

# U.S. Naturalizations: 2010

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Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon foreign citizens or nationals after fulfilling the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy nearly all the same benefits, rights and responsibilities that the Constitution gives to native-born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote. 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 2010.<sup>1</sup>

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 2010, the total number of persons naturalizing was 619,913 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (67,062), India (61,142), the Philippines (35,465), the People's Republic of China (33,969), and Vietnam (19,313). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (129,354), New York (67,972), and Florida (67,484).

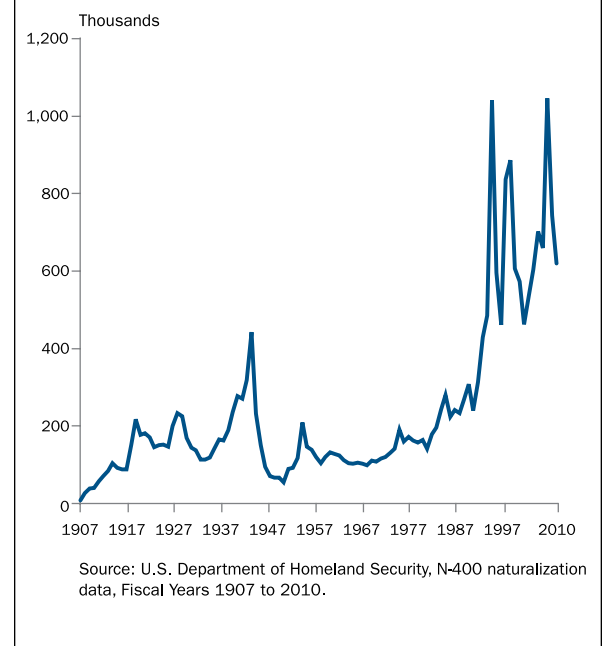
## THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

To be naturalized, an applicant 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 resident status in the United States (be a legal permanent resident or 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 history; and good moral character.

Special provisions of naturalization law exempt certain applicants from one or more 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 applying, if they meet 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 in 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.

Figure 1.  
Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1907 to 2010



<sup>1</sup> In this report, years refer to fiscal years (October 1 to September 30).



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 and the history and government of the United States. Those applicants found qualified are scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or before an officer delegated the authority to administer the oath 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. Caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the demand to naturalize. Year-to-year fluctuations in the number of naturalizations are not uncommon and reflect volatility in the volume of applications filed with USCIS and related impacts on application processing. Annual averages of persons naturalizing over a period of years provide a more accurate indication of long-term trends in the propensity to naturalize.

## TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

The number of persons naturalizing in the United States decreased to 619,913 in 2010 from 743,715 in 2009 and 1,046,539 in 2008. The 2008 number, an all-time record, followed a surge in applications in 2007 in advance of an application fee increase and efforts to encourage eligible immigrants to naturalize. The number of applications for naturalization, which declined from 2007 to 2008, increased to 570,000 in 2009 and 710,000 in 2010. The number of applications pending a decision decreased from 480,000 at the end of 2008 to 290,000 by the end of 2010.

### 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 680,000 between 2000 and 2010 (see Figure 1). Naturalizations rose sharply during the mid-1990s. Factors that may have accounted for this increase include: 1) the 2.7 million undocumented immigrants legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986

**Table 1.**

### Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010

(Countries ranked by 2010 persons naturalized)

Region/country of birth	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
<b>REGION:</b>						
Africa . . . . .	64,023	10.3	60,383	8.1	54,420	5.2
Asia* . . . . .	251,598	40.6	276,375	37.2	330,361	31.6
Europe . . . . .	77,951	12.6	90,149	12.1	108,618	10.4
North America . . . . .	163,888	26.4	250,266	33.7	462,372	44.2
Caribbean . . . . .	62,535	10.1	84,917	11.4	131,935	12.6
Central America . . . . .	25,706	4.1	43,914	5.9	86,168	8.2
Other North America . . . . .	75,647	12.2	121,435	16.3	244,269	23.3
Oceania . . . . .	3,646	0.6	3,928	0.5	4,781	0.5
South America . . . . .	58,481	9.4	61,674	8.3	84,853	8.1
Unknown . . . . .	326	0.1	940	0.1	1,134	0.1
<b>COUNTRY:</b>						
Mexico . . . . .	67,062	10.8	111,630	15.0	231,815	22.2
India . . . . .	61,142	9.9	52,889	7.1	65,971	6.3
Philippines . . . . .	35,465	5.7	38,934	5.2	58,792	5.6
China, People's Republic . . . . .	33,969	5.5	37,130	5.0	40,017	3.8
Vietnam . . . . .	19,313	3.1	31,168	4.2	39,584	3.8
Colombia . . . . .	18,417	3.0	16,593	2.2	22,926	2.2
Dominican Republic . . . . .	15,451	2.5	20,778	2.8	35,251	3.4
Cuba . . . . .	14,050	2.3	24,891	3.3	39,871	3.8
Haiti . . . . .	12,291	2.0	13,290	1.8	21,229	2.0
Jamaica . . . . .	12,070	1.9	15,098	2.0	21,324	2.0
Pakistan . . . . .	11,601	1.9	12,528	1.7	11,813	1.1
Korea, South** . . . . .	11,170	1.8	17,576	2.4	22,759	2.2
El Salvador . . . . .	10,343	1.7	18,927	2.5	35,796	3.4
Iran . . . . .	9,337	1.5	12,069	1.6	11,813	1.1
Nigeria . . . . .	9,126	1.5	9,298	1.3	8,597	0.8
Ethiopia . . . . .	8,903	1.4	8,698	1.2	7,160	0.7
Brazil . . . . .	8,867	1.4	7,960	1.1	8,808	0.8
Peru . . . . .	8,551	1.4	10,349	1.4	15,016	1.4
Canada . . . . .	8,539	1.4	9,753	1.3	12,387	1.2
United Kingdom . . . . .	8,401	1.4	10,060	1.4	12,095	1.2
All other countries . . . . .	235,845	38.0	264,096	35.5	323,515	30.9

\*Beginning in Fiscal Year 2009, data for Asia in all Fiscal Years include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

\*\*Data for South Korea prior to Fiscal Year 2009 include a small number of cases from North Korea.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

becoming 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 issued before 1977.

Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in European countries. The regional origin of new citizens shifted from Europe to Asia due to increased legal immigration from Asian countries, the arrival of Indochinese refugees in the 1970s, and the historically higher naturalization rate of Asian immigrants. Consequently, Asia has been the leading region of origin of new citizens in most years since 1976.

**Table 2.****Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010**

(Ranked by 2010 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
California . . . . .	129,354	20.9	179,754	24.2	297,909	28.5
New York . . . . .	67,972	11.0	88,733	11.9	90,572	8.7
Florida . . . . .	67,484	10.9	82,788	11.1	128,328	12.3
Texas . . . . .	49,699	8.0	54,024	7.3	82,129	7.8
New Jersey . . . . .	33,864	5.5	35,077	4.7	59,950	5.7
Illinois . . . . .	26,180	4.2	28,112	3.8	45,224	4.3
Massachusetts . . . . .	21,095	3.4	21,748	2.9	28,728	2.7
Georgia . . . . .	18,253	2.9	15,408	2.1	20,417	2.0
Virginia . . . . .	17,815	2.9	24,730	3.3	29,949	2.9
Washington . . . . .	16,830	2.7	19,853	2.7	18,665	1.8
Other . . . . .	171,367	27.6	193,488	26.0	244,668	23.4

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

**Region and Leading Countries of Birth**

Forty-one percent of persons naturalizing in 2010 were born in Asia, followed by 26 percent from North America, and 13 percent from Europe (see Table 1). Mexico was the leading country of birth of persons naturalizing in 2010 (11 percent). The next leading countries of origin of new citizens in 2010 were India (10 percent), the Philippines (5.7 percent), the People's Republic of China (5.5 percent), and Vietnam (3.1 percent). The 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 47 percent of all new citizens in 2010.

From 2008 to 2010, naturalizations increased among immigrants from Africa but decreased among immigrants from all other regions. This regional difference partly reflects the increase in naturalizations of asylee LPRs resulting from the elimination of the annual limit of 10,000 asylum adjustments of status under the REAL ID Act of 2005. About one in six persons from African countries naturalizing in 2010 were asylee LPRs.

At the country level, the number of Ethiopian-born persons obtaining citizenship increased for two consecutive years from

2008 to 2010 while the number of naturalizations among immigrants from most other leading countries of origin declined during the same period. The greatest decrease in naturalizations—in number and as a percentage of all naturalizations—occurred among immigrants from North American countries, following a period of growth in naturalizations from 2007 to 2008 during which persons from North America accounted for more than half of the total increase in the number of new citizens.

**Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence**

Seventy-two percent of all persons naturalizing in 2010 resided in 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest percentage of persons naturalizing (21 percent), followed by New York (11 percent) and Florida (11 percent). Fifty-two percent of all new citizens in 2010 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (see Table 3).<sup>2</sup> The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (15 percent), Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (8.4 percent), and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (6.8 percent).

From 2008 to 2010, naturalizations declined in all leading states and metropolitan areas of residence. Among leading states of residence, the greatest percentage decrease in the number of naturalizations occurred in California (57 percent) and Florida (47 percent). Among leading metropolitan areas of residence, the largest percentage decreases occurred in Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (63 percent) and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (53 percent).

<sup>2</sup>Beginning in 2005, the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) redefined metropolitan areas (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas), to conform with new standards issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs). 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/infocore/statpolicy.html#fs>.

**Table 3.****Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010**

(Ranked by 2010 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA . . . . .	91,257	14.7	112,801	15.2	134,571	12.9
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA . . . . .	51,977	8.4	84,061	11.3	138,618	13.2
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL . . . . .	42,220	6.8	54,202	7.3	89,440	8.5
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI . . . . .	25,053	4.0	26,676	3.6	43,548	4.2
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV . . . . .	24,861	4.0	32,690	4.4	40,731	3.9
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA . . . . .	21,281	3.4	20,956	2.8	37,852	3.6
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX . . . . .	18,344	3.0	18,380	2.5	28,275	2.7
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH . . . . .	17,027	2.7	17,429	2.3	22,859	2.2
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX . . . . .	16,572	2.7	17,423	2.3	25,172	2.4
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA . . . . .	15,519	2.5	12,651	1.7	16,812	1.6
Other . . . . .	295,802	47.7	346,446	46.6	468,661	44.8

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

**Table 4.**

**Persons Naturalized by Gender: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010**

Gender	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
Male . . . . .	290,846	46.9	351,633	47.3	456,767	43.6
Female . . . .	328,965	53.1	391,807	52.7	589,427	56.3
Unknown . . .	102	—	275	—	345	—

— Figure rounds to 0.0.  
 Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

**Table 5.**

**Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010**

Age	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
18 to 24 years . . . . .	59,230	9.6	60,955	8.2	87,397	8.4
25 to 34 years . . . . .	165,909	26.8	188,179	25.3	245,799	23.5
35 to 44 years . . . . .	184,781	29.8	215,889	29.0	306,960	29.3
45 to 54 years . . . . .	105,620	17.0	133,538	18.0	195,785	18.7
55 to 64 years . . . . .	61,755	10.0	87,245	11.7	131,854	12.6
65 years and over . . . . .	42,618	6.9	57,908	7.8	78,744	7.5
Unknown . . . . .	0	—	1	—	0	—
Median age . . . . .	39	X	40	X	40	X

X Not applicable.  
 — Figure rounds to 0.0.  
 Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

**Table 7.**

**Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Median Years in Legal Permanent Resident Status: Selected Fiscal Years 1965 to 2010**

Region of birth	Year																	
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Total . . . . .	6	7	9	8	7	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa . . . . .	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	6	7	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia . . . . .	5	6	7	6	6	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe . . . . .	6	7	7	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America . . . .	10	11	12	11	10	11	10	11	11	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania . . . . .	7	8	9	9	8	9	9	9	9	10	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America . . . .	5	6	8	7	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 aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 1965 to 2010.

**Gender, Age, and Marital Status**

In 2010, females accounted for 53 percent of all persons naturalizing (see Table 4). More than one-half (57 percent) of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing was 39 years. Persons 65 years and over accounted for nearly 7 percent of naturalizations in 2010 (see Table 5). Two-thirds (67 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2010 were married, and 21 percent were single (see Table 6).

**Years in Immigrant Status**

Persons naturalizing in 2010 spent a median of six years in legal permanent resident status before becoming citizens (see Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa, Asia, and South America spent the least time in legal immigrant status (5 years), followed by immigrants from Europe (6 years), Oceania (7 years), and North America (10

**Table 6.**

**Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010**

Marital status	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . .	619,913	100.0	743,715	100.0	1,046,539	100.0
Single . . . . .	131,595	21.2	147,270	19.8	218,003	20.8
Married . . . .	413,194	66.7	497,899	66.9	701,382	67.0
Other* . . . . .	75,124	12.1	98,546	13.3	127,154	12.1

\*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.  
 Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010.

years). From 2008 to 2010, the median number of years spent in legal permanent resident status decreased by three years. This decrease may be partly attributable to compositional changes in persons naturalizing, such as asylee LPRs,<sup>3</sup> and to reductions in processing times for naturalization applications as reflected by substantial declines in the pending caseload.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information about immigration and immigration statistics, visit the Office of Immigration Statistics web page at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics>.

<sup>3</sup> Asylee LPRs have higher rates of naturalization compared to many other categories of LPRs. Additionally, asylees are credited one year in asylum status toward lawful permanent resident status and thus meet the residency requirement for naturalization four years after becoming LPRs.