

# U.S. Naturalizations: 2016

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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 the same benefits, rights, and responsibilities 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 2016.<sup>1,2</sup>

In 2016, a total of 753,060 persons naturalized (see Figure 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (103,550), India (46,188), the Philippines (41,285), the People’s Republic of China (35,794), and Cuba (32,101). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (151,830), New York (93,376), and Florida (88,764).

## TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

The number of U.S. naturalizations increased to 753,060 in 2016, following a sharp increase from 653,416 in 2014 to 730,259 in 2015 (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

The number of petitions for citizenship filed increased substantially from 783,062 in 2015 to 972,151 in 2016, while the number of applications processed and persons naturalized increased by smaller margins, likely due to processing limitations.<sup>4</sup> For more data on applications processed during 2016, see Figure 2.

<sup>1</sup> In this report, “years” refer to fiscal years (October 1 to September 30).

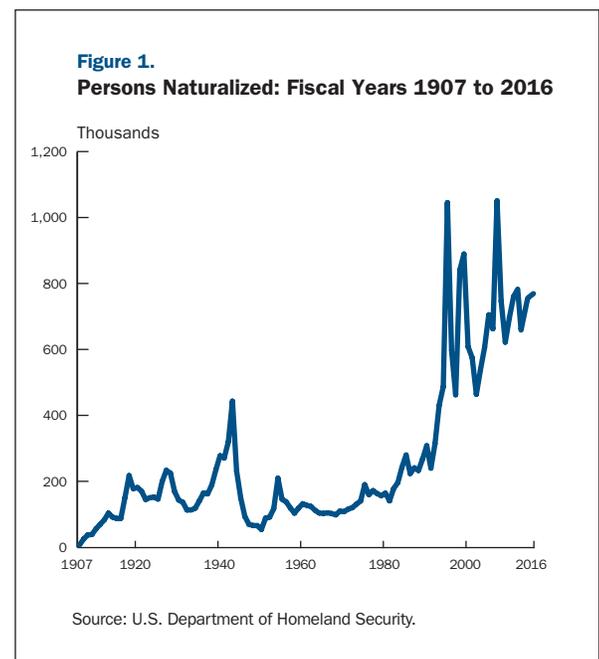
<sup>2</sup> In a 1998 report (GGD-98-164), the U.S. Government and Accountability Office noted that, as a result of reporting only on persons age 18 and over, the Office of Immigration Statistics underreports the number of annual naturalizations. This annual flow report does not include derivative naturalizations, or children receiving naturalized citizenship status from the citizenship status of a parent. The child of a naturalized parent obtains derivative U.S. citizenship through his/her parent and is not required to file an application for citizenship. Therefore, the number of naturalized persons presented in this report, obtained from N-400 records, may not represent a complete count of persons who obtained citizenship status during the reporting year.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> See also Table 20: *Petitions for Naturalization Filed, Persons Naturalized, and Petitions for Naturalization Denied* in the 2016 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.

## Historical Trend

The average number of persons naturalizing increased from less than 120,000 per year during the 1950s and 1960s to 210,000 during the 1980s, 500,000 during the 1990s, and to 680,000 between 2000 and 2009. Since 2010, the average annual number of naturalizations has increased to over 712,000 (see Figure 1). Overall, naturalizations have gradually increased over time; however, in recent decades, year-to-year numbers have varied due to naturalization spikes around election years, fee increases, and legislative changes.



## Region and Leading Countries of Birth

Until the 1970s, the majority of persons naturalizing were born in European countries. With increased legal immigration from Asian countries following the 1965 amendments to the INA, the arrival of Indochinese refugees in the 1970s, and a pattern of higher than average naturalization rates among Asian immigrants, Asia has been the leading region of origin of new citizens in most years since that time (see Figure 3). However, Mexico has consistently maintained its position in the last several decades as the leading country of origin.

Thirty-six percent of persons naturalizing in 2016 were born in Asia, followed by 35 percent born in North America and 10 percent born in Europe (see Table 1). Mexico was the leading country of birth for persons naturalizing in 2016 (14 percent), followed by India (6.1 percent), the Philippines (5.5 percent), the People's Republic of China (4.8 percent), and Cuba (4.3 percent). The 10 countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 49 percent of all naturalizing citizens in 2016.

From 2015 to 2016, the number of naturalizations increased among immigrants from every region other than Europe, which saw a five percent decrease. Overall, North American naturalizations increased by five percent (see Table 1), but this region-wide number reflected a mixed pattern, with Mexican naturalizations decreasing by two percent in 2016 and Caribbean naturalizations increasing by 13 percent.

Among leading countries of birth, the largest numeric increase in naturalizations occurred among immigrants born in Cuba (increase of 6,331 to 32,101), the Dominican Republic (increase of 4,655 to 31,320), the People's Republic of China (increase of 4,553 to 35,794), and India (increase of 3,975 to 46,188). After two consecutive years of growth (from 7,711 in 2013 to 14,899 in 2015), Iraq saw an 18 percent decline in naturalizations in 2016, to 12,130. Among leading countries of birth, the largest percentage increases in naturalizations were Cuba (25 percent), the Dominican Republic (17 percent), the People's Republic of China (15 percent), and Vietnam (13 percent).

## Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

Seventy-three percent of all persons naturalizing in 2016 resided in 10 states (see Table 2). California was home to the largest number of persons naturalizing (151,830; 20 percent of the total), followed by New York (93,376; 12 percent) and Florida (88,764; 12 percent) (see Figure 4).

**Table 1.**

### Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016

(Countries ranked by 2016 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>REGION</b>						
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
Africa . . . . .	72,338	9.6	71,492	9.8	62,175	9.5
Asia . . . . .	271,733	36.1	261,374	35.8	233,163	35.7
Europe . . . . .	74,344	9.9	78,074	10.7	71,325	10.9
North America . . . . .	259,845	34.5	247,492	33.9	222,547	34.1
Caribbean . . . . .	105,204	14.0	92,807	12.7	83,376	12.8
Central America . . . . .	41,649	5.5	39,160	5.4	35,866	5.5
Other North America . . . . .	112,992	15.0	115,525	15.8	103,305	15.8
Oceania . . . . .	3,953	0.5	3,811	0.5	3,399	0.5
South America . . . . .	70,821	9.4	67,927	9.3	60,665	9.3
Unknown . . . . .	26	—	89	—	142	—
<b>COUNTRY</b>						
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
Mexico . . . . .	103,550	13.8	105,958	14.5	94,889	14.5
India . . . . .	46,188	6.1	42,213	5.8	37,854	5.8
Philippines . . . . .	41,285	5.5	40,815	5.6	34,591	5.3
China, People's Republic . . . . .	35,794	4.8	31,241	4.3	30,284	4.6
Cuba . . . . .	32,101	4.3	25,770	3.5	24,092	3.7
Dominican Republic . . . . .	31,320	4.2	26,665	3.7	23,775	3.6
Vietnam . . . . .	24,848	3.3	21,976	3.0	18,837	2.9
Colombia . . . . .	18,601	2.5	17,207	2.4	16,478	2.5
El Salvador . . . . .	17,213	2.3	16,930	2.3	15,598	2.4
Jamaica . . . . .	16,772	2.2	16,566	2.3	13,547	2.1
Haiti . . . . .	15,276	2.0	14,053	1.9	13,676	2.1
Korea, South . . . . .	14,347	1.9	14,230	1.9	13,587	2.1
Iraq . . . . .	12,130	1.6	14,899	2.0	12,377	1.9
Pakistan . . . . .	11,729	1.6	11,912	1.6	11,210	1.7
Peru . . . . .	11,319	1.5	10,701	1.5	9,572	1.5
Brazil . . . . .	10,268	1.4	10,516	1.4	8,625	1.3
Bangladesh . . . . .	9,949	1.3	9,750	1.3	7,475	1.1
Guatemala . . . . .	9,764	1.3	9,344	1.3	8,549	1.3
United Kingdom . . . . .	9,562	1.3	10,095	1.4	8,906	1.4
Nigeria . . . . .	9,520	1.3	10,363	1.4	8,667	1.3
All other countries . . . . .	271,524	36.1	269,055	36.8	240,827	36.9

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Table 2.**

### Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016

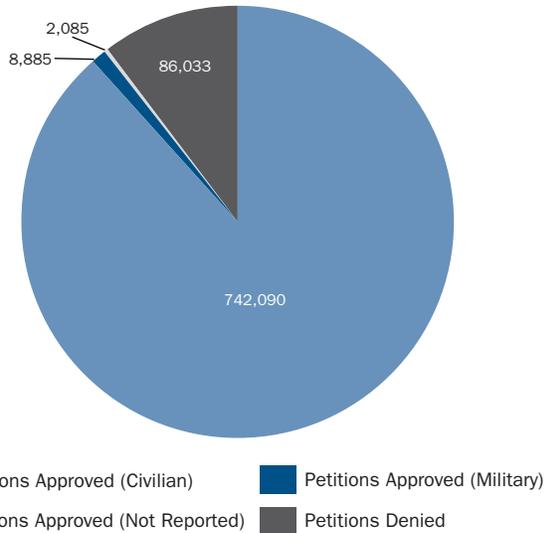
(States ranked by 2016 persons naturalized)

State of residence	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
California . . . . .	151,830	20.2	155,979	21.4	140,234	21.5
New York . . . . .	93,376	12.4	90,368	12.4	77,717	11.9
Florida . . . . .	88,764	11.8	81,960	11.2	79,637	12.2
Texas . . . . .	63,945	8.5	65,467	9.0	52,879	8.1
New Jersey . . . . .	40,344	5.4	34,857	4.8	32,939	5.0
Illinois . . . . .	26,003	3.5	25,722	3.5	26,224	4.0
Massachusetts . . . . .	24,577	3.3	23,554	3.2	21,608	3.3
Washington . . . . .	21,655	2.9	14,341	2.0	12,246	1.9
Virginia . . . . .	20,437	2.7	18,391	2.5	19,646	3.0
Maryland . . . . .	19,775	2.6	18,390	2.5	13,707	2.1
Other* . . . . .	202,354	26.9	201,230	27.6	176,579	27.0

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Figure 2.**  
**Petitions for Naturalization Filed: Fiscal Year 2016**

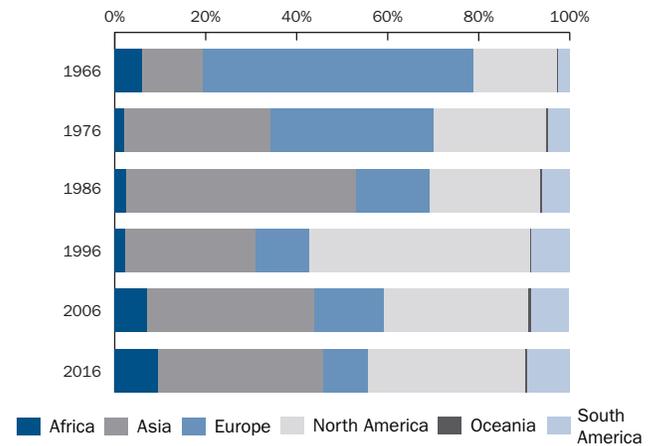


Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

More than 50 percent of all new citizens in 2016 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (see Table 3).<sup>5</sup> The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (122,156; 16 percent of the total); Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (61,950; 8.2 percent); and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL (59,227; 7.9 percent).

<sup>5</sup> The most current CBSA definitions are available from OMB at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/bulletins/2013/b13-01.pdf>.

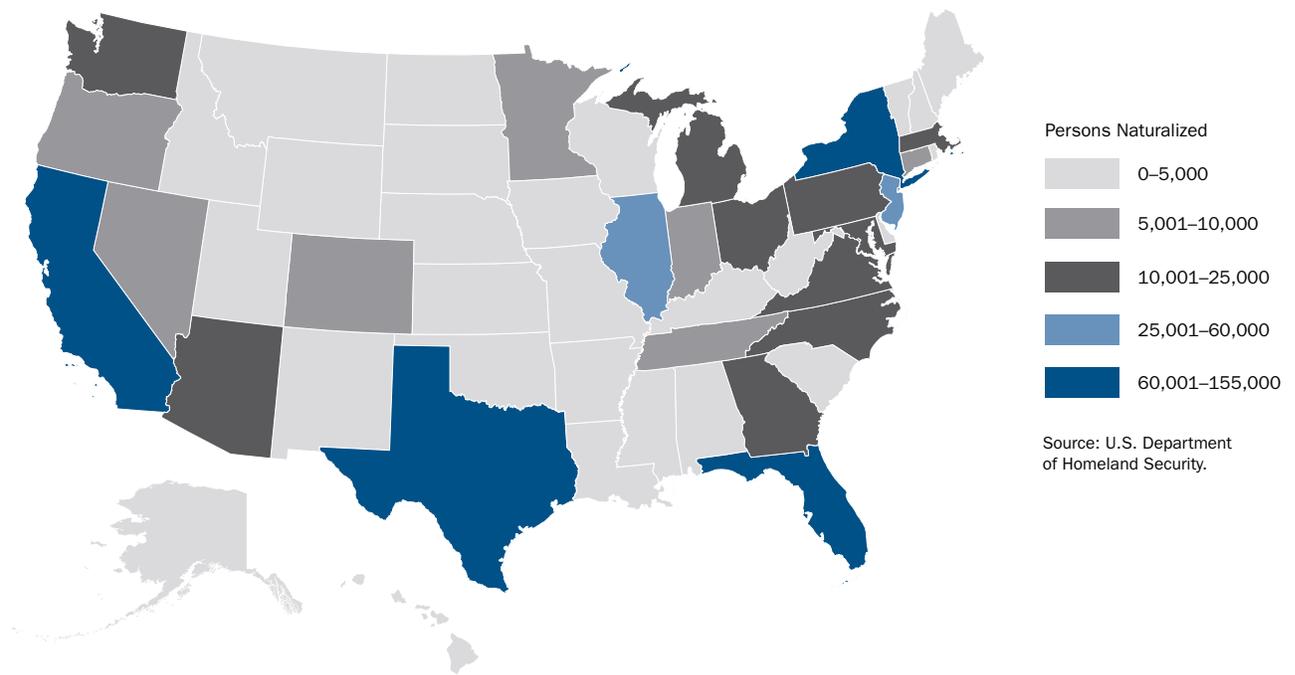
**Figure 3.**  
**Percent Total of Persons Naturalized per Year by Region**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

From 2015 to 2016, the largest percentage increases in the number of naturalizations among leading states of residence occurred in Washington (51 percent), New Jersey (16 percent), and Virginia (11 percent). With 21,655 naturalizations in 2016, Washington saw its highest number of naturalizations ever. While it is not unusual for the number of naturalizations in a state to gradually increase over time, this 50 percent increase from 2015 in a year with otherwise steady trends is a noteworthy exception. Among leading metropolitan areas of residence, the largest percentage increases from 2015 to 2016 occurred in Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue,

**Figure 4.**  
**Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Year 2016**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Table 3.****Persons Naturalized by Metropolitan Area of Residence: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016**

(Ranked by 2016 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA . . . . .	122,156	16.2	113,758	15.6	100,257	15.3
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA . . . . .	61,950	8.2	69,017	9.5	57,674	8.8
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL . . . . .	59,227	7.9	53,448	7.3	52,544	8.0
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV . . . . .	29,138	3.9	27,084	3.7	24,649	3.8
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI . . . . .	24,907	3.3	24,201	3.3	24,617	3.8
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX . . . . .	23,858	3.2	25,735	3.5	17,547	2.7
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA . . . . .	23,261	3.1	20,620	2.8	19,842	3.0
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH . . . . .	19,690	2.6	18,385	2.5	17,311	2.6
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX . . . . .	18,780	2.5	19,626	2.7	16,581	2.5
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA . . . . .	16,563	2.2	10,119	1.4	8,345	1.3
Other, including unknown . . . . .	353,530	46.9	348,266	47.7	314,049	48.1

Note: 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: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

WA (64 percent), and San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA (13 percent). While three of the leading metropolitan areas of residence saw a decrease in naturalizations in 2016, the decrease in Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA, was the largest in both total number (8,398 fewer naturalizations) and percent (10 percent decrease).

**Sex, Age, and Marital Status**

The percentage breakdown by sex, age, and marital status remained largely unchanged from recent years (see Tables 4, 5, and 6). In 2016, females accounted for 56 percent of all persons

naturalizing (see Figure 5). Slightly more than one-half (51 percent) of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years, 22 percent were ages 55 years and older, and fewer than 10 percent were ages 18 to 24 years (see Figure 5). The median age of all persons naturalizing increased overall from previous years to 41—a trend consistent with the increasing average age of the U.S. population. Marital trends in recent years continued with 64 percent of persons naturalizing in 2016 identifying as married, and nearly one-quarter (23 percent) identifying as single.

**Table 4.****Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016**

Sex	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
Female . . . . .	420,483	55.8	408,064	55.9	360,547	55.2
Male . . . . .	332,563	44.2	322,164	44.1	292,858	44.8
Unknown . . . . .	14	—	31	—	11	—

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Table 6.****Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016**

Marital status	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
Married . . . . .	477,843	63.5	463,779	63.5	417,117	63.8
Single . . . . .	171,428	22.8	167,024	22.9	147,369	22.6
Other* . . . . .	103,789	13.8	99,456	13.6	88,930	13.6

\*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Table 5.****Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2014 to 2016**

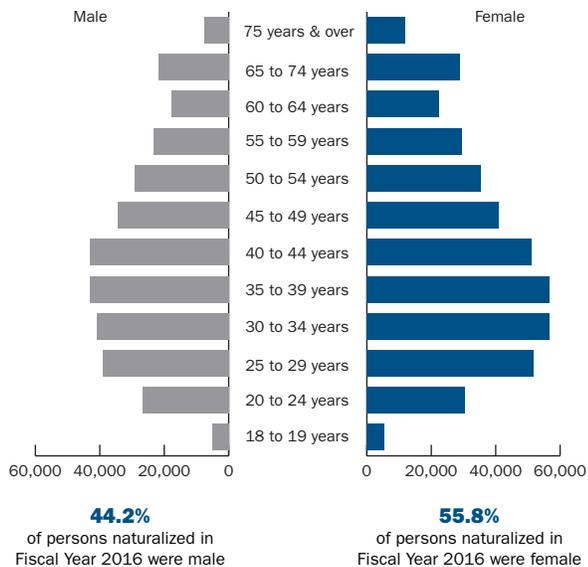
Age	2016		2015		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total . . . . .	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0	653,416	100.0
18 to 24 years . . . . .	67,696	9.0	66,806	9.1	59,431	9.1
25 to 34 years . . . . .	188,411	25.0	186,115	25.5	163,264	25.0
35 to 44 years . . . . .	194,291	25.8	190,366	26.1	173,413	26.5
45 to 54 years . . . . .	139,790	18.6	133,561	18.3	121,187	18.5
55 to 64 years . . . . .	92,732	12.3	87,655	12.0	78,058	11.9
65 years and over . . . . .	70,140	9.3	65,756	9.0	58,063	8.9
Median age (years) . . . . .	41	X	40	X	40	X

X Not applicable.

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Figure 5.**  
**Naturalizations by Age and Sex: 2016**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

### Years in Immigrant Status

As in the previous three years, persons naturalizing in 2016 spent a median of seven years inlawful permanent resident (LPR) status before becoming citizens (see Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa and Asia spent the least time in LPR status (six years), followed by immigrants from South America (seven years), Europe (nine years), North America (10 years), and Oceania (10 years) (see Figure 6). Oceania has seen a continual increase in time spent in LPR status since 2011, when the median time spent in LPR status was seven years.

### CURRENT EVENTS

As in many election years, naturalizations increased in a predictable fashion in 2016. Since 2000, naturalizations have increased by as little as six percent (FY 2000) to as much as 58 percent (FY 2008); however, in 2016, naturalizations only marginally increased (three percent). During recent years with national elections, Cuban naturalizations often spike—a trend which was seen in 2008, 2012, and again in 2016 (see Figure 7). While the increase in Cuban naturalizations was smaller than the Cuban increase in 2008 (159 percent) and 2012 (49 percent), the 2016 Cuban increase of 25 percent still stands in stark contrast to the meager increase of overall naturalizations in 2016 (three percent).

**Table 7.**

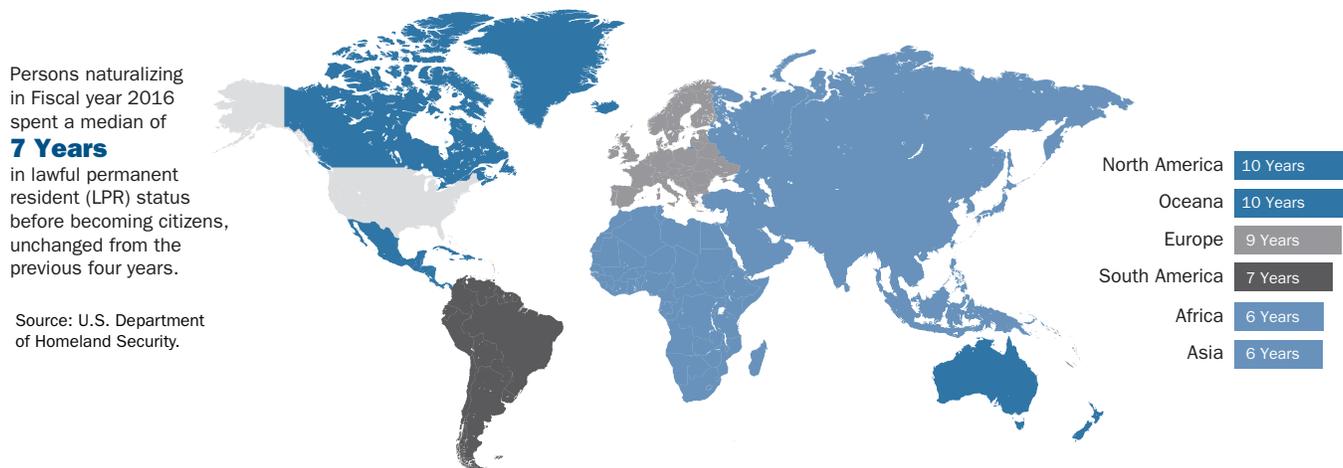
**Median Years in Lawful Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Fiscal Years 2007 to 2016**

Region of birth	Year									
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Total	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	7	9	8
Africa	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
Asia	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	7	6
Europe	9	9	8	7	7	6	6	7	7	6
North America	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	12	11
Oceania	10	9	9	8	8	7	7	8	9	9
South America	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	6	8	7

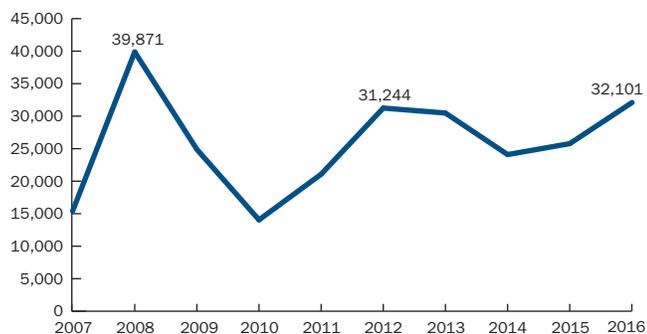
Note: Excludes persons who were not required to be lawful permanent residents prior to naturalization.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Figure 6.**  
**Median Years in LPR Status Before Naturalizing: 2016**



**Figure 7.**  
**Cuban Naturalization Trends: 2007 to 2016**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.  
Note: Total naturalizations spiked in 2008 following the announcement of an application for naturalization fee increase.

Iraq naturalizations have fluctuated significantly since 2000. Likely influenced by ongoing conflict, waves of incoming immigrants from Iraq are seen in archival data. Refugees/asylees settled in the United States are eligible to apply for naturalization status after five years; with U.S. troops entering Iraq in 2003, a precipitous increase in new naturalizations in 2009 was a likely outcome. The increase continued until 2013 when new Iraq naturalizations decreased by over 50 percent. The spike beginning in 2014 of new naturalizations from Iraq followed a second wave of refugees.

USCIS announced an increased application fee for the N-400 in October 2016, which went into effect on December 23, 2016. This announcement was not made during the 2016 fiscal year and therefore does not impact the data in this report.

## THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

An applicant filing Form N-400 *Application for Naturalization* must fulfill certain general requirements set forth in the INA. The general naturalization provisions specify that a foreign national must be at least 18 years of age, be a U.S. 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. Some types of applicants who may be eligible for specific exemptions under certain conditions include spouses of U.S. citizens and persons with qualifying military service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Every applicant for naturalization must file an N-400 *Application for Naturalization*. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must interview all applicants to determine their eligibility to naturalize including reviewing documents to support that case. Following approval, USCIS schedules applicants for an oath ceremony before a judge or USCIS official.

## DATA

This report uses data from USCIS administrative records. These records consist of information taken from Form N-400 *Application for Naturalization* applications, such as the date and country of birth, sex, marital status, and state of residence. USCIS's Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS 4) provides nearly all the data, while a minimal number of records are from the Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) and the Central Index System of USCIS.

## 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>.