Region of birth	Year													
	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Total	7	8	8	8	8	9	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa	6	7	7	7	6	7	7	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania	8	9	9	9	9	10	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America	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 for persons age 18 and over, Fiscal Years 1965 to 2006.

Years in Immigrant Status

Among persons who naturalized in 2006, the median time elapsed between the date of legal immigration and the date of naturalization was seven years (see Table 7). At the 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 (8 years), and North America (10 years). Between 2005 and 2006, the median years spent in legal permanent resident status declined by one year in most regions. This decline may reflect both declines in application processing times and changes in the demand for or timing of naturalization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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