

U.S. Naturalizations: 2012

JAMES LEE

The naturalization process confers U.S. citizenship upon foreign citizens or nationals who have fulfilled the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy nearly all of 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 naturalized during 2012.¹

In 2012, a total of 757,434 persons naturalized (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (102,181), the Philippines (44,958), India (42,928), the Dominican Republic (33,351), and the People’s Republic of China (31,868). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (158,850), Florida (100,890), and New York (93,584).

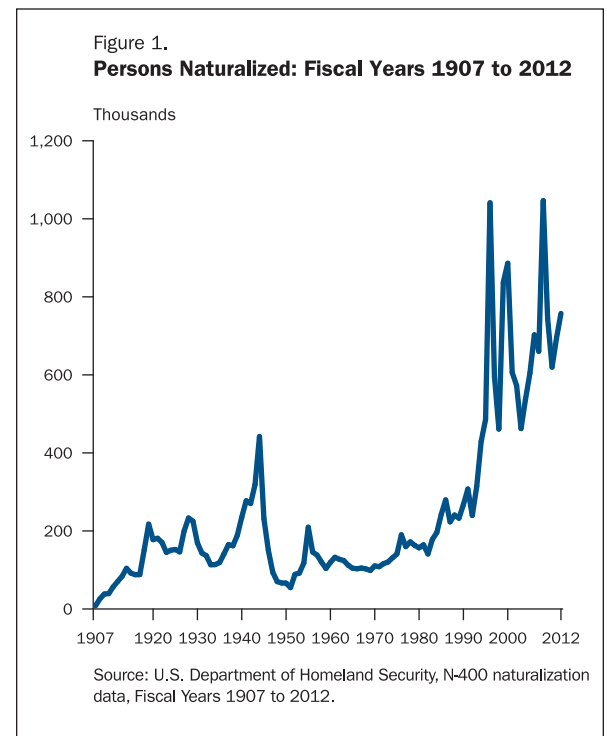
THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

An applicant for naturalization must fulfill certain requirements set forth in the INA 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; be a U.S. legal permanent resident (LPR); and have resided in the country continuously for at least five 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 some of these general requirements. The primary types of applicants who may, under certain conditions, be eligible for specific exemptions include spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and persons with qualifying military service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Every applicant for naturalization who is 18 years of age or older must file an N-400 *Application for Naturalization*. All applicants who meet the preliminary documentary

requirements must be interviewed by officers from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to determine their eligibility to naturalize. In most cases, the officer verifies the applicant’s knowledge and understanding of English and the history and government of the United States. Qualified applicants are then scheduled for an oath ceremony before a judge or before an officer with authority delegated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.



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



DATA

This report uses data from administrative records of USCIS of the Department of Homeland Security. These records consist of information taken from N-400 applications, such as date and country of birth; sex; marital status; and state of residence. The Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS) of USCIS provided nearly all of the data; a small number of records came 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 U.S. naturalizations increased to 757,434 in 2012 from 694,193 in 2011 and 619,913 in 2010. These increases were consistent with the growing number of naturalization applications filed and processed during 2010–2012.

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 2009 (see Figure 1). 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.

Region and Leading Countries of Birth

Thirty-five percent of persons naturalizing in 2012 were born in North America, followed by 34 percent from Asia and 11 percent from Europe (see Table 1). Mexico was the leading country of birth of persons naturalizing in 2012 (14 percent). The next leading countries of origin of new citizens in 2012 were the Philippines (5.9 percent), India (5.7 percent), the Dominican Republic (4.4 percent), and the People's Republic of China (4.2 percent). The 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 49 percent of all new citizens in 2012.

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012

(Countries ranked by 2012 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
REGION						
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
Africa	74,775	9.9	69,738	10.0	64,022	10.3
Asia	257,035	33.9	249,940	36.0	251,598	40.6
Europe	82,714	10.9	82,209	11.8	78,011	12.6
North America	261,673	34.5	217,750	31.4	163,836	26.4
Caribbean	109,762	14.5	79,820	11.5	62,483	10.1
Central America	40,592	5.4	33,784	4.9	25,706	4.1
Other North America	111,319	14.7	104,146	15.0	75,647	12.2
Oceania	3,886	0.5	3,734	0.5	3,646	0.6
South America	76,992	10.2	70,485	10.2	58,474	9.4
Unknown	359	—	337	—	326	0.1
COUNTRY						
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
Mexico	102,181	13.5	94,783	13.7	67,062	10.8
Philippines	44,958	5.9	42,520	6.1	35,465	5.7
India	42,928	5.7	45,985	6.6	61,142	9.9
Dominican Republic	33,351	4.4	20,508	3.0	15,451	2.5
China, People's Republic	31,868	4.2	32,864	4.7	33,969	5.5
Cuba	31,244	4.1	21,071	3.0	14,050	2.3
Colombia	23,972	3.2	22,693	3.3	18,417	3.0
Vietnam	23,490	3.1	20,922	3.0	19,313	3.1
Haiti	19,114	2.5	14,191	2.0	12,291	2.0
El Salvador	16,685	2.2	13,834	2.0	10,343	1.7
Jamaica	15,531	2.1	14,591	2.1	12,070	1.9
Korea, South	13,790	1.8	12,664	1.8	11,170	1.8
Peru	11,814	1.6	10,266	1.5	8,551	1.4
Pakistan	11,150	1.5	10,655	1.5	11,601	1.9
Brazil	9,884	1.3	10,251	1.5	8,867	1.4
Iran	9,627	1.3	9,286	1.3	9,337	1.5
Ukraine	9,459	1.2	8,489	1.2	7,345	1.2
Nigeria	9,322	1.2	9,344	1.3	9,126	1.5
Somalia	9,286	1.2	7,971	1.1	5,728	0.9
United Kingdom	9,145	1.2	9,246	1.3	8,401	1.4
All other countries	278,635	36.8	262,059	37.8	240,214	38.7

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012.

From 2011 to 2012, the number of naturalizations increased the most for immigrants from North America. Among leading countries of origin, the largest increase in naturalizations during this period—in absolute and percentage terms—occurred among persons born in the Dominican Republic (12,843 or 63 percent) and Cuba (10,173 or 48 percent). In addition, the number of naturalizations of immigrants born in India and the People's Republic of China decreased for two consecutive years from 2010 to 2012 partly due to a decline in the number of naturalizations of persons from these countries who were granted LPR status under employment-based preference categories.

Table 2.**Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012**

(Ranked by 2012 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
California	158,850	21.0	151,183	21.8	129,354	20.9
Florida	100,890	13.3	87,309	12.6	67,484	10.9
New York	93,584	12.4	76,603	11.0	67,972	11.0
Texas	57,762	7.6	52,927	7.6	49,699	8.0
New Jersey	42,622	5.6	33,826	4.9	33,864	5.5
Illinois	28,376	3.7	29,133	4.2	26,180	4.2
Virginia	24,224	3.2	13,782	2.0	17,815	2.9
Massachusetts	22,753	3.0	22,812	3.3	21,095	3.4
Washington	17,524	2.3	17,317	2.5	16,830	2.7
Georgia	17,093	2.3	17,761	2.6	18,253	2.9
Other*	193,756	25.6	191,540	27.6	171,367	27.6

*Includes unknown, U.S. territories and armed forces posts.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012.

Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

Seventy-four percent of all persons naturalizing in 2012 resided in 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest percentage of persons naturalizing (21 percent), followed by Florida (13 percent) and New York (12 percent). Fifty-four percent of all new citizens in 2012 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (see Table 3).² The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (16 percent), Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (9 percent), and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (8.7 percent).

²The most current CBSA definitions are available from OMB at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/fedreg_2010/06282010_metro_standards-Complete.pdf.**Table 3.****Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012**

(Ranked by 2012 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	123,891	16.4	99,153	14.3	91,256	14.7
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	68,072	9.0	55,560	8.0	42,220	6.8
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	65,679	8.7	62,373	9.0	51,977	8.4
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	31,601	4.2	20,591	3.0	24,861	4.0
Chicago-Joliet-Naperville, IL-IN-WI	26,942	3.6	27,607	4.0	25,053	4.0
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	22,056	2.9	18,467	2.7	18,343	3.0
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	20,474	2.7	22,046	3.2	21,281	3.4
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	18,264	2.4	18,834	2.7	17,027	2.7
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	16,892	2.2	16,048	2.3	16,568	2.7
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	14,205	1.9	14,335	2.1	15,519	2.5
Other, including unknown	349,358	46.1	339,179	48.9	295,808	47.7

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 2010 to 2012.

From 2011 to 2012, naturalizations increased in most leading states and metropolitan areas of residence. Among leading states of residence, the greatest percentage increases in the number of naturalizations occurred in Virginia (76 percent), New Jersey (26 percent), and New York (22 percent). Among leading metropolitan areas of residence, the largest percentage increases during this period occurred in Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV (53 percent), New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (25 percent), and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (23 percent), while San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA had the largest percentage decrease (7.1 percent) in naturalizations from 2011 to 2012. The growth in naturalizations of immigrants from Cuba and the Dominican Republic contributed to the increases in some of these states and metropolitan areas: In 2012, 87 percent of Cuban-born persons naturalizing lived in Florida, and 63 percent of immigrants naturalizing that were born in the Dominican Republic lived in New Jersey or New York.

Sex, Age, and Marital Status

In 2012, females accounted for 55 percent of all persons naturalizing (see Table 4). More than one-half (52 percent) of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years. The median age of all persons naturalizing was 40 years. Persons 65 years and over accounted for nearly nine percent of naturalizations in 2012 (see Table 5). Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of persons naturalizing in 2012 were married, and 23 percent were single (see Table 6).

Table 4.

Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012

Sex	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
Male	339,260	44.8	316,561	45.6	290,846	46.9
Female	418,125	55.2	377,581	54.4	328,965	53.1
Unknown	49	—	51	—	102	—

— Figure rounds to 0.0.
 Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, N-400 naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over, Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012.

Table 5.

Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012

Age	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
18 to 24 years	72,834	9.6	67,927	9.8	59,230	9.6
25 to 34 years	191,480	25.3	178,247	25.7	165,909	26.8
35 to 44 years	201,386	26.6	190,585	27.5	184,781	29.8
45 to 54 years	136,604	18.0	124,033	17.9	105,620	17.0
55 to 64 years	88,993	11.7	76,912	11.1	61,755	10.0
65 years and over	66,136	8.7	56,487	8.1	42,618	6.9
Unknown	1	—	2	—	0	—
Median age	40	X	39	X	39	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 2010 to 2012.

Table 7.

Median Years in Legal Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Selected Fiscal Years 1965 to 2012

Region of birth	Year															
	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965
Total	7	6	6	7	9	8	7	8	9	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Africa	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	6	7	7	7	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	5	6	7	6	6	7	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Europe	7	6	6	7	7	6	6	6	7	9	10	9	10	8	9	7
North America	10	10	10	11	12	11	10	11	11	14	11	13	11	9	7	9
Oceania	8	7	7	8	9	9	8	9	11	11	10	8	8	7	9	8
South America	6	6	5	6	8	7	7	8	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 2012.

Years in Immigrant Status

Persons naturalizing in 2012 spent a median of seven years in LPR status before becoming citizens (see Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa spent the least time in legal immigrant status (5 years), followed by immigrants from Asia and South America (6 years), Europe (7 years), Oceania (8 years), and North America (10 years). The median years spent in LPR status for all persons naturalizing increased by one year from 2011 to 2012.

Table 6.

Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2012

Marital status	2012		2011		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	757,434	100.0	694,193	100.0	619,913	100.0
Single	170,125	22.5	151,750	21.9	131,595	21.2
Married	480,863	63.5	446,686	64.3	413,194	66.7
Other*	106,446	14.1	95,757	13.8	75,124	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 2010 to 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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