

Place of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population: 2009

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents data on the foreign-born population at the national and state levels based on the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS). During the last four decades, the foreign-born population of the United States has continued to increase in size and as a percent of the total population: from 9.6 million or 4.7 percent in 1970, to 14.1 million or 6.2 percent in 1980, 19.8 million or 7.9 percent in 1990, and 31.1 million or 11.1 percent in 2000.¹ According to the 2009 ACS, there were 38.5 million foreign-born residents, representing 12.5 percent of the total population.² While the number of foreign born represents a historical high, the proportion of the total population is lower than during the great migration of the late 1800s and early 1900s, when it fluctuated between 13 percent and 15 percent.³ But more notable than the growth of the foreign-born population is the change in the distribution of origin countries over time.

¹ Gibson, Campbell and Kay Jung. 2006. "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1850 to 2000." U.S. Census Bureau: Population Division Working Paper, Number 81 available on the U.S. Census Bureau's Web site at <www.census.gov/population/www/techpap.html>.

² In addition, since 1970, as the foreign-born population increased in size, it also became, on average, a younger population. In 1970, the median age of the foreign-born population was 52 years; by 2009, it was 41 years (Campbell and Jung, 2006; 2009 American Community Survey).

³ The foreign-born population represented 13.3 percent of the total population in 1880, 14.8 percent in 1890, 13.6 percent in 1900, 14.7 percent in 1910, and 13.2 percent in 1920. See Campbell and Jung, 2006.

Defining Nativity Status: Who Is Foreign Born?

Nativity status refers to whether a person is native or foreign born. The native-born population includes anyone who was a U.S. citizen at birth. Respondents who were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents, are defined as native. The foreign-born population includes anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization.

In 1960, 75 percent of the foreign born were from countries in Europe. By 2009, over 80 percent of the foreign born were from countries in Latin America and Asia. Also since 1960, the foreign born increasingly have settled in states beyond the traditional gateway states of New York, California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois. This report will discuss the size, country of origin, and distribution of the foreign-born population in 2009.

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SIZE, COUNTRY OF BIRTH, AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

In 2009, there were 307 million people living in the United States, including 38.5 million foreign born representing 1 in 8 residents. Between 2000 and 2009, the foreign-born population increased by 7.4 million persons, or by about 24 percent.

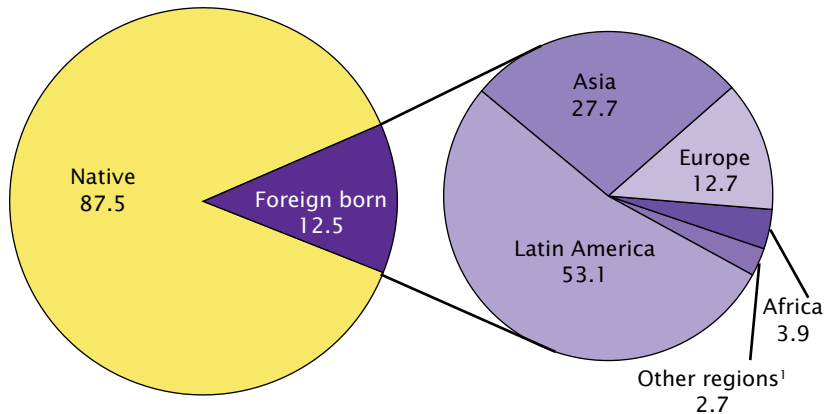
Over half (53 percent) of all foreign born were from Latin America (see Figure 1). Another 28 percent were from Asia. The next largest region-of-origin group—the foreign born from Europe—represented 13 percent of all foreign born, less than half the size of the foreign born from Asia. About 4 percent of the foreign born were from Africa, followed by about 3 percent from other regions, including Oceania and Northern America.

Mexico was the largest of all country-of-birth groups (see Figure 2). There were 11.5 million foreign born from Mexico in the United States, representing 30 percent of the total foreign-born population. Mexico was also the predominant country in the Latin America region-of-origin group. Of the 20.5 million foreign born from Latin America, 56 percent were born in Mexico. The next largest country-of-birth group, the foreign born from China, was considerably smaller than the foreign-born population from Mexico. There were 2 million foreign born from China, comprising over 5 percent of the total foreign-born population. The remaining largest country-of-birth groups, with about 1 million foreign born each, included the Philippines, India, Vietnam, El Salvador, Korea, and Cuba.⁴

⁴ The estimates for Vietnam and El Salvador are not statistically different. The estimates for Korea and Cuba are not statistically different.

Figure 1.
Total Population by Nativity and Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth: 2009

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

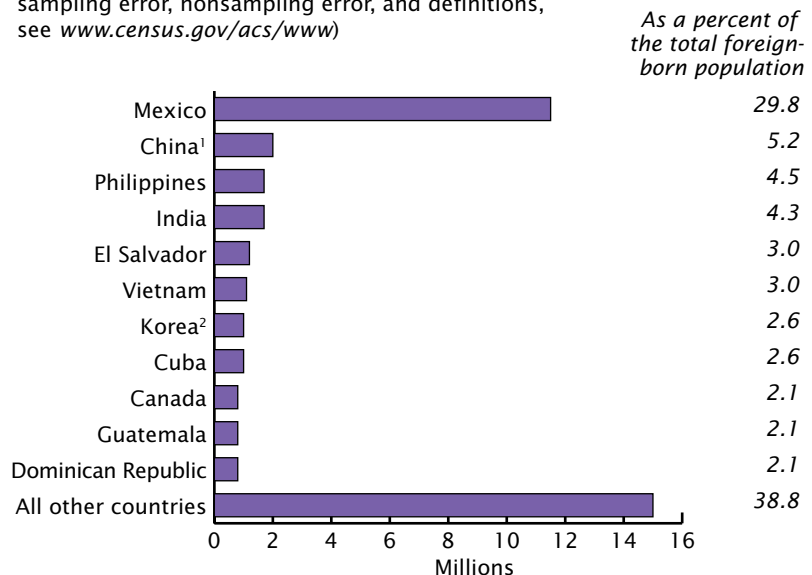


¹Other regions include Oceania and Northern America.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

Figure 2.
Foreign-Born Population by Country of Birth for Countries With 750,000 or More Foreign Born: 2009

(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)



¹ Includes respondents who reported their country of birth as China, Hong Kong, Macau, Paracel Islands, or Taiwan.

² Includes respondents who reported their country of birth as Korea, North Korea, or South Korea.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

California had the largest number of foreign-born residents (9.9 million), followed by New York (4.2 million), Texas (4.0 million), and Florida (3.5 million) (see Figure 3). When combined, 21.6 million foreign born—or more than half (56 percent) of the total foreign-born population—lived in just these four states. California's foreign born alone represented over one-fourth of all foreign born.

California also had the largest proportion of foreign born in its total population (see Figure 4). Over one-fourth (27 percent) of all residents of California were foreign born. Approximately 1 in 5 residents were foreign born in two other states—New York (21 percent) and New Jersey (20 percent). An additional nine states had proportions of foreign born that were higher than the national average (12.5 percent): Nevada, Florida, Hawaii, Texas, Massachusetts, Arizona, Illinois, Connecticut, and Maryland.⁵

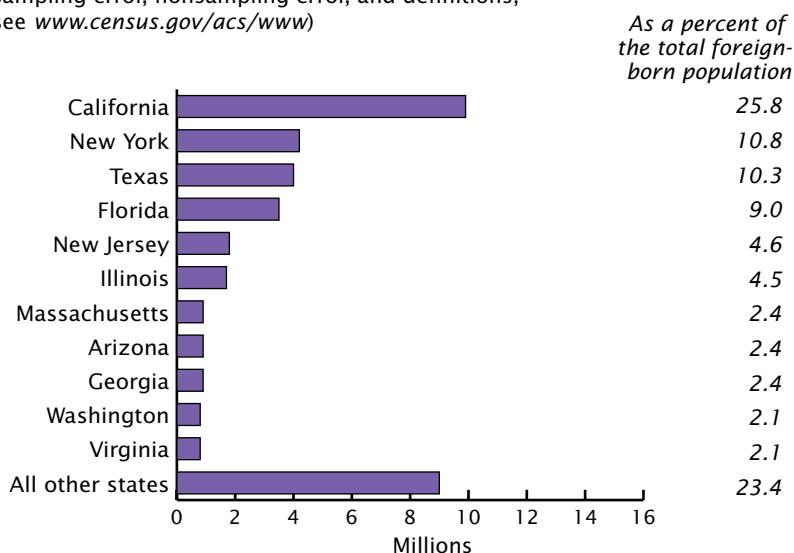
The composition of the foreign-born population by region of birth varied among states. The foreign born from Latin America represented over 65 percent of the state foreign-born population in New Mexico (78 percent), Florida (75 percent), Texas (73 percent), and Arizona (69 percent) (see Table 1). In addition to these 4 states, there were 13 other states where over 50 percent of the foreign-born population was from Latin America. The foreign born from Asia comprised more than 50 percent of the total foreign-born population in one state: Hawaii (78 percent). An additional 10 states had more than one-third

⁵ The estimates for Nevada and Florida are not statistically different. The estimates for Massachusetts and Arizona are not statistically different. The estimates for Connecticut and Maryland are not statistically different.

Figure 3.

Foreign-Born Population by State for States With 750,000 or More Foreign Born: 2009

(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

of their foreign-born populations from Asia. In three states, the foreign born from Africa represented more than 15 percent of the foreign-born population: North Dakota (22 percent), Minnesota (18 percent), and Maryland (16 percent).⁶ One of the states with the highest proportion of foreign born from Europe in its total foreign-born population was Vermont (39 percent).⁷

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on people and households that responded to the ACS in 2009. The resulting estimates are representative of the entire population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant

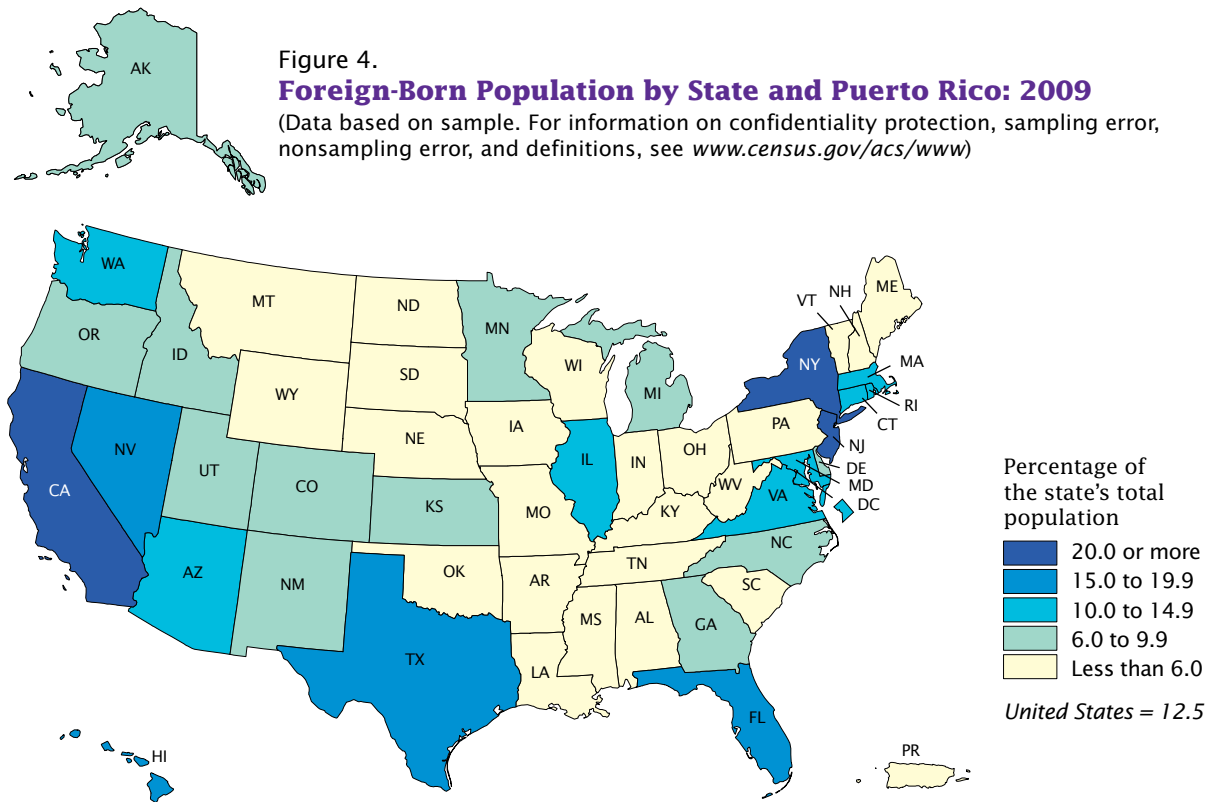
⁶ The estimates for North Dakota and Minnesota are not statistically different. The estimates for Minnesota and Maryland are not statistically different.

⁷ The estimates for Vermont and Montana are not statistically different.

at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “ACS Accuracy of the Data (2009)” document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2009.pdf.

Additional information about the foreign-born population is available on the Census Bureau's Web site at www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/index.html.

Figure 4.
Foreign-Born Population by State and Puerto Rico: 2009
 (Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009, Puerto Rico Community Survey, 2009.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties,

places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio

in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.

Table 1.

The Foreign-Born Population, Showing Percentage of the Population by Region of Birth and by State and Puerto Rico: 2009

(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Area	Foreign born		Africa		Asia		Europe		Latin America		Other regions ¹	
	Total	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent of total	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent of total	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent of total	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent of total	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent of total	Margin of error ² (±)
United States . . .	38,517	116	3.9	0.1	27.7	0.1	12.7	0.1	53.1	0.1	2.7	–
Alabama	147	4	5.2	1.5	28.3	1.6	12.5	1.4	51.0	2.1	3.1	0.8
Alaska	49	3	3.4	2.0	51.6	3.7	13.3	2.3	23.7	3.9	8.0	1.9
Arizona	925	20	2.2	0.4	15.0	0.7	8.9	0.6	69.4	0.9	4.5	0.4
Arkansas	120	5	1.7	0.8	20.2	2.2	9.6	1.7	65.5	2.3	3.0	0.8
California	9,947	47	1.4	0.1	35.1	0.2	6.7	0.2	54.8	0.3	2.1	0.1
Colorado	487	15	3.8	0.7	21.5	1.1	13.5	0.9	58.0	1.4	3.2	0.5
Connecticut	460	12	3.8	0.7	21.5	0.7	28.1	1.2	42.7	1.3	3.9	0.4
Delaware	74	5	9.6	2.7	31.0	3.5	14.6	2.8	41.9	4.2	2.9	1.5
District of Columbia . . .	72	5	13.1	3.2	17.3	2.0	16.9	2.6	49.0	3.1	3.7	1.2
Florida	3,484	37	1.4	0.1	10.0	0.2	10.5	0.3	74.8	0.4	3.3	0.2
Georgia	920	17	8.2	0.8	25.0	0.8	10.0	0.7	54.6	0.8	2.2	0.3
Hawaii	224	9	0.8	0.4	78.2	2.2	5.5	0.9	4.8	0.9	10.8	1.7
Idaho	98	6	3.0	1.3	15.3	2.2	17.1	2.5	59.1	3.0	5.5	1.3
Illinois	1,741	24	2.6	0.3	25.8	0.5	22.7	0.7	47.6	0.7	1.3	0.1
Indiana	281	9	4.7	1.1	27.6	1.4	16.4	1.7	47.8	1.6	3.5	0.5
Iowa	116	4	6.5	1.6	33.8	2.0	15.2	2.1	42.0	2.2	2.5	0.6
Kansas	171	6	4.3	0.9	26.8	1.3	8.8	1.3	57.8	1.8	2.4	1.0
Kentucky	128	6	7.3	1.8	30.7	2.5	18.0	2.5	40.4	2.6	3.5	0.9
Louisiana	152	7	4.5	1.8	32.4	1.9	10.7	1.4	49.5	2.2	2.9	0.8
Maine	44	4	15.3	5.0	22.6	2.6	24.9	3.4	8.1	2.2	29.0	4.0
Maryland	730	14	16.1	1.1	32.8	0.9	12.2	0.7	37.6	1.0	1.3	0.2
Massachusetts	943	19	8.1	0.9	27.6	0.8	25.9	0.9	34.8	1.1	3.5	0.3
Michigan	614	15	3.6	0.6	45.5	1.3	25.0	1.2	19.3	1.0	6.6	0.5
Minnesota	358	10	17.9	1.5	36.3	1.2	12.9	1.2	29.2	1.3	3.8	0.6
Mississippi	60	5	3.2	1.4	31.1	3.6	12.5	2.7	49.5	4.0	3.6	1.7
Missouri	213	8	7.4	1.3	35.7	1.8	23.6	1.8	30.1	1.7	3.1	0.6
Montana	19	2	2.0	2.0	28.1	5.6	33.1	6.5	16.2	4.1	20.6	4.6
Nebraska	106	4	7.8	1.7	26.2	2.1	5.9	1.1	57.4	2.6	2.7	1.0
Nevada	507	11	2.9	0.6	26.8	0.9	8.7	0.9	58.7	1.0	2.9	0.5
New Hampshire	68	5	8.1	1.9	29.8	2.7	25.7	2.8	22.9	3.3	13.6	2.5
New Jersey	1,759	24	4.5	0.4	31.1	0.6	18.1	0.5	45.2	0.7	1.0	0.1
New Mexico	196	10	1.7	0.6	9.5	0.8	7.9	1.0	78.3	1.4	2.6	0.6
New York	4,178	36	4.0	0.3	26.4	0.3	19.2	0.4	48.8	0.5	1.6	0.1
North Carolina	665	14	5.7	0.8	22.2	0.8	11.7	0.7	57.3	1.0	3.2	0.4
North Dakota	15	2	21.6	4.1	25.7	4.9	16.1	4.2	11.5	4.6	25.1	5.1
Ohio	433	11	11.3	1.3	36.6	1.3	27.7	1.3	20.5	1.0	4.0	0.5
Oklahoma	190	7	4.3	1.1	23.4	1.4	7.9	0.9	60.4	1.9	4.0	1.2
Oregon	367	12	2.3	0.5	27.7	1.2	16.4	1.3	48.0	1.3	5.6	0.7
Pennsylvania	691	16	7.7	0.9	36.4	1.0	26.4	1.1	26.9	1.2	2.6	0.3
Rhode Island	133	7	12.5	2.0	16.6	1.5	23.6	2.3	43.4	2.5	3.9	1.1
South Carolina	205	8	3.0	1.1	24.1	1.6	16.6	1.6	52.3	1.8	4.1	0.9
South Dakota	22	3	17.4	4.4	31.4	5.3	23.2	8.7	22.4	5.0	5.6	1.9
Tennessee	266	10	7.7	1.6	29.6	1.9	12.0	1.3	46.9	1.5	3.8	0.7
Texas	3,985	37	3.1	0.2	17.6	0.3	4.6	0.2	73.4	0.4	1.3	0.1
Utah	218	7	2.3	0.9	18.5	1.6	11.1	1.3	59.6	1.8	8.6	1.1
Vermont	21	2	4.5	2.5	24.3	4.5	38.7	5.6	6.1	2.1	26.4	4.2
Virginia	806	15	8.7	0.8	41.4	0.9	11.7	0.7	35.7	0.8	2.5	0.3
Washington	811	15	5.2	0.6	39.0	0.8	18.4	1.0	30.2	0.9	7.1	0.5
West Virginia	23	2	8.4	4.1	51.6	6.3	16.5	4.2	19.8	5.0	3.6	1.9
Wisconsin	256	9	3.8	0.9	31.2	1.4	20.3	1.7	41.2	1.8	3.4	0.7
Wyoming	17	2	3.2	3.1	16.4	6.2	13.2	4.4	59.0	6.8	8.2	3.1
Puerto Rico	108	7	0.1	0.2	2.7	1.3	3.8	1.0	92.9	1.7	0.4	0.3

– Represents or rounds to zero.

¹Other regions include Oceania and Northern America.

²Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimates, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.