

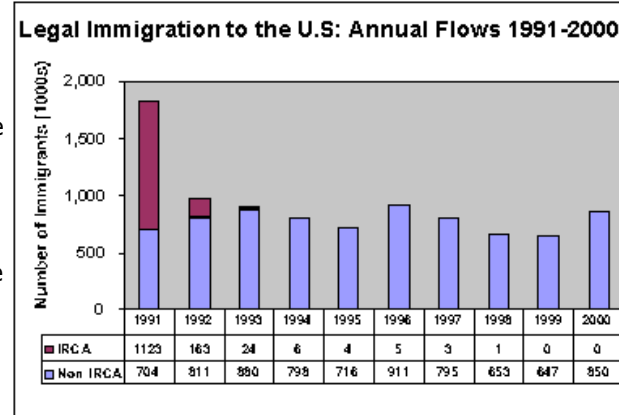
## Executive Summary - IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES: 2004 UPDATE

Immigration, both legal and illegal, has a profound impact on the nation that is reflected in the diversity of cultures, languages and ethnic groups characteristic of the U.S. The public policy implications of immigration stem from its impact on **population growth**, **employment**, and **wages**. This impact is further affected by the high rate of immigration to the United States.

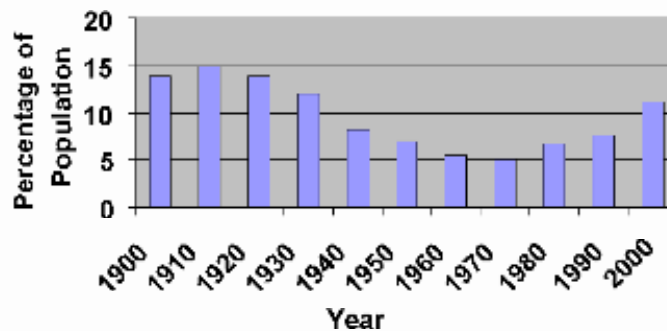
The immigrant population is growing 7.2 times faster than the native-born population. The 31.1 million immigrants found in the 2000 Census is unparalleled in American history. It is more than triple the 9.6 million in 1970 and more than double the 14.1 million in 1980. Although the absolute size of the foreign-born population is at an all-time high, the foreign-born comprise just over 11 percent of the population - significantly below the 15 percent that was recorded in the early part of the century.

### Size of the Immigrant Population

< From 2000 to 2003 approximately 4.2 million immigrants were added to the foreign-born population of the U.S. Legal immigrants accounted for approximately two-thirds of the increase. The balance of the inflow includes refugees and asylees.



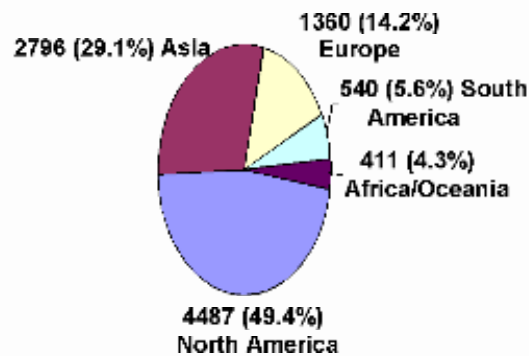
### Foreign Born: Percentage of Population



< The annual flows of legal immigrants reached historical highs during the 1990s. Immigration peaked in 1991 when over 1.8 million people acquired legal status. Approximately 1.1 million of this total were legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which allowed illegal immigrants who had lived in the U.S. prior to 1982 to apply for legal status without penalty. Despite the fact that IRCA has gradually been phased out, over **10.6 million legal** immigrants were added to the U.S. population between 1991-2000 (this figure includes IRCA legalizations).

### National Origin

### 1991-2000 Legal Immigration (All Numbers in 1,000's)



< In 2000, over 50 percent of legal immigrants arrived from the "Americas" (North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean). Half of these immigrants migrated from Mexico. Asia accounted for 26 percent of legal immigration into the U.S. while Europe (15 percent) and Africa (3 percent) contributed significantly less.

< Approximately three-quarters of the estimated eight million illegal immigrants arrived from Central America and the Caribbean, and over one-half (4.5 million) from Mexico.

< Historically, U.S. immigration legislation, U.S. involvement in conflict and world events (such as economic conditions and famines in Europe) profoundly influenced the race, ethnicity and national origin of the immigrant population. For example, prior to 1880 most immigrants were from northern and western Europe. Southern and eastern Europeans became the dominant group by the end of the century. This trend continued until the 1965 amendment to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act ended country quotas in favor of a preference system that focused on family reunification. This amendment had the effect of encouraging more equitable representation among all nations.

< During the 1950s, Europe accounted for two-thirds of all immigrants and seven of the top ten countries from which immigrants originated, while six percent of immigrants arrived from Asia and 12 percent from Mexico. In contrast, during the 1990s only 15 percent came from Europe, while 30 percent came from Asia, and over 25 percent from Mexico. In 2000 four of the top ten countries of origin of immigrants were Asian.

### **Characteristics of Immigrants ([Click here for additional information](#))**

< The characteristics and experiences of different groups of immigrants vary widely across educational, economic and social strata. While immigrants are nearly three times more likely than natives to have not received a high school degree, many have attained advanced degrees. In fact, 30 percent of recent immigrants have achieved at least a college degree, compared to 28 percent of the native population.

< There is a significant earnings disparity between immigrants and the native U.S. population. Nearly 17 percent of those who are foreign-born live below the poverty line, compared to 11 percent of the native population. On the other end of the earnings scale 10 percent of the immigrant population households had household incomes above \$75,000 per year, compared to 13 percent of the native population.

< Immigrants comprise a disproportionately high level of non-private household jobs such as janitor or security guard while constituting a disproportionately lower percentage of managerial or professional jobs. As a result, 17 percent of immigrants live below the poverty line compared to 11 percent of the native population.

< Nearly half of those individuals in the United States who speak a language other than English at home are immigrants.

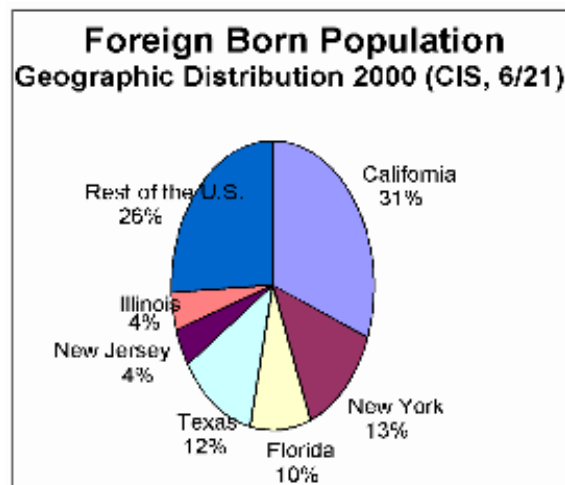
## Population Growth

< According to the middle series projections from the U.S. Census Bureau, the immigrants arriving after 1990 and their offspring are expected to contribute two-thirds of the population growth in the U.S. between 2000 and 2050, when the total population of the U.S. will increase from 281 million to 404 million. Estimates indicate that these immigrants and their children will comprise more than one out of four residents in 2050.

< Immigration has become the determinate factor in U.S. population growth. The 8.6 million immigrants who indicated that they had arrived between 1990 and 1998 represent 42 percent of the 20.4 million increase in the total U.S. population since 1990.

< The population composition will change as the foreign-born population grows. According to projections that assume racial and ethnic groups will not intermarry, the Hispanic population will be 24 percent of the overall population in 2050 (currently 13 percent), the Asian population will be nine percent (currently 4 percent) and the black population will continue to be 12 percent. Less than a third of all minorities will be black in 2050.

## Geographical Concentration



< Seventy percent of all legal immigrants entering in 2000 intended to reside in one of six states: California (31 percent), New York (13 percent), Florida (10 percent), Texas (8 percent), New Jersey (4 percent) and Illinois (4 percent). These states also have the largest foreign-born populations. Approximately one-third of all foreign-born residents live in California.

< Over 40 percent (3.4 million) of all undocumented immigrants live in California. Following California, Texas (1.5 million), New York (625,000), Florida (560,000), Illinois (464,000) and New Jersey (219,000) have the largest share and concentration of illegal immigrants.

## Conclusions

< The high rate of increase in immigration during the 1990s can be characterized as "sociological shock." The 11.3 million (or 57 percent) increase, from 19.8 million in 1990 to 31.1 million in 2000, is unprecedented in the history of the United States, both numerically and proportionately. Even during the great wave of immigration from 1900 to 1910, the foreign-born population grew by only 3.2 million (or 31 percent) from 10.3 million to 13.5 million. The foreign-born population increased from 7.9 percent of the total population in 1990 to 11.1 percent in 2000. If current trends continue, the percentage of the population that is

foreign-born will surpass by the end of this decade the all-time high of 14.8 percent, registered in 1890.

< The unparalleled boom in immigration directly impacts critical issues such as politics and social welfare programs. In 2000, according to the United States Census, immigrants accounted for 5.5 percent of all registered voters. However, only 37 percent of immigrants are naturalized citizens and thus eligible to vote.

< The proportion of eligible immigrant households using welfare programs is 30 to 50 percent higher than that of native households. One-third of immigrants do not have health insurance; twice the rate of the native population. As a result, immigrants who arrived after 1989 and their U.S. born children account for 60 percent, or 5.5 million, of the increase in the size of the uninsured population. The boom in immigration has also played a large role in the increase in public school enrollment. In 2000, there were 8.6 million school-age children from immigrant families in the United States.

< Increases in immigration have also given rise to new security concerns. In recent years the United States has attempted to prevent most undocumented immigrants from entering illegally. In 2000, the INS reported that 184,775 undocumented immigrants were formally removed from the country. Of this total, 150,068, or over 90 percent, were originally from Mexico. The total number of formal removals has increased more than 150 percent since 1996.

< After the September 11, 2001 attacks, border apprehensions have decreased. According to the INS, border apprehensions at the Mexican border between October 2001 and February 2002 were at their lowest figure in 17 years. This was due in part to a decline in economic prosperity in the United States and also a substantial rise in the cost of illegally entering the country. The number have since been increasing and in 2003 the Department of Homeland Security estimated that 700,000 illegal immigrants entered and stayed in the year. Other suggest that as many as 4 million are entering a year.

< Currently immigrants with at least a bachelors degree or its equivalent, can get temporary employment through the H-1B visa. The U.S. made available 65,000 H-1B visas in FY2004. That number had been temporarily raised to 195,000 a year in 2001, 2002, 2003.

< Many possible solutions to the problem of illegal Mexican immigration to the United States have been discussed. The Bush administration rejects a proposal similar to that of IRCA, passed in 1986, because it believes that IRCA proved ineffective in stemming illegal Mexican migration and also that the INS is currently too over-burdened to adopt such a measure. One of the alternatively proposed solutions is a guest-worker program that would permit unauthorized Mexicans already in the United States to obtain a temporary legal status and subsequently would admit additional Mexican workers to fill jobs throughout the U.S. economy. The bill would ensure that guest workers return to Mexico when their work permits expire and would raise sanctions on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers, in order to encourage them to employ legal workers.

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This Executive Summary was updated in December of 2004 by Andrew Batchelor, fellow at the Population Resource Center. Sources include the U.S. Census, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, the the Migration Policy Institute, [2000 INS Statistical Yearbook, Immigration in the United States-2000: A Snapshot of America's Foreign-Born Population](#) by Steven A. Camarota (Center for Immigration Studies, January 2001), [The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: Population Characteristics](#) by Lisa Lollock (US Census Bureau, January 2001), [Illegal Alien Resident Population \(Estimates of the Undocumented Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: October 1996\)\(Updated December 2001\)](#) released by the Immigration and Nationalization Services, [National Estimates: Annual Population Estimates by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, Selected Years from 1990 to 2000](#), (Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau), [Enchilada Lite: A Post 9/11 Mexican Migration Agreement](#) by Robert S. Leiken (Guest Scholar at the Nixon Center and a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution), and [Immigration, Welfare Magnets and the Geography of Child Poverty in the U.S.](#) by William Frey. For more information, contact the Center at (202) 467-5030, 1725 K Street, NW, Suite 1102, Washington, DC 20006 or (609) 452-2822, 15 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540.