

U.S. Naturalizations: 2017

JOHN TEKE

The naturalization process confers U.S. citizenship upon foreign 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 protects for native-born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote. This Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) Annual Flow Report presents information on the number and characteristics of foreign nationals aged 18 years and over who naturalized during 2017.^{1,2}

SUMMARY

A total of 707,265 persons naturalized in 2017, down 6.1 percent from 2016 (Table 1). The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (118,559), India (50,802), the People’s Republic of China (37,674), the Philippines (36,828), and the Dominican Republic (29,734). The largest number of persons naturalizing lived in California (157,364), New York (86,407), and Florida (69,485) (Table 2).

TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS NATURALIZING

The number of U.S. naturalizations fell to 707,265 persons in 2017, down 6.1 percent from 753,060 in 2016 and down 3.1 percent from 730,259 in 2015 (Figure 1).³ Meanwhile, the number of applications for citizenship increased from 972,151 in 2016 to 986,851 in 2017 (1.5 percent). The number of applications exceeds the number of naturalizations because of the lag in processing applications and because 11.8 percent of applications adjudicated in 2017 were denied (Figure 2).⁴

¹ In this report, “years” refer to U.S. fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30. For example, fiscal year 2017 began on October 1, 2016, and ended on September 30, 2017.

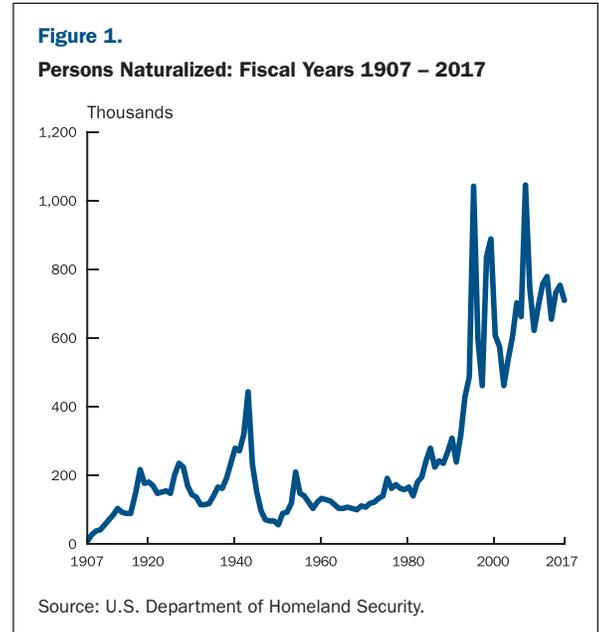
² This annual flow report does not include children acquiring citizenship based upon the citizenship status of a parent. The child of a U.S. citizen parent may acquire U.S. citizenship through his/her parent and is not required to file an application for naturalization. Therefore, the number of naturalized 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.

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 also Table 20: Applications for Naturalization Filed, Persons Naturalized, and Applications for Naturalization Denied in the 2017 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 (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, legislative changes, and other factors.



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 (Figure 3). However, Mexico has consistently maintained its position in the last several decades as the leading country of origin.

Thirty-seven percent of persons naturalizing in 2017 were born in North America, followed by 36 percent born in Asia, and 9.2 percent born in Europe (Table 1). Mexico was the leading country of birth for persons naturalizing in 2017 (17 percent of the total), followed by India (7.2 percent), the People's Republic of China (5.3 percent), the Philippines (5.2 percent), and the Dominican Republic (4.2 percent). The ten countries with the largest number of naturalizations accounted for 52 percent of all naturalizing citizens in 2017, a three percentage point increase from 2016.

From 2016 to 2017, the number of naturalizations decreased among immigrants from every region. North American naturalizations decreased by the smallest proportion, at just 0.6 percent; but this region-wide number reflected a mixed pattern, with Mexican naturalizations increasing by 14 percent and Caribbean naturalizations decreasing by 12 percent. This pattern partly reflects a reversion to the mean as Mexican naturalizations fell two percent and Caribbean naturalizations increased 13 percent between 2015 and 2016.

The largest numeric increase in naturalizations occurred among immigrants born in Mexico (increase of 15,009 naturalizations), India (4,614), the People's Republic of China (1,880), and South Korea (296). Mexico (14 percent), India (10 percent), and the People's Republic of China (5.3 percent) were also the countries of birth with the largest proportional increases in naturalizations in 2017. With two consecutive years of decline from 14,900 in 2015 to 12,000 in 2016, Iraq had seen a 19 percent decline in naturalizations – a trend which continued with a 35 percent decrease in naturalizations to 7,875 in 2017.

Table 1.

Persons Naturalized by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017

(Countries ranked by 2017 persons naturalized)

Region and country of birth	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
REGION						
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
Africa	61,851	8.7	72,338	9.6	71,492	9.8
Asia	255,306	36.1	271,733	36.1	261,374	35.8
Europe	65,141	9.2	74,344	9.9	78,074	10.7
North America	258,371	36.5	259,845	34.5	247,492	33.9
Caribbean	92,540	13.1	105,204	14.0	92,807	12.7
Central America	39,359	5.6	41,649	5.5	39,160	5.4
Other North America	126,472	17.9	112,992	15.0	115,525	15.8
Oceania	3,327	0.5	3,953	0.5	3,811	0.5
South America	63,063	8.9	70,821	9.4	67,927	9.3
Unknown	206	—	26	—	89	—
COUNTRY						
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
Mexico	118,559	16.8	103,550	13.8	105,958	14.5
India	50,802	7.2	46,188	6.1	42,213	5.8
China, People's Republic	37,674	5.3	35,794	4.8	31,241	4.3
Philippines	36,828	5.2	41,285	5.5	40,815	5.6
Dominican Republic	29,734	4.2	31,320	4.2	26,665	3.7
Cuba	25,961	3.7	32,101	4.3	25,770	3.5
Vietnam	19,323	2.7	24,848	3.3	21,976	3.0
El Salvador	16,941	2.4	17,213	2.3	16,930	2.3
Colombia	16,184	2.3	18,601	2.5	17,207	2.4
Jamaica	15,087	2.1	16,772	2.2	16,566	2.3
Korea, South	14,643	2.1	14,347	1.9	14,230	1.9
Haiti	12,794	1.8	15,276	2.0	14,053	1.9
Pakistan	10,166	1.4	11,729	1.6	11,912	1.6
Peru	10,014	1.4	11,319	1.5	10,701	1.5
Brazil	9,701	1.4	10,268	1.4	10,516	1.4
Guatemala	9,131	1.3	9,764	1.3	9,344	1.3
United Kingdom	9,049	1.3	9,562	1.3	10,095	1.4
Bangladesh	8,629	1.2	9,949	1.3	9,750	1.3
Iran	8,324	1.2	9,507	1.3	10,344	1.4
Iraq	7,875	1.1	12,130	1.6	14,899	2.0
All other countries	239,846	33.9	271,537	36.1	269,074	36.8

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Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 2.

Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017

(States ranked by 2017 persons naturalized)

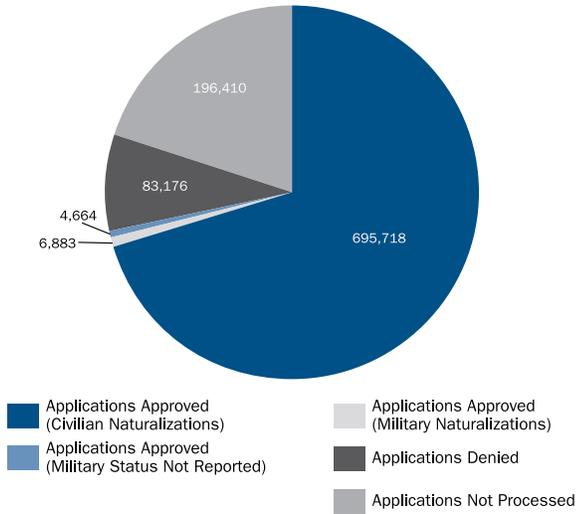
State of residence	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
California	157,364	22.2	151,830	20.2	155,979	21.4
New York	86,407	12.2	93,376	12.4	90,368	12.4
Florida	69,485	9.8	88,764	11.8	81,960	11.2
Texas	50,552	7.1	63,945	8.5	65,467	9.0
New Jersey	38,611	5.5	40,344	5.4	34,857	4.8
Massachusetts	27,739	3.9	24,577	3.3	23,554	3.2
Illinois	24,933	3.5	26,003	3.5	25,722	3.5
Virginia	21,930	3.1	20,437	2.7	18,391	2.5
Maryland	17,729	2.5	19,775	2.6	18,390	2.5
Georgia	16,461	2.3	18,866	2.5	20,794	2.8
Washington	16,030	2.3	21,655	2.9	14,341	2.0
Other*	180,024	25.5	183,488	24.4	180,436	24.7

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

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 2.

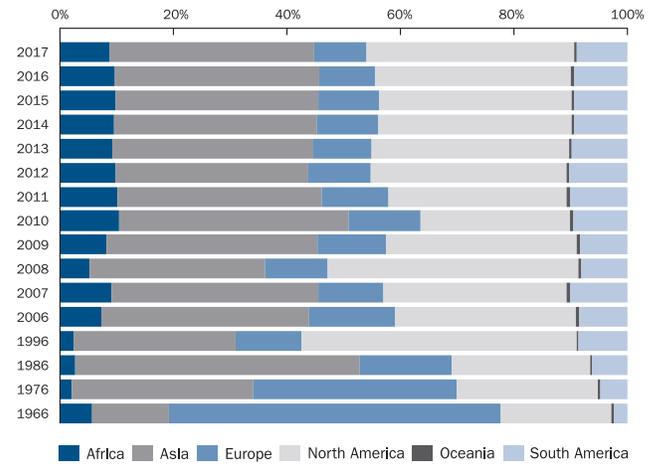
Applications for Citizenship Processed: Fiscal Year 2017



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 3.

Percent Total of Persons Naturalized per Year by Region: Fiscal Years 2008–2017



Note: Oceania has an average value of 0.5% over the last 10-year period.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Leading States and Metropolitan Areas of Residence

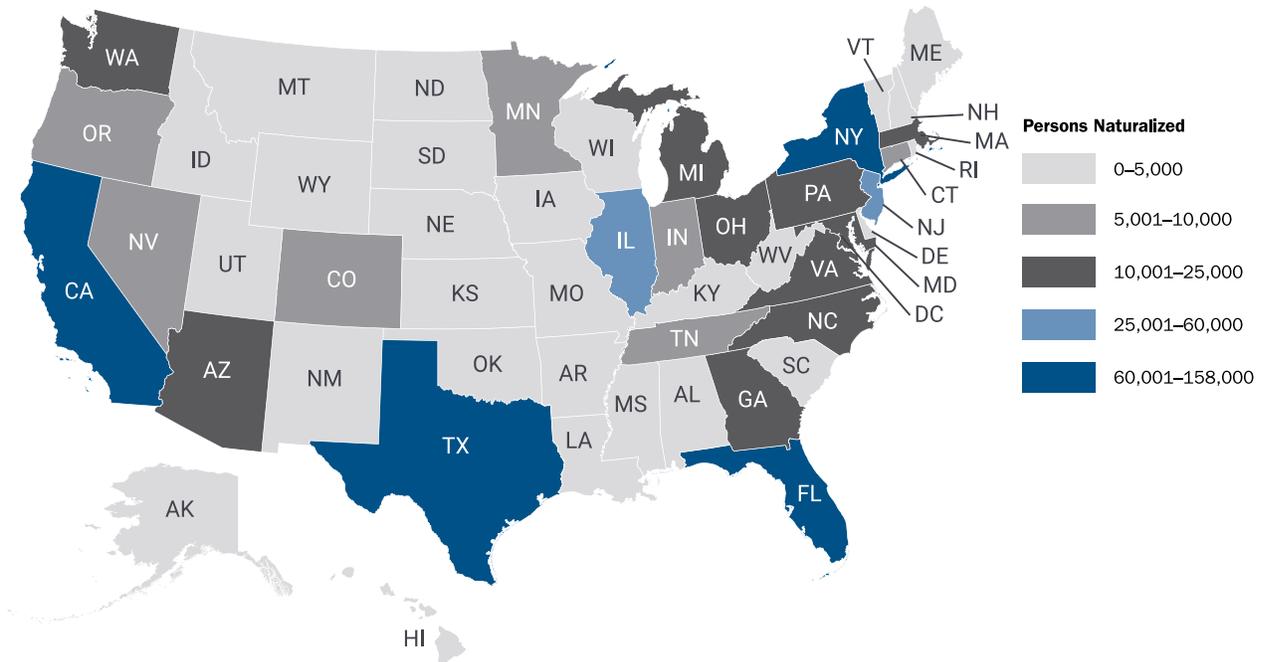
In 2017, 72 percent of all persons naturalizing resided in 10 states (Table 2). With 157,364 persons, California was home to the largest number of persons naturalizing, representing 22 percent of the total, followed by New York with 86,407 persons (12 percent) and Florida with 69,485 persons (9.8 percent) (Figure 4).

Fifty-one percent of all new citizens in 2017 lived in 10 metropolitan areas (Table 3).⁵ The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA having 112,568 persons (16 percent of the total); Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA with 59,356 persons (8.4 percent); and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL with 44,520 persons (6.3 percent).

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

Figure 4.

Persons Naturalized by State of Residence: Fiscal Year 2017



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 3.**Persons Naturalized by Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) of Residence: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017**

(CBSAs ranked by 2017 persons naturalized)

Metropolitan area of residence	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	112,568	15.9	122,156	16.2	113,758	15.6
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	59,356	8.4	61,950	8.2	69,017	9.5
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	44,520	6.3	59,227	7.9	53,448	7.3
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	29,682	4.2	29,138	3.9	27,084	3.7
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	23,044	3.3	24,907	3.3	24,201	3.3
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	22,002	3.1	19,690	2.6	18,385	2.5
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	21,352	3.0	23,261	3.1	20,620	2.8
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	16,748	2.4	12,113	1.6	13,695	1.9
San Diego-Carlsbad, CA	16,638	2.4	14,764	2.0	14,189	1.9
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	15,120	2.1	23,858	3.2	25,735	3.5
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	14,045	2.0	15,873	2.1	17,105	2.3
Other, including unknown	332,190	47.0	346,123	46.0	333,022	45.6

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: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The largest percent increases in naturalizations among leading states of residence between 2016 and 2017 occurred in Massachusetts (13 percent), Virginia (7.3 percent), and California (3.6 percent). With 27,737 naturalizations in 2017, Massachusetts saw its highest number of naturalizations since 2008 when it recorded 28,728 naturalizations. While it is not unusual for the number of naturalizations in a state to gradually increase over time, the 13 percent increase from 2016 was a noteworthy development. Among leading metropolitan areas of residence, the largest percent increases from 2016 to 2017 occurred in

Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA (38 percent) and San Diego-Carlsbad, CA (13 percent). Six of the leading metropolitan areas of residence saw decreases in naturalizations between 2016 and 2017, including Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX, which had the largest proportional decrease (37 percent) and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL, which had the largest numerical decrease (14,707 fewer naturalizations).

Sex, Age, and Marital Status

The percentage breakdown by sex, age, and marital status remained largely unchanged from recent years (Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively). In 2017, females accounted for 56 percent of all persons naturalizing (Figure 5). Nearly 50 percent of new citizens were ages 25 to 44 years, about 23 percent were ages 55 years and older, and 7.8 percent were ages 18 to 24 years (Figure 5). The median age of those naturalizing has been increasing in recent years from 41 in 2016 to 42 in 2017 – a trend consistent with the increasing average age of the U.S. population. Marital status also matched recent trends, with about 65 percent of persons naturalizing in 2017 identified as married, and 20 percent as single (Table 6).

Table 4.**Persons Naturalized by Sex: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017**

Sex	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
Female	396,234	56.0	420,483	55.8	408,064	55.9
Male	310,987	44.0	332,563	44.2	322,164	44.1
Unknown	44	—	14	—	31	—

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 5.**Persons Naturalized by Age: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017**

Age	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
18 to 24 years	55,283	7.8	67,696	9.0	66,806	9.1
25 to 34 years	162,131	22.9	188,411	25.0	186,115	25.5
35 to 44 years	189,076	26.7	194,291	25.8	190,366	26.1
45 to 54 years	137,688	19.5	139,790	18.6	133,561	18.3
55 to 64 years	94,437	13.4	92,732	12.3	87,655	12.0
65 years and over	68,649	9.7	70,140	9.3	65,756	9.0
Unknown	1	—	—	—	—	—
Median age(years)	42	X	41	X	40	X

X Not applicable.

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Years in Immigrant Status

In 2017, persons naturalizing spent a median of eight years in lawful permanent resident (LPR) status before becoming U.S. citizens, up from seven years in 2016 (Table 7). Immigrants born in Africa and Asia spent the least number of years in LPR status (six years), followed by immigrants from South America (eight years), Europe (nine years), North America (11 years), and Oceania (10 years) (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.

Table 6.
Persons Naturalized by Marital Status: Fiscal Years 2015 to 2017

Marital status	2017		2016		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	707,265	100.0	753,060	100.0	730,259	100.0
Married	457,506	64.7	477,843	63.5	463,779	63.5
Single	149,666	21.2	171,428	22.8	167,024	22.9
Other*	100,093	14.2	103,789	13.8	99,456	13.6

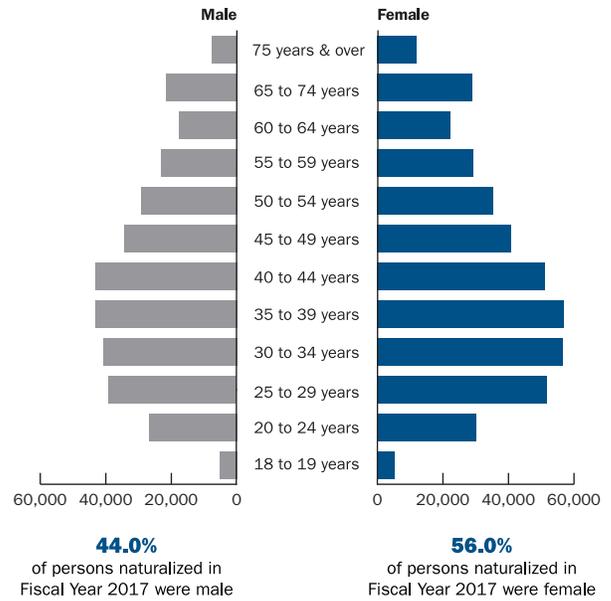
*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Table 7.
Median Years in Lawful Permanent Resident Status for Persons Naturalized by Region of Birth and Year of Naturalization: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2017

Region of birth	Year										
	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	
Total	8	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	7	9	
Africa	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	
Asia	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	7	
Europe	9	9	9	8	7	7	6	6	7	7	
North America	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	12	
Oceania	10	10	9	9	8	8	7	7	8	9	
South America	8	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	6	8	

Note: Excludes persons who were not required to be lawful permanent residents prior to naturalization.
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

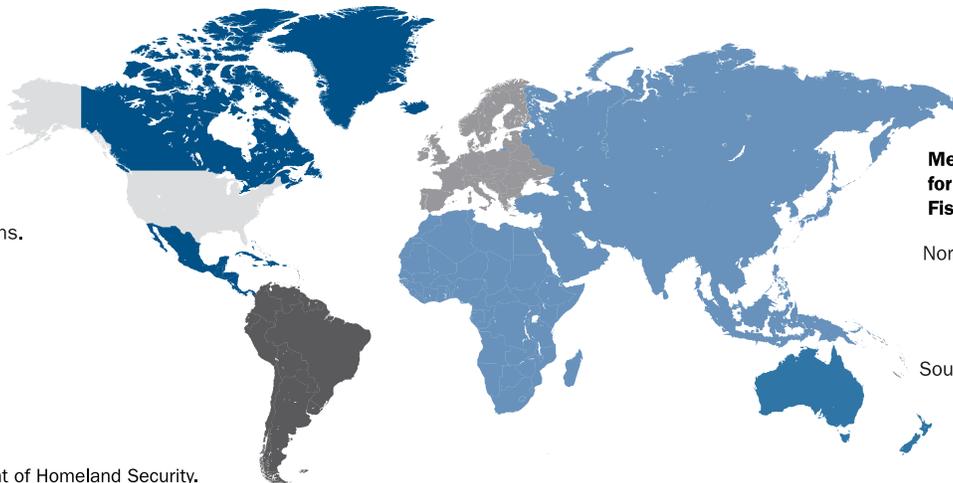
Figure 5.
Naturalizations by Age and Sex: 2017



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 6.
Median Years in LPR Status Before Naturalizing: 2017

Persons naturalizing in Fiscal year 2017 spent a median of **8 Years** in lawful permanent resident (LPR) status before becoming citizens.



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

An applicant for naturalization must fulfill certain requirements set forth in the INA. The general naturalization provisions specify that a foreign national must be at least 18 years of age, must 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 has resided continuously in the United States for at least five years⁶ as an LPR, immediately preceding the date of filing the application and up to the time of admission to citizenship. The applicant must be physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the five years immediately preceding the date of filing the application and must have lived within the state or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) district with jurisdiction over the applicant's place of residence for at least 90 days prior to the date of filing. Additional requirements include the ability to speak, read, and write the English language; knowledge of the U.S. Government and history; attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution; and good moral character.

Special provisions of naturalization law exempt certain applicants from some of these general requirements. 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.

⁶ A permanent resident who is married to a U.S. citizen and with evidence of continuous residency is eligible for naturalization after three years instead of the normally required five years as a permanent resident applying for citizenship.

Every applicant for naturalization must file a Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization*. USCIS must interview all applicants to determine their eligibility to naturalize, including reviewing supporting documents. Following approval, USCIS schedules applicants for an oath ceremony before a judge or USCIS official.

DATA

This report uses data from USCIS administrative records of newly naturalized US citizens⁷ in 2017. 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 Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS 4) provides nearly all the data, while a small 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>.

⁷ A permanent U.S. resident becomes a naturalized U.S. citizen only after the Oath Ceremony date.