

United States Census Bureau

How Do We Know?

America's Foreign Born in the Last 50 Years

During the last 50 years, the foreign-born population of the United States has undergone dramatic changes in size, origins, and geographic distributions. This population represented about 1 in 20 residents in 1960, mostly from countries in Europe who settled in the Northeast and Midwest. Today's foreign-born population makes up about one in eight U.S. residents, mostly immigrants from Latin America and Asia who have settled in the West and South. The Decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey allow us to trace the changes in the foreign-born population over time.

Long-term trends

Foreign –Born Population and as Percent of Total Population

Foreign Born Population

(millions)

1850 2.2 9.7 %

1860 4.1 13.2 %

1870 5.6 14.4 %

1880 6.7 13.3 %

1890 9.2 14.8 %

1900 10.3 13.6 %

1910 13.5 14.7 %

1920 13.9 13.2 %

1930 14.2 11.6 %

1940 11.6 8.8 %

1950 10.3 6.9 %

1960 9.7 5.4 %

1970 9.6 4.7 %

1980 14.1 6.2 %

1990 19.8 7.9 %

2000 31.1 11.1 %

2010 40.0 12.9 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 – 2000 Decennial Census; 2010 American Community Survey

Where they come from?

Change in Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth

Europe

1960 75 %

2010 12 %

Northern American

1960 10 %

2010 2 %

Latin America

1960 9 %

2010 53 %

Asia

1960 5 %

2010 28 %

Other

1960 1 %

2010 5 %

Source: US Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey

Top 10 Countries of Birth

1960

Millions of Foreign-Born Residents

Italy 1.3 million
Germany 1.0 million
Canada 1.0 million
United Kingdom 0.8 million
Poland 0.7 million
Soviet Union 0.7 million
Mexico 0.6 million
Ireland 0.3 million
Austria 0.3 million
Hungary 0.2 million

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Census

2010

Millions of Foreign-Born Residents

Mexico 11.7 million
China 2.2 million
India 1.8 million
Phillipines 1.8 million
Vietnam 1.2 million
El Salvador 1.2 million
Cuba 1.1 million
Korea 1.1 million
Dominican Republic 0.9 million
Guatemala 0.8 million

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Where they live

Foreign –Born Population as a Percent of State Population

1960

About two-thirds of all states had less than 5 percent foreign born

In 1960, the median age of the foreign-born population was 57.3 years

70 percent of the foreign born-resided in the Northeast and Midwest

Map showing percentage of foreign born by state

Key

Less than 5 %

5 to 9.9 %

10 to 14.9 %

15 % and over

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Census

2010

About two-thirds of all states had more than 5 percent foreign born

By 2010, the median age of the foreign-born population was 41.4 years.

67 percent of the foreign born resided in the West and South. In 2010, 27 percent of California's population was foreign born, highest in the nation.

Map showing percentage of foreign born by state

Key

Less than 5 %

5 to 9.9 %

10 to 14.9 %

15 % and over

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Source: The Size, Place, of Birth, and Geographic Distribution of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1960 to 2010

<http://www.census.gov/population/foreign/files/WorkingPaper96.pdf>

United States Census Bureau

For more information:

<http://www.census.gov/>

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