

U.S. Naturalizations: 2020

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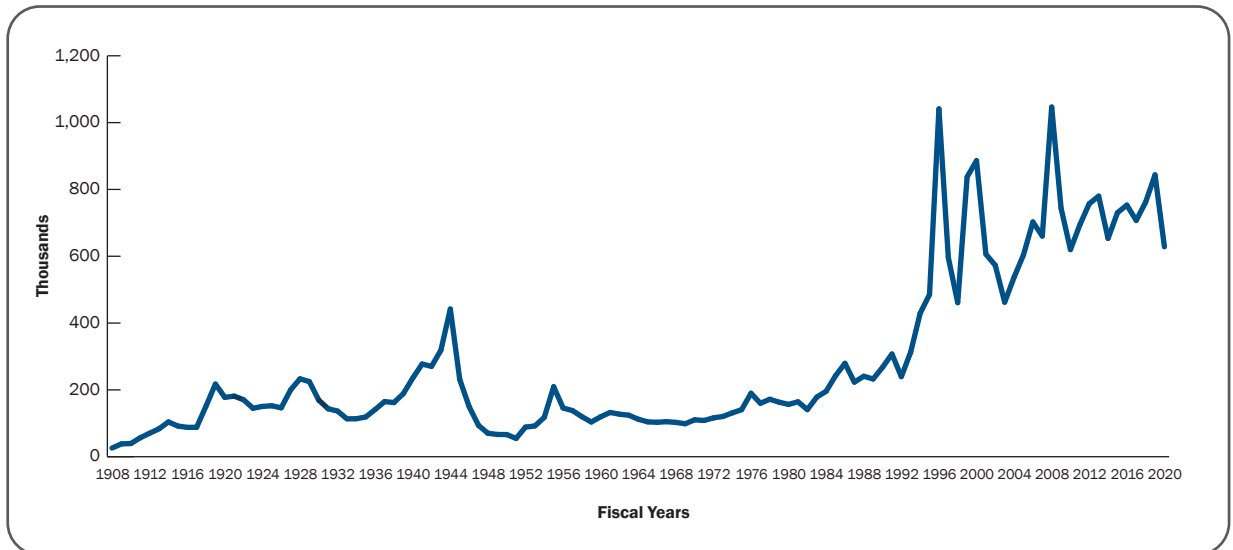
The naturalization process confers U.S. citizenship upon applicants who have fulfilled the requirements established in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). After naturalization, foreign-born citizens enjoy almost all the same benefits, rights, and responsibilities that the U.S. Constitution gives to U.S. citizens at birth, including the right to vote. The 2020 U.S. Naturalizations Annual Flow Report, authored by the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), presents information on the number and characteristics of applicants aged 18 years and over who naturalized during 2020.^{1,2}

SUMMARY

The number of U.S. naturalizations fell to 628,000 persons in 2020, down 26 percent from 844,000 in 2019 (Table 1) (Figure 1), down 15 percent from the 2011-2019 average of 742,000, and the lowest number since 2010.³ The suspension of in-person naturalization services from March 18, 2020 to June 4, 2020 to help slow the spread of COVID-19 contributed to the lower number of naturalizations (Figure 2). The number of applications for citizenship in 2020 increased to 968,000 from 831,000 applications in 2019 and was up from the 2011-2019 average of 846,000 applications. The number of naturalizations does not match the number of applications due to previously adjudicated applications, denials, and delays in application processing (Figure 3).⁴ The leading countries

Figure 1.

Persons Naturalized: Fiscal Years 1908 to 2020



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

¹ In this report, “years” refer to fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30. Numbers in the text of this report are rounded to the nearest thousand; please refer to data tables for precise figures.

² This report does not include data on children acquiring citizenship based upon the citizenship status of a parent. The child of a U.S. citizen parent may acquire U.S. citizenship through their parent and is not required to file an N-400, *Application for Naturalization*. Therefore, naturalizations described in this report, obtained from N-400 records, do not represent a complete count of persons who obtained citizenship status during the reporting year.

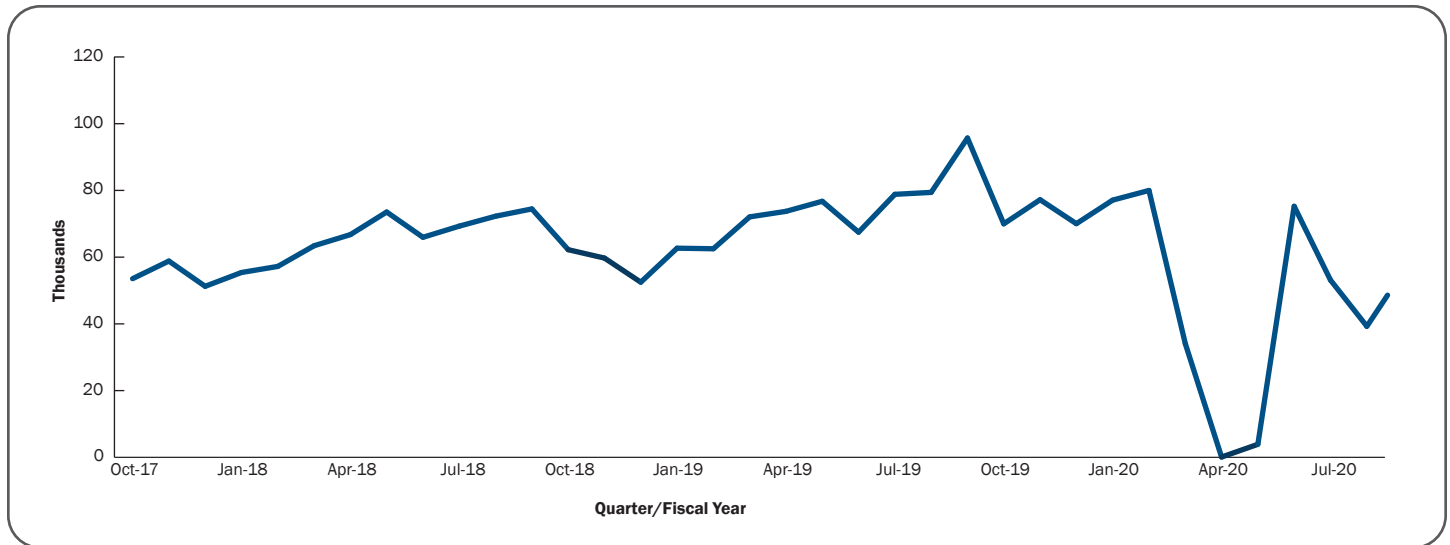
³ Naturalization numbers reflect changes in the numbers of naturalization applications received as well as the number processed, which may be affected by applications pending from previous years and available resources. As a result, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from these data about trends in the underlying demand to naturalize. Average naturalization totals over a period of years provide a more accurate indication of long-term trends in naturalization.

⁴ See 2020 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*; Table 20: Applications for Naturalization Filed, Persons Naturalized, and Applications for Naturalization Denied.



Figure 2.

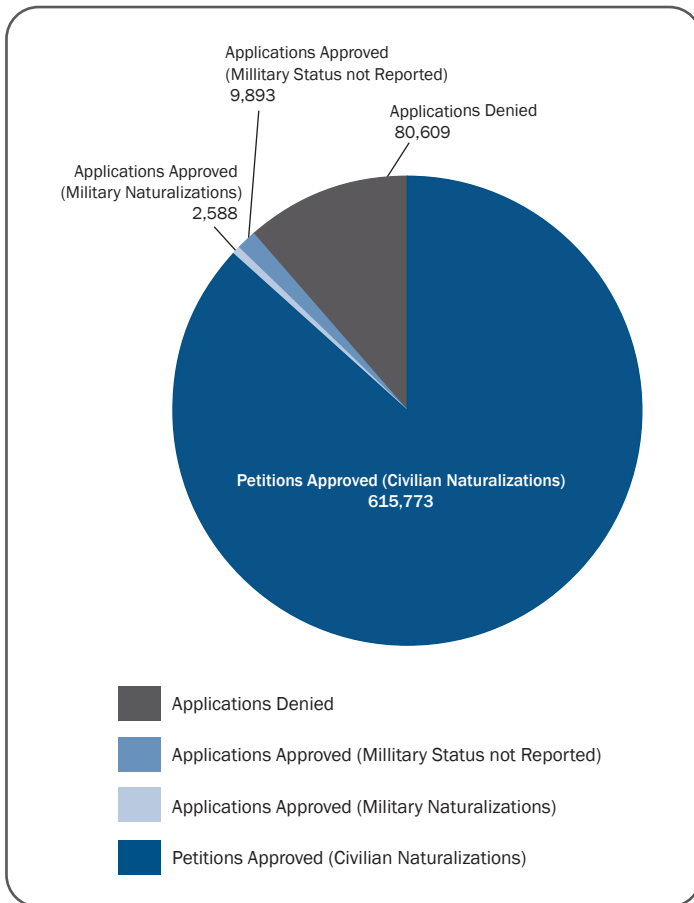
Persons Naturalized by Month: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

Figure 3.

Applications for U.S. Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2020



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

of birth of newly naturalized citizens were Mexico (84,000), India (48,000), the Philippines (33,000), Cuba (31,000), and the People’s Republic of China (China) (26,000) (Table 1). The top three states of residence of persons naturalizing were California (113,000), Florida (79,000), and Texas (67,000) (Table 2).

THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for naturalization, an applicant must meet INA requirements and document them by filing a Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization*. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reviews the application and interviews all applicants to determine their eligibility to naturalize. Following approval, USCIS schedules applicants for a required oath ceremony before a judge or USCIS official.

Generally, to naturalize, an applicant must be at least 18 years of age, establish that he or she has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence at the time of filing the naturalization application, and have resided continuously in the United States for at least 5 years⁵ as a lawful permanent resident (LPR) immediately preceding the date of filing the application and up to the time of admission to citizenship. The applicant generally must be physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately preceding the date of filing the application and must have lived within the state or district with jurisdiction over the applicant’s place of residence for at least 90 days prior to the date of filing. Additional requirements for applicants include the ability to speak, read, and write the English language; knowledge of U.S. Government and its history;

⁵ Certain permanent residents who are married to U.S. citizens and with evidence of continuous residency are eligible for naturalization after 3 years instead of the normally required 5 years as a permanent resident applying for citizenship. In addition, certain persons with qualifying military service may be eligible to apply for naturalization without any period of continuous residence in the United States. For more information, please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/military/naturalization-through-military-service> and <https://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/citizenship-through-naturalization> for citizenship through military service and naturalization, respectively.

attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution; and being of good moral character. Special provisions of naturalization law generally exempt spouses of U.S. citizens and persons with qualifying military service in the U.S. Armed Forces from some of these requirements.

TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

Historical Trend

The average number of persons naturalizing increased from fewer than 113,000 per year during the 1950s and 1960s to 210,000 per year during the 1980s, 500,000 during the 1990s, 680,000 during the 2000s, and 730,000 per year between 2010 and 2019 (Figure 1). While annual naturalization rates have gradually increased, short-term naturalization rates since the mid-1990s have varied substantially due to dynamics related to election years, USCIS fee increases, and proposed legislative or actual statutory changes. USCIS was particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because the agency is fee-funded and experienced a budget shortfall following the suspension of in-person services and the reduction of worldwide travel. Spending reductions impacted all agency operations, including naturalizations.

Region and Leading Countries of Birth

Until the early 1970s, persons naturalizing were predominately from Europe. Asia overtook Europe as the leading region of origin for new citizens following increased Asian immigration pursuant to the 1965 amendments to the INA and the arrival of large numbers of Indochinese refugees in the 1970s, along with a pattern of higher-than-average naturalization rates among Asian immigrants. Asia has continued to be the leading region of origin in recent decades (Figure 4) and is closely followed by the North American region. From 2019 to 2020, the number of naturalizations varied among immigrants from these regions though their respective proportions relative to the total were similar. Other North American (non-Caribbean and non-Central American countries) naturalizations decreased by the largest proportion at 31 percent, followed by persons from Europe with 29 percent and Central America with 27 percent (Table 1).

Among the top 10 countries of birth for persons naturalizing in 2020, Mexico was the leading country (13 percent of the total), followed by India (7.7 percent), the Philippines

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

(Countries ranked by 2020 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
REGION						
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
Africa	64,934	8.5	84,990	10.1	66,436	10.6
Asia	275,621	36.2	327,273	38.8	246,099	39.2
Europe	71,436	9.4	81,040	9.6	57,403	9.1
North America	277,592	36.4	276,910	32.8	204,250	32.5
Caribbean	95,298	12.5	101,312	12.0	80,879	12.9
Central America	40,815	5.4	42,077	5.0	30,703	4.9
Other North America	141,479	18.6	133,521	15.8	92,668	14.8
Oceania	3,792	0.5	4,308	0.5	3,392	0.5
South America	67,892	8.9	68,678	8.1	50,441	8.0
Unknown	634	0.1	394	-	233	-
COUNTRY						
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
Mexico	131,977	17.3	122,286	14.5	84,081	13.4
India	52,194	6.9	64,631	7.7	48,109	7.7
Philippines	38,816	5.1	43,668	5.2	33,417	5.3
Cuba	32,089	4.2	36,246	4.3	31,369	5.0
China, People's Republic	39,600	5.2	39,490	4.7	26,110	4.2
Vietnam	21,082	2.8	25,646	3.0	22,705	3.6
Dominican Republic	22,970	3.0	23,101	2.7	18,675	3.0
Jamaica	17,213	2.3	18,010	2.1	13,465	2.1
Colombia	17,564	2.3	17,126	2.0	12,768	2.0
El Salvador	17,300	2.3	18,260	2.2	12,606	2.0
Iraq	12,448	1.6	18,366	2.2	12,321	2.0
Korea, South	16,031	2.1	16,298	1.9	11,350	1.8
Haiti	14,389	1.9	14,308	1.7	10,865	1.7
Pakistan	10,414	1.4	13,079	1.6	9,975	1.6
Burma	7,858	1.0	11,674	1.4	9,181	1.5
Nigeria	8,459	1.1	11,360	1.3	8,929	1.4
United Kingdom	10,530	1.4	12,195	1.4	8,842	1.4
Iran	8,409	1.1	11,310	1.3	8,828	1.4
Canada	9,379	1.2	11,059	1.3	8,423	1.3
Brazil	10,538	1.4	10,451	1.2	8,323	1.3
All other countries	262,641	34.5	305,029	36.2	227,912	36.3

- Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 2.

Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

(States ranked by 2020 persons naturalized)

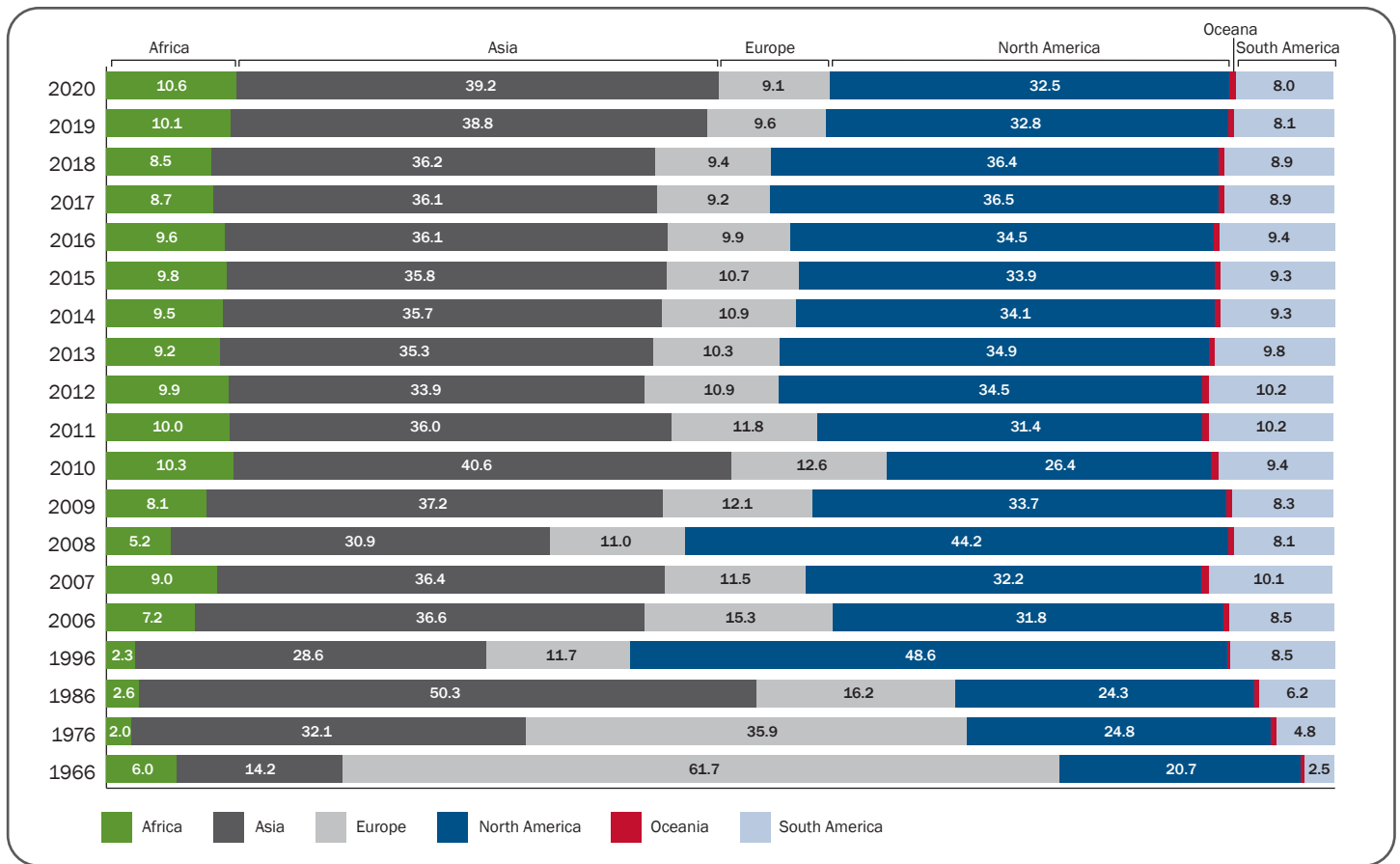
State of residence	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
California	163,059	21.4	148,765	17.6	112,738	17.9
Florida	95,978	12.6	96,149	11.4	78,641	12.5
Texas	64,685	8.5	97,675	11.6	66,942	10.7
New York	81,404	10.7	85,444	10.1	56,273	9.0
New Jersey	40,089	5.3	36,661	4.3	22,185	3.5
Massachusetts	24,826	3.3	22,894	2.7	20,367	3.2
Maryland	12,434	1.6	19,349	2.3	19,878	3.2
Illinois	26,477	3.5	30,472	3.6	19,835	3.2
Georgia	16,590	2.2	25,858	3.1	18,694	3.0
Virginia	18,118	2.4	23,345	2.8	17,360	2.8
Other*	218,241	28.6	211,668	27.8	195,341	31.1

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

Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Figure 4.

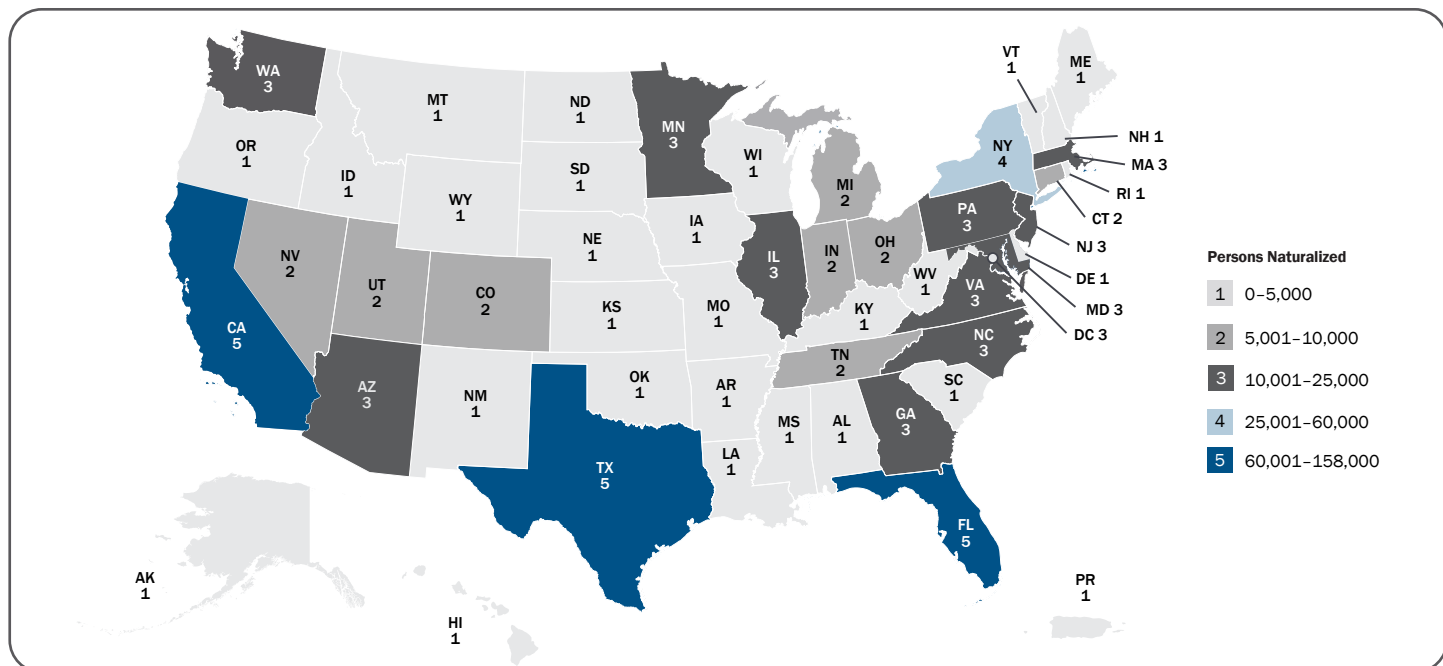
Percent of Total Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth by Decade (1966 to 2006) and Fiscal Years (2006 to 2020)



Notes: Oceania has an average value of 0.5 percent over the last 5-year period. Africa had a value of 0.5 percent in 1966.
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics

Figure 5.

Naturalizations by State of Residence: Fiscal Year 2020



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 3.

Persons Naturalized by Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) of Residence: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

(CBSA ranked by 2020 Naturalization)

Metropolitan area of residence	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	107,196	14.1	107,964	12.8	68,933	11.0
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	58,165	7.6	60,590	7.2	52,921	8.4
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	62,075	8.1	56,850	6.7	43,381	6.9
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	22,468	2.9	30,808	3.7	26,306	4.2
San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	21,156	2.8	20,903	2.5	23,479	3.7
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	17,702	2.3	30,521	3.6	22,371	3.6
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	22,998	3.0	33,826	4.0	21,462	3.4
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	24,879	3.3	29,049	3.4	18,588	3.0
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	14,092	1.8	21,001	2.5	16,046	2.6
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	19,680	2.6	17,786	2.1	15,817	2.5
Other, including unknown	391,490	51.4	434,295	51.5	318,950	50.8

Notes: Metropolitan areas defined based on the 2013 update of Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) definitions. As a result, numbers for previous years may differ from previously published figures. Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

(5.3 percent), Cuba (5.0 percent), and China (4.2 percent) (Table 1). The top five countries of birth were unchanged from 2019, although Cuba replaced China as the fourth-leading country. The 10 top countries of origin accounted for 48 percent of all naturalizing citizens in 2020, essentially unchanged from 2019. The largest numeric decrease in naturalizations between 2019 and 2020 occurred among immigrants born in Mexico (38,000), India (17,000), China (13,000), the Philippines (10,000), and Iraq (6,000). The largest percentage decrease in naturalizations between 2019 and 2020 was experienced by immigrants born in China (34 percent), Iraq (33 percent), Mexico (31 percent), El Salvador (31 percent), and South Korea (30 percent).

Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

In 2020, 433,000 people, or 69 percent of all persons naturalizing, resided in the top 10 states, down from a 10-year average of 73 percent. California was home to the largest number of persons naturalizing with 113,000 (18 percent of the total), down from 149,000 in 2019; Florida followed with 79,000 (13 percent), down from 96,000 in 2019; and Texas with 67,000 (11 percent), down from 98,000 in 2019 (Table 2). The largest percentage decreases in naturalizations between 2019 and 2020 among leading states of residence occurred in New Jersey (39 percent), Illinois (35 percent), and New York (34 percent) while Maryland experienced a small increase from 2019 to 2020 (2.7 percent). In 2020, 49 percent of all new citizens lived in the top 10 metropolitan areas (Table 3), up from the 10-year average of 48 percent.⁶ The leading metropolitan areas were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, having 69,000 persons (11 percent of the total), down from 108,000 in 2019; Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL with 53,000 persons (8.4 percent), down from 61,000 persons in 2019; and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA with 43,000 persons (6.9 percent), down from 57,000 persons in 2019. The leading metropolitan areas of residence remained the same as in 2019, although Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land,

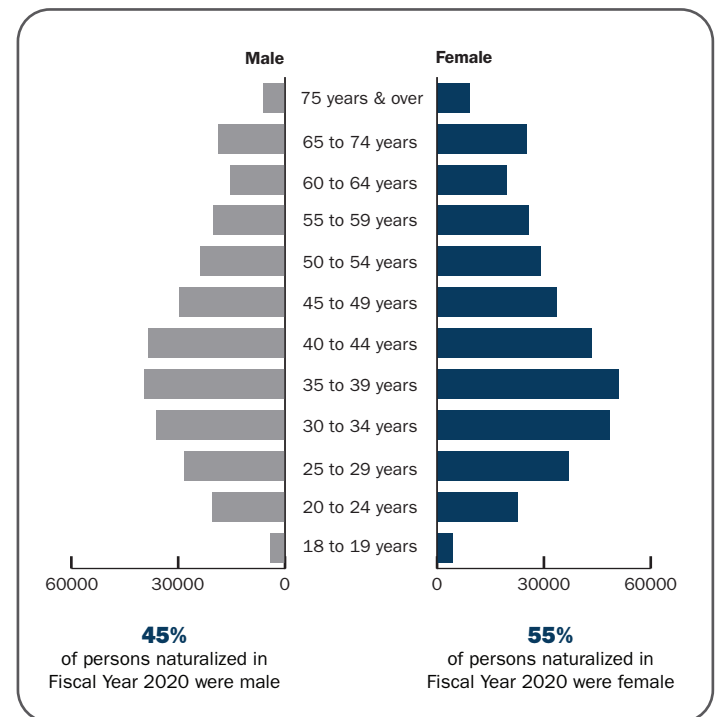
⁶ The most current Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) definitions are available from OMB at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro.html>.

TX, fell from the fourth highest number of naturalizations in 2019 to the seventh highest in 2020 (from 34,000 to 21,000). The largest numeric decrease in naturalizations occurred in New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (39,000) and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (13,000), though their percentages relative to the total were largely unchanged.

Sex, Age, and Marital Status

Naturalization proportions by sex, age, and marital status varied only very slightly between 2019 and 2020 (Tables 4, 5, and 6,

Figure 6.
Naturalizations by Age and Sex: Fiscal Year 2020



Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

respectively). In 2020, females accounted for the majority of naturalizations at 55 percent of all persons naturalizing, essentially unchanged from 2019 (Figure 6). Fifty-one percent of newly naturalized adults were ages 25 to 44 years, almost unchanged from 2019. Twenty-two percent were ages 55 years and older, down from 23 percent in 2019, and 8.2 percent were ages 18 to 24 years, unchanged from 2019 (Figure 7). The median age of those naturalizing in 2020 was 41, unchanged from 2019.⁷ Nearly 66 percent of individuals naturalizing were married in 2020, up from 64 percent in 2019, and 21 percent were single, the same as in 2019 (Table 6).

Years in Immigrant Status

Persons naturalizing in 2020 spent a median of 7 years in LPR status before becoming U.S. citizens, down from 8 years in 2018 and 2019 (Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa or Asia spent the least number of years in LPR status (6 years), followed by immigrants from South America (7 years), Europe (8 years), Oceania (10 years), and North America (10 years), the ordering largely unchanged over the last decade (Figure 7). Europe, South America, and Oceania have seen a continual increase in time spent in LPR status since 2011, when the median time spent in LPR status was 6, 6, and 7 years, respectively.

⁷ This report excludes data on children acquiring citizenship based on the citizenship of a parent; see footnote 2.

Table 4.

Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

Sex	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
Female	341,378	44.8	378,792	44.9	279,832	44.5
Male	420,415	55.2	464,561	55.1	348,333	55.4
Unknown	108	-	240	-	89	-

- Figure rounds to 0.0.
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 5.

Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

Age	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
18 to 24 years	59,037	7.7	69,013	8.2	51,421	8.2
25 to 34 years	170,465	22.4	196,412	23.3	149,900	23.9
35 to 44 years	201,434	26.4	229,217	27.2	171,844	27.4
45 to 54 years	148,617	19.5	157,821	18.7	115,667	18.4
55 to 64 years	103,120	13.5	107,926	12.8	80,548	12.8
65 years and over	79,223	10.4	83,204	9.9	58,874	9.4
Unknown	5	-	-	-	-	-
Median age (years)	42	X	41	X	41	X

X Not applicable.
- Figure rounds to 0.0 or 0.
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 6.

Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2020

Marital status	2018		2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	761,901	100.0	843,593	100.0	628,254	100.0
Married	158,954	20.9	177,418	21.0	131,044	20.9
Single	494,461	64.9	543,672	64.4	411,725	65.5
Other*	108,486	14.2	122,503	14.5	85,485	13.6

*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Table 7.

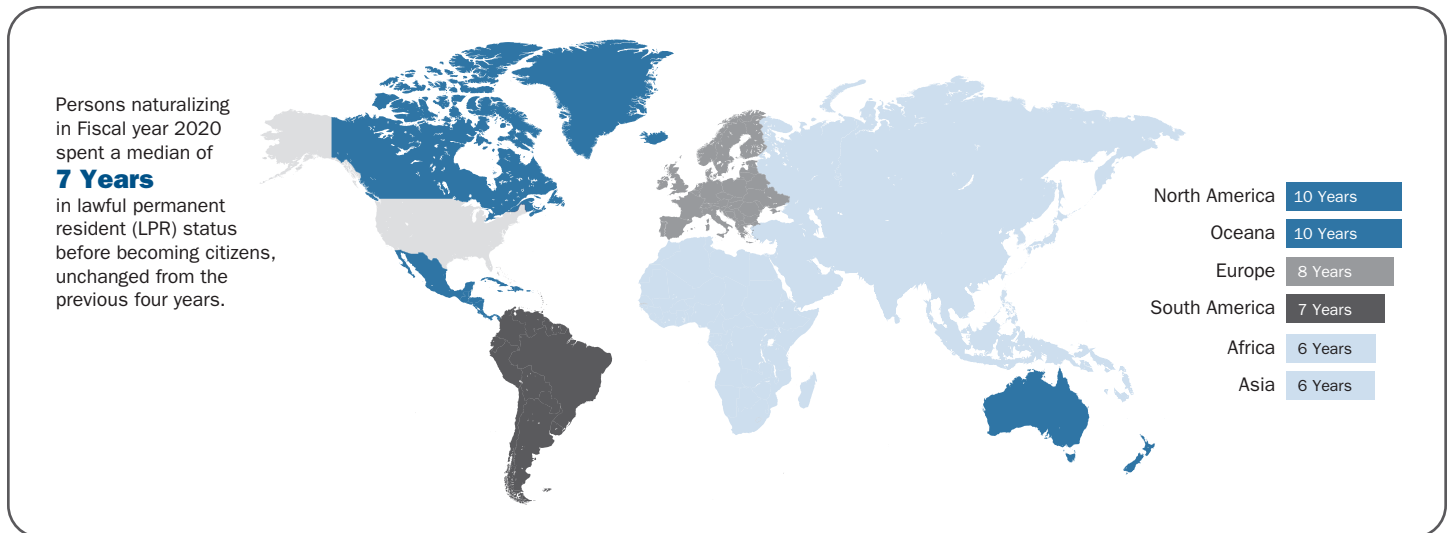
Median Years in Lawful Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Fiscal Years 2011 to 2020

Region of birth	Fiscal Year									
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	7
Africa	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	6
Europe	6	7	7	8	9	9	9	9	9	8
North America	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	10	10
Caribbean	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
Central America	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	10	10
Other North America	11	11	11	12	11	11	14	15	13	12
Oceania	7	8	8	9	9	10	10	10	10	10
South America	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	7

Note: Excludes persons who were not required to be lawful permanent residents prior to naturalization.
Source: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics.

Figure 7.

Median Years in Lawful Permanent Residence Status before Naturalizing: Fiscal Year 2020



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

DATA

This report is based on data from USCIS administrative records of new U.S. citizens⁸ who naturalized in 2020. These records consist of information taken from Form N-400 applications, such as the date and country of birth, sex, marital status, and state of residence. The Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) provided slightly more than 98 percent of the data, while USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS 4)⁹ and the Central Index System provided 0.7 and 1.1 percent, respectively.

⁸ A lawful permanent resident becomes a naturalized U.S. citizen only after the oath ceremony date.
⁹ Use of CLAIMS 4 is being phased out and has been decommissioned as of September 30, 2020. USCIS stopped ingesting N-400 cases on October 26, 2017 and transferred all remaining open cases to ELIS after decommissioning CLAIMS 4.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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