

Immigration Fact Sheet

People Immigrate to Other Countries for Family, Work, and Freedom

- Family Reunification: In 2006, more than 63% of immigrants who became legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States did so when they reunited with family members who were U.S. citizens or LPRs.
- Work: Nearly 13% of new LPRs in 2006 came to fill jobs, mostly high skilled, for which employers were unable to find U.S. workers.
- Freedom: About 17% of new LPRs in 2006 were asylees and refugees who fled wars or other disasters in their home countries.

Global Perspective on Immigration

- Of the nearly 191 million people who lived outside their country of birth in 2005, about 20% lived in the United States.
- Of 13.5 million refugees worldwide in 2004, 421,000 were in the United States.

Immigrants in the United States

- There were about 35 million foreign-born people living in the United States in 2005, amounting to more than 12% of the population.
- More than 30 million Americans, or 11% of the U.S. population, have at least one parent who is an immigrant.
- Some people claim that immigration is out of control. But, between 1860 and 1920, immigrants accounted for more than 13% of the U.S. population.
- There were about 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States in 2005, amounting to about 30% of all immigrants or 4% of the U.S. population.
- Immigrants accounted for more than 15% of the U.S. workforce in 2006 and filled both high-skilled and less-skilled jobs. For example, immigrants were more than 40% of all farm workers, a third of all building and grounds cleaning and maintenance workers, and a quarter of all physicians, engineers, and computer scientists.
- Immigrants are less likely than the native-born to commit crimes or to be in prison. Among men age 18-39, who comprise the vast majority of the prison population, the 3.5% incarceration rate of the native-born in 2000 was 5 times higher than the 0.7% incarceration rate of the foreign-born.

From Where Do Immigrants in the United States Come?

- In 2006, the top five countries of origin for new LPRs were Mexico (14%), China (6.9%), the Philippines (5.9%), India (4.8%), and Cuba (3.6%).

Where Do Immigrants Settle?

- In 2005, the states with the largest foreign-born populations were California (where immigrants were 27% of the state's population), New York (21%), New Jersey (20%), Florida (19%), and Nevada (17%).

From Where Do Refugees and Asylees Come?

- In 2006, one quarter of all refugees admitted into the United States were from Somalia, followed by Russia (15%), Cuba (8%), Vietnam (7%), and Iran (7%).
- Most people seeking asylum in the United States in 2006 were from China (21%), Haiti (12%), Colombia (11%), Venezuela (5%), and Ethiopia (3%).