

U.S. foreign-born population surpasses 25 million.

As of March 1997, according to data collected in the Current Population Survey, the estimated foreign-born population of the United States was 25.8 million — the largest in U.S. history. The number has climbed 6.0 million, or 30 percent, since the 1990 census, and 16.2 million, or 168 percent, since 1970, when the United States had the lowest number of foreign born in this century. The number of foreign-born U.S. residents now exceeds the population of all but 36 of the world's nations and each of our country's states, except California.

Meanwhile, the proportion of the U.S. population that was foreign born reached an estimated 1 in 10 in 1997, the highest proportion since 1930. (See Figure 1.) The 1997 figure is midway between the highest figures during a period of large-scale migration from Europe (14 percent in 1870 and 15 percent in 1890 and 1910) and the lowest figure during the culmination of a long period of limited migration (5 percent in 1970).

One-half of the foreign-born population is from Latin America.

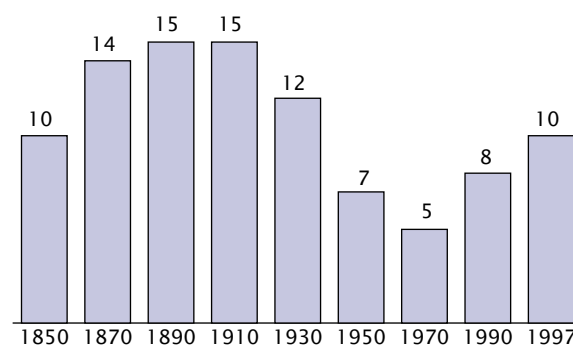
In 1997, 13.1 million (1 in 2) foreign-born residents were from Latin America, an impressive increase from the

1.8 million (1 in 5) who resided in this country as recently as 1970. (See Figure 2.) Mexico alone accounted for 7.0 million of the total number of foreign born in 1997, up from 800,000 in 1970. Other Latin American nations among the top 10 countries of birth of the foreign born were Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador.

Foreign-Born Population Defined

The *Foreign Born* were not U.S. citizens at birth. *Natives* were born in the United States or a U.S. Island Area such as Puerto Rico, or born abroad of a U.S. citizen parent.

Figure 1.
Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1997
(Percent of total population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Figure 1-1.

More than a quarter of the foreign-born population is from Asia.

There were 6.8 million U.S. foreign-born residents from Asia in 1997 — 27 percent of the total foreign-born population. As recently as 1970, the corresponding figures were 800,000 and 9 percent. The Philippines, China, Vietnam and India, all in Asia, were among the top countries of origin for migrants to the United States.

Another 4.3 million or about 1 in 5 foreign-born residents came from Europe (1997) — a far cry from 1970 when the majority (3 in 5) listed Europe as their region of birth.

Foreign-born population is highly concentrated in a few states.

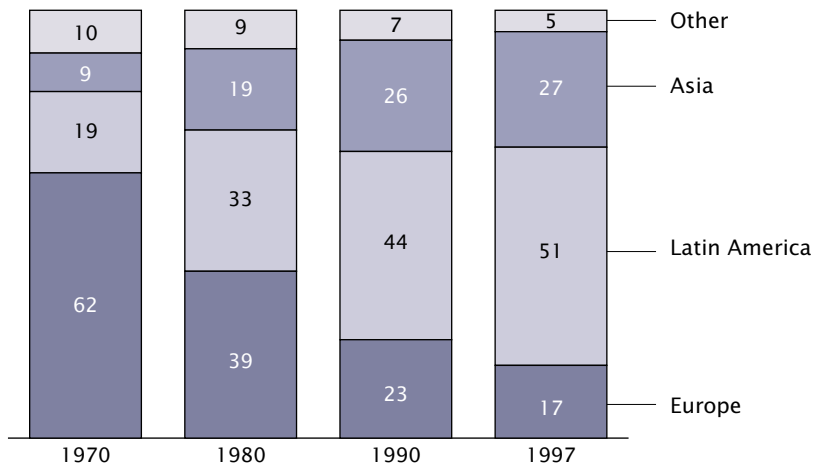
Six states had estimated foreign-born populations of 1 million or more in 1997: California (8.1 million), New York (3.6 million), Florida (2.4 million), Texas (2.2 million), New Jersey (1.2 million) and Illinois (1.1 million). Whereas the total population of these states represented a proportion of 4 in 10 of the total U.S. population, their foreign-born populations represented 7 in 10 of the nation's total foreign-born population.

In five of these six states, as well as two others, the proportion of the population that was foreign born exceeded the national average of 10 percent: California (25 percent), New York (20 percent), Hawaii (18 percent), Florida (16 percent), New Jersey (15 percent), Arizona (14 percent) and Texas (11 percent). The estimates for Florida and New Jersey do not differ significantly from each other. (See Figure 3.)

While California, Florida and Texas combined accounted for about

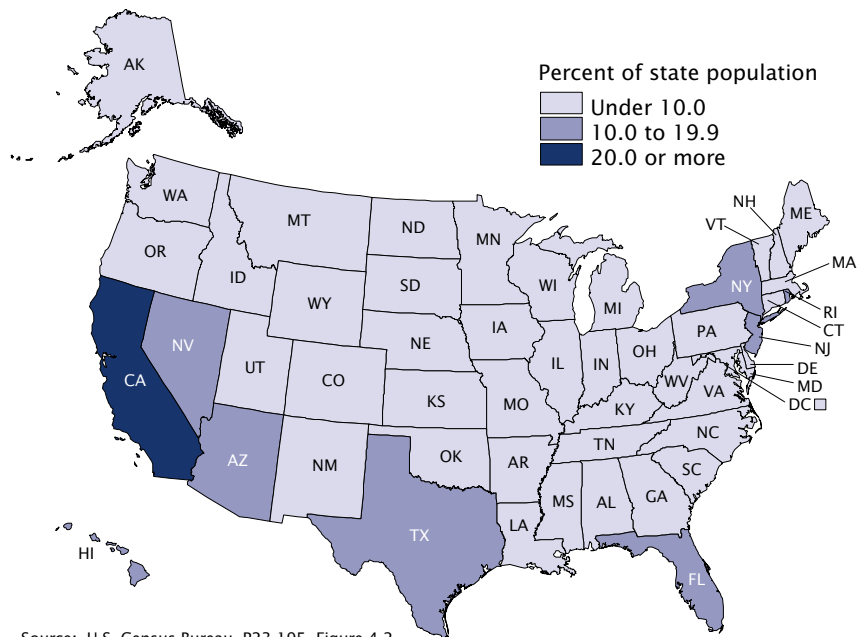
Figure 2. **Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth: 1970 to 1997**

(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Figure 2-2.

Figure 3. **Foreign-Born Population by State: 1997**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Figure 4-2.

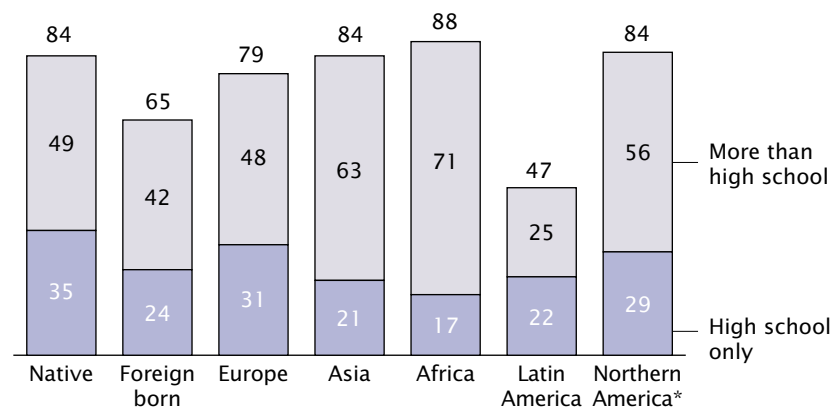
40 percent of the growth of the total U.S. population between 1960 and 1997, the three were responsible for 70 percent of the increase in the foreign-born population during the same period.

The foreign born swell populations of large metro areas.

Five metro areas together were home to half of the nation's foreign-born population in 1997:

Figure 4.
High School Graduate or Higher Education by Nativity and Region of Birth of the Foreign Born: 1997

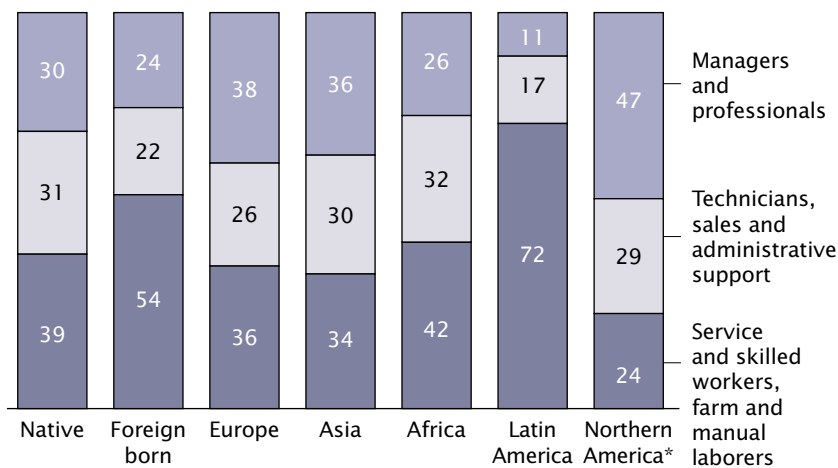
(Percent of the population 25 years and older)



*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Table 13-1D.

Figure 5.
Occupational Distribution of Workers by Nativity and Region of Birth of the Foreign Born: 1997

(Percent distribution)



*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Figure 15-2.

Los Angeles (4.8 million), New York (4.6 million), Miami (1.4 million), San Francisco (1.4 million) and Chicago (1.1 million). Of these, Miami had the highest proportion of foreign born among its total population (39 percent).

Region of birth is key indicator of foreign born's well-being.

The nation's foreign-born residents are far from homogeneous. Their social and economic well-being varies depending on where they were born. Following is a look at how selected foreign-born groups

compare with one another, as well as with the native population. Unless otherwise indicated, the data are for 1997:

- **Age** — The median ages of the foreign-born population (37 years) and the native population (34 years) did not differ greatly. However, there was great variation within the foreign-born population by region of birth, as median ages ranged from 51 years for those from Europe to 38 years for those from Asia and 34 years for Latin American-born residents. (The median age is the age at which half the population is older, and half is younger.)
- **Education** — The proportion of the population 25 years and older who had a high school education or higher was lower among the foreign-born population (65 percent) than among the native population (84 percent). Foreign born from Asia had a rate (about 84 percent) similar to natives, while those from Europe (79 percent) were next and those from Latin America (47 percent) were considerably lower. (See Figure 4.)
- **Labor force participation** — Foreign-born men 16 years old and older had a higher labor force participation rate (79 percent) than native men (74 percent). In contrast, foreign-born women in this age range had a lower rate (53 percent) than their native counterparts (61 percent).

- **Occupation** — Twenty-four percent of foreign-born workers had jobs in a managerial or professional specialty occupation compared with 30 percent of native workers. (See Figure 5.) The proportions of foreign-born workers in these occupations varied greatly by region of birth, from about 37 percent of workers from Asia

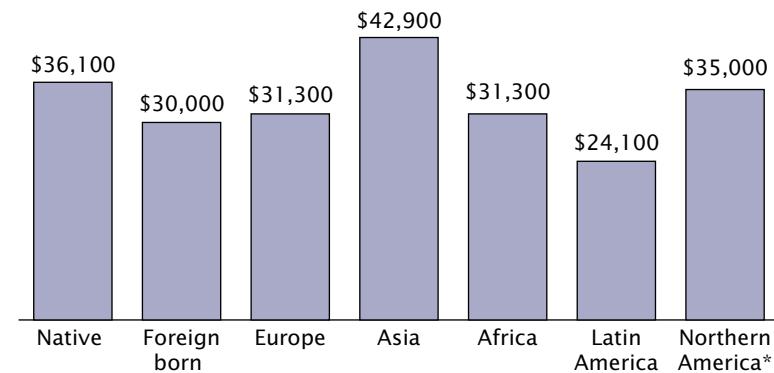
and Europe to 11 percent from Latin America.

- **Health insurance coverage** — Among workers in 1996, 44 percent of the foreign born and 54 percent of the natives had employment-based health insurance. Among the foreign born, the proportions were 54 percent from Europe, 52 percent from Asia and 36 percent from Latin America. (Rates for Europe and Asia were not statistically different from each other or the natives.)
- **Poverty** — The poverty rate was 21 percent for the foreign-born population in 1996, compared with 13 percent for the native population. Among the foreign-born population, poverty rates for those from Europe (13 percent) and Asia (15 percent) were similar to each other and to the native population. In contrast, the rate for those born in Latin America was 28 percent.
- **Household size** — The average size of households with foreign-born householders was 3.32 people, considerably larger than the average of 2.56 for households with a native householder. The average size of foreign-born households by area of birth of the householder was 2.41 for householders from Europe, 3.26 for those from Asia and 3.84 for those from Latin America. (The size of European-born and native households was not significantly different.)
- **Household income** — The median income in 1996 for households with a foreign-born householder was \$30,000, about \$6,100 less than that for households with a native householder. (See Figure 6.) Median household income levels were \$42,900 if the householder was from Asia, \$31,300 when the householder was from Europe and \$24,100 when from Latin America.

Figure 6.

Median Household Income by Nativity and Region of Birth of the Foreign Born: 1996

(Households classified by nativity and region of birth of the householder)



*Northern America includes Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P23-195, Figure 16-2.

- **Homeownership** — In 1997, the homeownership rate was higher for households with a native householder (68 percent) than for those with a foreign-born householder (47 percent). Homeownership rates were 63 percent for those with householders from Europe, 51 percent for those whose householders were born in Asia and 38 percent for those from Latin America.
- **Program participation** — In 1996, 17 percent of native householders and 24 percent of foreign-born householders participated in one or more means-tested noncash programs, such as Medicaid. Among foreign-born householders, the proportions of those participating in these programs were 14 percent from Europe, 17 percent from Asia and 33 percent from Latin America. (There was no statistical difference between the natives and foreign born from Asia or Europe.)

More Information:

The information in this Census Brief is based on findings from *Profile of*

the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1997, Current Population Reports, Special Studies P23-195. The report may be found on the Internet at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign.html>>. Paper copies also may be ordered from the Census Bureau (tel. 301-457-2422; e-mail: <pop@census.gov>). Funding for the report was provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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The data in the report are from the March 1997 Current Population Survey. Data from 1990 and earlier censuses are included for comparison. Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. The Census Bureau's population estimates program uses different methods to estimate population by nativity and may show slightly different estimates of foreign-born and native populations from those presented here.