

THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN 2004

Having the facts on America's growing cultural diversity is essential for good government and good business. In some parts of the country, the characteristics of the foreign-born population are taken into account when developing educational programs, designing street signs, and providing social services. This population defies generalization because it is both diverse and rapidly changing.

World Regions of Population

In 2004, 34.2 million people or 12 percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population were foreign born, according to the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS).¹ Almost 18 percent entered the United States since 2000, and another 35 percent entered during the 1990s. Among those arriving since 1990, 16 percent

Words That Count

The **foreign-born population** refers to people who were not U.S. citizens at birth.

The **native population** refers to people who were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or a U.S. island area, such as Guam, or who were born abroad of at least one U.S.-citizen parent.²

World regions used in this chapter—Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Other Regions—are based on United Nations' definitions. Latin America can be subdivided into Central America (including Mexico), South America, and the Caribbean. The Other Regions category includes Northern America, Africa, and Oceania.

¹ The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

Members of the armed forces who live off post or who live with their families on post are included in the ASEC, as long as one civilian adult lives in the same household.

² The U.S. island areas include the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

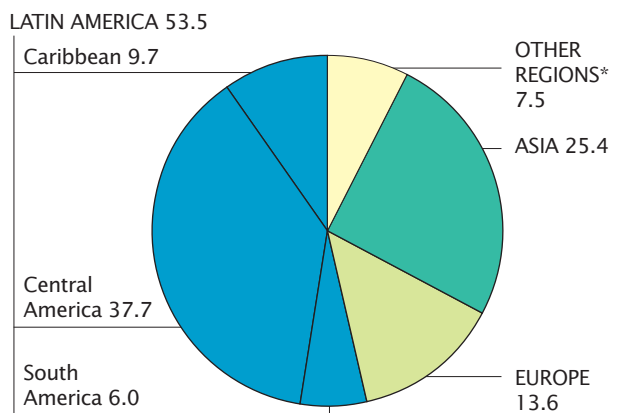
were naturalized.³ Citizenship rates increased with length of residence. Among the foreign born who entered the United States before 1970, 83 percent were naturalized by 2004.

Countries of Birth

Among the foreign born in 2004, 53 percent were born in Latin America, 25 percent in Asia, 14 percent in Europe, and 8 percent in other regions of the world, as shown in Figure 1. Seven in 10 people from Latin America were born in Central America, including Mexico.

Figure 1.
U.S. Foreign-Born Population by World Region of Birth: 2004

(In percent)



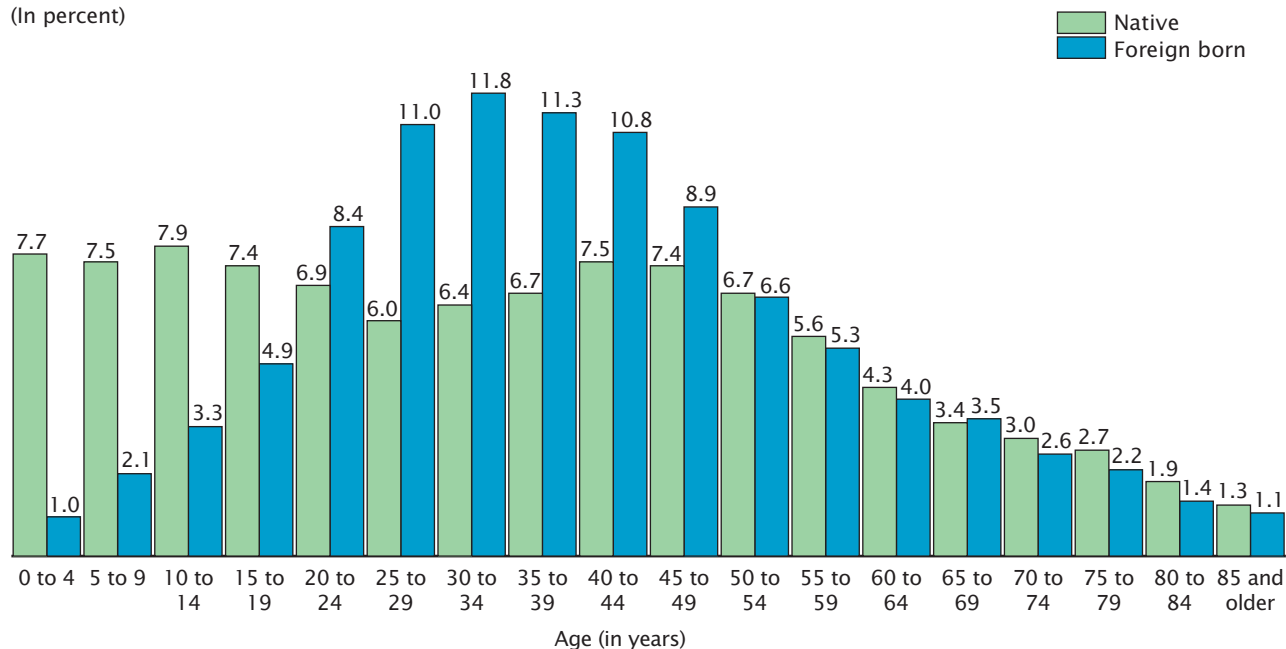
*Includes Northern America, Africa, and Oceania.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004.

³ Generally, at least 5 years of U.S. residence are required for naturalization; therefore, the foreign born who have arrived in the United States more recently will have lower rates of U.S. citizenship than those who arrived earlier. Citizenship rates obtained from the CPS ASEC data differ from naturalization rates available from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in part because CPS ASEC data include not only immigrants eligible for U.S. citizenship, but also those who are not eligible for citizenship (such as students, diplomats, and unauthorized migrants). For more information, see *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000* (P23-206), Section 7, "Citizenship Status."

Figure 2.
Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Age: 2004

(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004.

U.S. Regional Differences

The West was home to the largest share of the foreign-born population living in the United States. Thirty-eight percent of the foreign born lived there, compared with 21 percent of the native population. The South accounted for 30 percent of the foreign-born population and 37 percent of the native population. The Northeast was home to 22 percent of the foreign born and 18 percent of natives.⁴ Eleven percent of the foreign-born population lived in the Midwest, compared with 24 percent of the native population.

In 2004, a higher proportion of the foreign born than natives lived in central cities—43 percent compared with 27 percent of natives.

Age and Family Size

The age structure of the foreign-born population and that of the native population differ. In 2004, 80 percent of the foreign born were aged 18 to 64, compared with 60 percent of natives. Forty-five percent of the foreign born were aged 25 to 44, compared with 27 percent of natives (Figure 2).

⁴ The percentage of the foreign-born population living in the Northeast is not statistically different from the percentage of the native population living in the West.

The percentages of the foreign-born population and the native population that were 65 and older were slightly different (11 percent and 12 percent, respectively). Fewer foreign-born residents were under age 18—9 percent, compared with 28 percent of natives. The smaller proportion of the foreign born in the youngest age group reflects the fact that most of the children of foreign-born parents were natives.

Foreign-born families were larger than families of natives.⁵ While 25 percent of families with a foreign-born householder had five or more members, 12 percent of families with a native householder were this large.

Educational and Economic Characteristics

Among the population 25 and older, 67 percent of the foreign born were high school graduates or had more education, compared with 88 percent of natives. About 86 percent of people this age who were born in Asia and Europe had this much education.⁶

⁵ Families are households consisting of two or more individuals, at least one of whom is related to the householder (the person or persons who own or rent the dwelling). The U.S. Census Bureau defines the nativity of a household (native or foreign born) by the nativity of the householder, regardless of the nativity of the other household members.

⁶ The percentage of the European foreign born age 25 and older who have a high school diploma or more education is not significantly different from the percentage of people this age from Asia and Other Regions with this much education.

Moving to America— Moving to Homeownership (1994 to 2002)

In 2002, homeownership rates for natives (70 percent), naturalized citizens (68 percent), and noncitizens (35 percent) were among the highest levels since data were first collected on homeownership and nativity in the 1994 CPS.⁷ For both naturalized citizens and noncitizens, homeownership rates were generally higher for householders who had lived in this country the longest. Among naturalized householders who entered the country before 1975, 77 percent owned their own home, compared with 60 percent of those who entered the country later. In a similar vein, 63 percent of noncitizen householders who lived in the country prior to 1975 were homeowners, compared with 32 percent of householders who entered the country more recently.

Homeownership rates varied by place of birth. The rate of homeownership was 75 percent for naturalized European householders, 70 percent for naturalized Asian householders, and 62 percent for naturalized Latin American householders, as shown in Figure 3. These rates may be related to the length of time these

householders lived in the United States. For instance, 32 percent of European-born householders entered the United States in 1975 or later, compared with 74 percent of Asian-born householders.

For natives, naturalized citizens, and noncitizens, marital status was related to homeownership rates. Married-couple households, for example, had higher

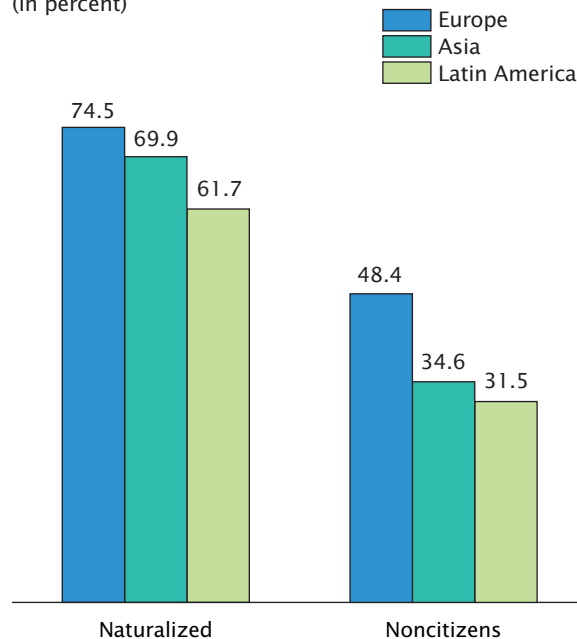
homeownership rates than nonfamily households with two or more members. For natives, 86 percent of married-couple households and 42 percent of nonfamily households with two or more members owned their own homes. For naturalized householders, the homeownership rates were 79 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Among noncitizens, the rates were 45 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

The likelihood of homeownership increased with age. For native householders, homeownership was highest among those aged 55 to 64 (83 percent) and lowest for those under 35 (44 percent). The same pattern held true for naturalized citizens, with 76 percent of householders 55 to 64 owning their homes, compared with 48 percent of those under 35. While homeownership rates were lower for noncitizens of all ages, they reflected the same pattern. For example, among those 55 and older, the homeownership rate was 52 percent, compared with 22 percent for those under 35.

Homeownership rates were higher for naturalized citizens than for natives in the Midwest, the South, and the West. The rates were 78 percent for naturalized householders and 74 percent for native householders in the Midwest; 73 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the South; and 67 percent and 66 percent, respectively, in the West. In the Northeast, naturalized householders (59 percent) were less likely than native householders (68 percent) to be homeowners.

Figure 3.
Homeownership Rates of the Foreign Born by Citizenship Status and World Region of Birth of Householder: 2002

(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Housing Vacancy Survey, 2002.

⁷ Information on homeownership and nativity comes from the Current Population Survey's Housing Vacancy Survey.

About half of those from Latin America had this much education. Among those from Other Regions, 84 percent finished high school.

The real median income for native (\$45,319) and foreign-born householders (\$39,412) was unchanged between 2003 and 2004.⁸ The median for households maintained by naturalized citizens (\$46,233) was not statistically different from the median for natives, but the medians for households maintained by noncitizens (\$34,497) was lower.

Between 2003 and 2004, the poverty rate and number in poverty rose for the native population. In 2004, 12.1 percent of natives were in poverty, accounting for 31.0 million people. At the same time, both the poverty rate and the number in poverty remained unchanged for the foreign-born population—17.1 percent and 6.0 million.⁹

⁸ Data on income and poverty for 2004 are from the 2005 CPS ASEC. See the chapters on money income and poverty for more information.

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The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports: *The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2003* (P20-551) by Luke Larsen and *Moving to America—Moving to Homeownership: 1994–2002* (H121/03-1) by Robert R. Callis.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's Web site <www.census.gov>. Click on "Subjects A to Z." Click on "F" and select "Foreign-Born Population Data" or "H" for "Homeownership/Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636).

For information on the foreign born, e-mail <pop@census.gov>.

See the chapter on housing for more information on housing or e-mail <hhes-info@census.gov>.

For information on the source and accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.