

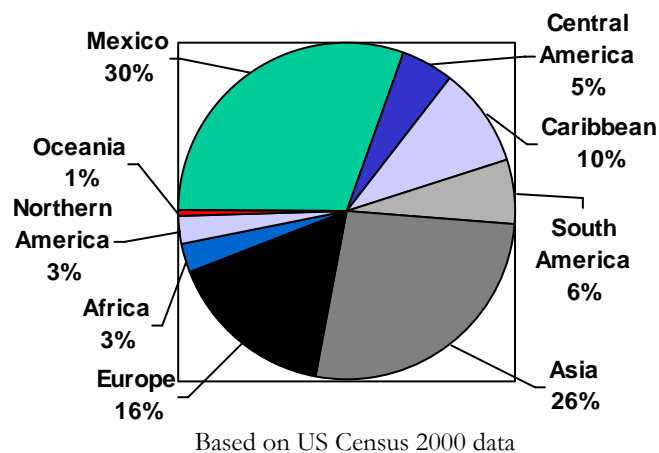
## Who are today's immigrants?

During the 1990s, more than 13 million people came to the United States, averaging well over a million immigrants per year. This number includes 700,000 to 900,000 legal immigrants, 70,000 to 125,000 refugees and asylees, and at least 300,000 to 500,000 undocumented immigrants arriving each year.<sup>1</sup> The foreign-born population has been on the rise in recent years with 33.5 million people or 11.7% of the population living in the US in 2003 who were born somewhere outside the US and its territories, according to the US Census.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that by 2050, the foreign-born population will account for 15% of the US population. Put into perspective, the foreign-born population has not been that high since the immigration boom of the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup>

## Where are people immigrating from?

The foreign-born have come from over 100 countries, according to the Census 2000.<sup>4</sup> As illustrated in the chart below, the most common country of origin is Mexico, accounting for 30% (9 million) of the foreign-born living in the US in 2000. The entire continent of Asia accounts for the next largest share (26% or 8 million), followed by the cluster of other countries in Latin America including the Caribbean countries (22% or 7 million). Europe and Canada, the primary origin of immigrants from 100 years ago, now account for only 18 percent (6 million). Africa and other countries (including Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands) account for only 3 percent (about 1 million), though the number of African foreign-born has been rising in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

**Chart 1: Percentage of Immigrants by Country or Region of Origin**



When considering only undocumented immigrants, the large majority are from Latin American countries. The five countries of origin with the largest undocumented immigrant populations are Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Columbia, and Honduras. Representing the largest number, Mexico (4.8 million in 2000) accounts for 69% of the total undocumented population in the US. Other countries of origin for large numbers of undocumented immigrants include El Salvador (189,000), Guatemala (144,000), Columbia (141,000), Honduras (138,000), China (115,000), and Ecuador (108,000).<sup>6</sup>

### Where are immigrants settling in the US?

The most up to date settlement data on new immigrants comes from the US Center for Immigration Statistics which asks where legal immigrants intend to live upon arrival into the US. In 2002, 65 percent of immigrants arriving intended to reside in just six states: California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey.<sup>7</sup> Census data collected from legal and illegal immigrant populations show that these six states continue to draw the largest numbers of immigrants, though 22 other states with relatively low numbers of foreign-born people before 1990 have experienced faster growth rates between 1990 and 2000.<sup>8</sup> Due to both direct immigration and secondary migration from traditionally high receiving states like California, the majority of these “new growth” states have more than doubled their foreign-born population. The 10 states with the fastest growing immigrant populations were North Carolina (274%), Georgia (233%), Nevada (202%), Arkansas (196%), Utah (171%), Tennessee (169%), Nebraska (165%), Colorado (160%), Arizona (136%), and Kentucky (135%).<sup>9</sup>

The Northeast region currently accounts for 23.1% of the foreign-born living in the US, according to the 2002 US Census.<sup>10</sup> Concentrated in the Northeast is a large percentage of the Latin American foreign-born, specifically, from the Caribbean (50.5%) and from South America (45.5%).<sup>11</sup> The number of foreign-born living in each Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic state is summarized in the table below.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1: Percentage of foreign born population in Northeastern states in 1990 and 2003**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>New York</b>	15.9%	20.8%
<b>New Jersey</b>	12.5%	19.2%
<b>Massachusetts</b>	9.5%	13.7%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	9.5%	11.6%
<b>Connecticut</b>	8.5%	11.4%
<b>Maryland</b>	6.6%	10.6%
<b>Delaware</b>	3.3%	6.1%
<b>New Hampshire</b>	3.7%	5.0%
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	3.1%	4.6%

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Capps, R., Passel, J.S., Perez-Lopez, D., Fix, M. (2003) The Urban Institute, *The new neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in US Communities*, Available at: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310844>
- <sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau: The Foreign born population in the US 2003
- <sup>3</sup> Capps, R., Passel, J.S., Perez-Lopez, D., Fix, M. (2003) The Urban Institute, *The new neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in US Communities*, Available at: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310844>
- <sup>4</sup> US Census 2000
- <sup>5</sup> US Census 2000
- <sup>6</sup> Migration Policy Institute. (2003). *Immigration Facts: Unauthorized Immigration to the United States*. Available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/USImmigrationFacts2003.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service (2002). *Statistical Yearbook*. Washington, D.C. Available at: <http://www.ins.gov/graphics/aboutins/statistics/Yearbook2002.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> Capps, R., Passel, J.S., Perez-Lopez, D., Fix, M. (2003) The Urban Institute, *The new neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in US Communities*, Available at: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310844>
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> US Census 2002
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> Federation American Immigration Reform FAIR. *Immigration Impact in your State*. Available at: [http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research\\_researchlistda29](http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_researchlistda29)