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ABSTRACT

Immigration, both legal and illegal, has a profound impact on the United States. The public policy implications of immigration include the impact on population growth, employment, wages, taxes, and social spending. In 1994, a net total of between 900,000 and 1.1 million immigrants were added to the foreign-born population of the United States. Over 800,000 of these immigrants were legally admitted to the United States, and it is estimated that undocumented immigration accounted for another 200,000 to 300,000 additions. Over 40% of the legal immigrants arrived from the "Americas," and just under two-thirds of the estimated illegal immigrant population came from Central America and the Caribbean. The characteristics and experiences of immigrants vary widely across education, economic, and social spectrums, with immigrants overrepresented among the least well educated and the most well educated portions of the U.S. population. Immigrants and their offspring are expected to contribute two-thirds of the population growth in the United States between 1990 and 2040. Studies that have measured the impact of immigration on wage levels and job availability have indicated that immigration has a negligible impact on the overall U.S. labor market. In areas where low-wage, low-skill jobs comprise a significant portion of the economy and immigration is high, immigration does contribute to reduced earnings for low-skill workers. Recent surveys have also indicated that, in terms of taxes and social spending, immigrant households are an asset to the federal government, but that social spending and tax revenue attributable to immigrants generally offset each other on the state level. (Contains five graphs.) (SLD)

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Immigration to the United States: 1996 Update.
Executive Summary

Population Resource Center

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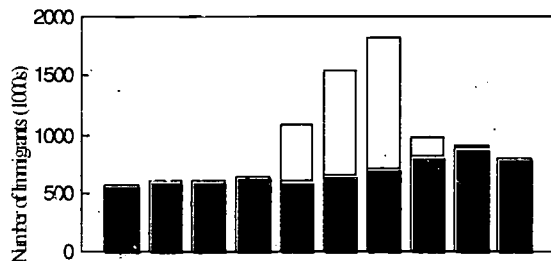
POPULATION RESOURCE CENTER

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES: 1996 UPDATE

Immigration, both legal and illegal, has a profound impact on the United States which is apparent in the diversity of cultures, languages and ethnic groups characteristic of the US. The public policy implications of immigration include the impact on **population growth, employment, wages, taxes and social spending** at local, state and national levels.

Legal Immigration to the U.S.

Annual Flows 1985-1994



Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
■ Non-IRCA	570	602	602	643	612	656	704	811	880	798
□ IRCA	0	0	0	0	479	880	1123	163	24	6

Source: 1994 INS Yearbook

Size of the Immigrant Population

► In 1994, a net total of between **900,000 and 1.1 million** immigrants were added to the foreign-born population of the US. Over 800,000 of these immigrants were legally admitted to the US. Undocumented immigration accounted for 200,000 to 300,000 additions and approximately 200,000 foreign-born residents either emigrate or die each year (net reductions). The balance of the inflow includes refugees and asylees.

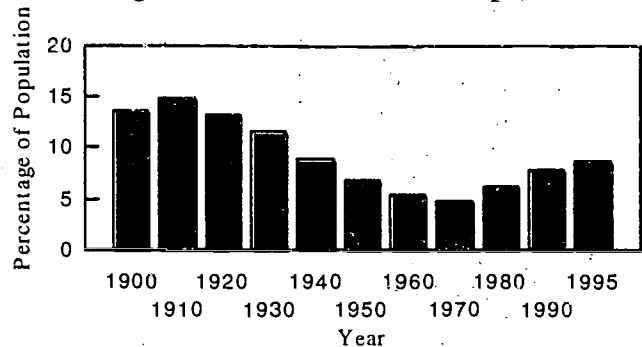
► The annual flows of legal immigrants reached historical highs during the 1990's. Immigration peaked in 1991 when over 1.8 million people acquired legal status. Approximately 1.1 million of this total were legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) which allowed illegal immigrants who had lived in the US prior to 1982 to apply for legal status without penalty. Despite the fact that IRCA has been phased out (only 6,000 illegal aliens

were legalized under IRCA in 1994), over **5.4 million legal** immigrants have entered the U.S. between 1990-1995 (this figure includes IRCA legalizations).

► The foreign-born population in 1995 totaled a record **23 million**. Although the absolute size of the foreign-born population is at an all-time high, the proportion of the foreign-born population currently comprises just under nine percent of the population--well below the 15 percent of the population recorded in the early part of this century.

► In addition to the legally admitted foreign-born population, there are an estimated **3.5 to 4 million** undocumented immigrants in the U.S.. While this range has declined from a peak of 3-5 million in June of 1986, much of the decrease occurred due to legalizations under IRCA (over 1.5 million illegal residents who entered prior to 1982 and 1.1 million Special Agricultural Workers were granted legal status under IRCA).

Foreign Born: Percent of Population



Source: 1994 INS Yearbook

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National Origin

► In 1994, over 40 percent of legal immigrants arrived from the “Americas” (North, Central, South America Caribbean). Just over a third of the immigrants from this region emigrated from Mexico. Asia accounted for 35 percent of legal immigration into the US while Europe (21 percent) and Africa (3 percent) accounted for significantly less.

► Just under two-thirds of the estimated illegal immigrant population (3.2 million in 1992) arrived from Central America and the Caribbean. One-third of the overall total (1 million) are from Mexico.

► Historically, U.S. immigration legislation and world events (such as economic dislocation and famines in Europe) profoundly impact the race, ethnicity and national origin of the immigrant population. For example, prior to 1880 most immigrants were from Northern and Western Europe. Southern and Eastern Europeans became the dominant group by the end of the century. This European bent continued until the 1965 amendment of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act ended country quotas in favor of a preference system that focused on family reunification. This amendment had the effect of encouraging more equitable representation among all nations.

► During the 1950s, only six percent of immigrants arrived from Asia and twelve percent from Mexico while Europe accounted for two-thirds of all immigrants and seven of the top ten immigrant producing countries. In contrast, during the 1980s only 10 percent came from Europe, while 35 percent from Asia, and over 28 percent Mexico. In 1994 five of the top ten (in fact, five of the top six) immigration countries were Asian.

Characteristics of Immigrants

► The characteristics and experiences of different groups of immigrants vary widely across educational, economic and social spectrums. For example, the average earnings of Chinese, Japanese and Korean male immigrants are twice as large as Mexican immigrants. This is mainly due to the relatively lower educational levels of Mexican immigrants. These differences are perhaps partially related to the value that is placed on educational attainment by the general population in the countries from which immigrants depart.

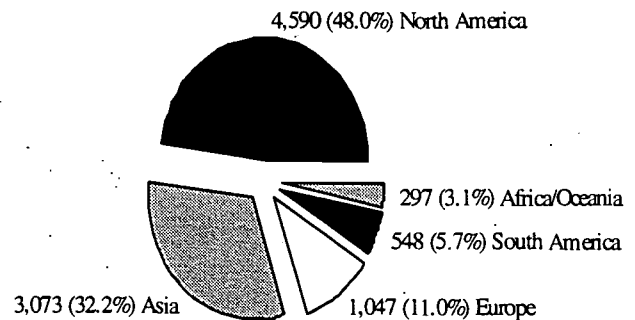
► Immigrants are over represented in among both the least well educated and the most well educated portions of the U.S. population. While 23 percent of the native population aged 25 or older has less than a high school education, 41 percent of recent immigrants lack a high school degree. On the other end of the educational spectrum, 24 percent of recent immigrants have at least a college degree. Just over 20 percent of the native population has obtained that level of education.

► Less than five percent of immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala (each of which produce many illegal immigrants) have at least a college education (and approximately three quarters do not have a high school education). Immigrants from countries that have many refugees are also less likely to be college educated and more likely to lack a high school education than the native population and non-refugee legal immigrants.

► Immigrants are more likely than native-born U.S. citizens to have labor-intensive occupations rather than professional and clerical positions. However, the number of employment visa immigrants has more than doubled between 1987 and 1994 from 58,000 to 123,000. This growth resulted in an increase in the number of immigrants who work in the professional sector (Between 1980 and 1990, the number of foreign-born workers in the “professional workforce” increased by over 70 percent). In 1995 the trend toward increased employment immigrant reversed as the number of employment visa immigrants declined to 93,000.

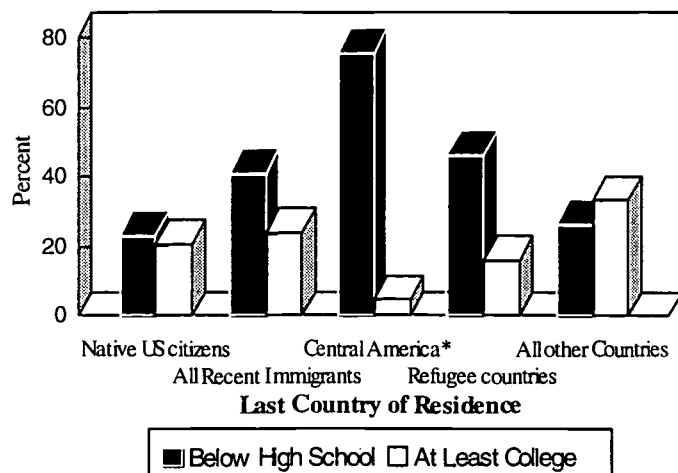
1985-1994 Legal Immigration

Continent of Origin



All numbers in 1,000s
Source: 1994 INS Yearbook

Educational Status



*Central America represented by Guatemala, El Salvador & Mexico
Source: The Urban Institute

▶ The earnings disparity between immigrants and the native U.S. population is deceptive. Immigrants are more likely than the native population to have household earnings less than \$20,000 per year, but both groups are equally likely to have household incomes above \$70,000 per year. Just as with educational status, the earnings of immigrants are polarized.

▶ The longer immigrants live in the U.S., the less likely they will be poor. Nonetheless, those who are foreign-born are 1.6 times as likely as the native population to live in poverty. Recent immigrants are twice as likely to live in poverty, but those who entered before 1970 are less likely to be in poverty than the native population.

▶ Between 1980 and 1990, the number of people who spoke another language than English at home grew from 23.2 million to

31.8 million people. However, over half of those who speak another language at home are native U.S. citizens. Fifty percent of recent immigrants speak English “very well” while one-fifth of immigrants speak English either “not well” or “not at all”.

Population Growth

▶ According to middle series projections from the U.S. Census Bureau, immigrants and their offspring are expected to contribute two-thirds of the population growth in the U.S. between 1990 and 2040 while the total population increases from 249 million to 355 million. Estimates indicate that immigrants and their children will account for over one out of four residents in 2040.

▶ The population composition will change as the foreign-born population grows. According to projections that assume racial and ethnic groups will not intermarry; the Hispanic population will comprise 18 percent of the overall population in 2040 (currently ten percent), the Asian population will be ten percent (currently 3.4 percent) and the black population will continue to comprise 12 percent. Less than a third of all minorities will be black in 2040.

Geographical Concentration

▶ Two-thirds of all legal immigrants entering in 1994 intended to reside in one of six states: California (25 percent), New York (18 percent), Florida (seven percent), Texas (seven percent), New Jersey (five percent) and Illinois (five percent). These states also have the largest foreign-born populations. Over one-third of all foreign-born residents live in California.

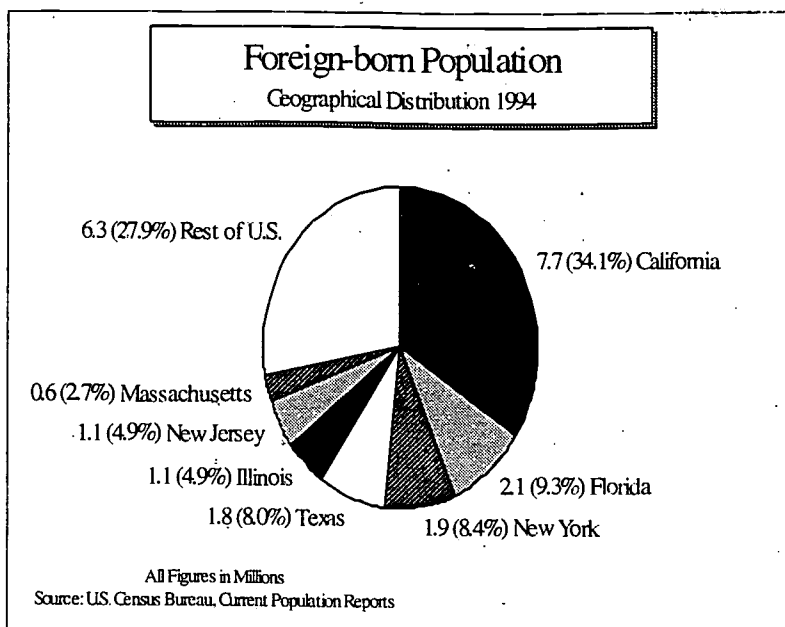
▶ Over 40 percent (1.4 million) of all undocumented immigrants live in California and almost five percent of California residents are illegal immigrants-- three times the national average. Prior to IRCA, California’s illegal immigrant count reached 2.4 million, which represented over half the undocumented resident population. Following California; New York (449,000), Texas (357,000), Florida (322,000), Illinois (176,000) and New Jersey (116,000) had the largest share and the largest concentration of illegal immigrants.

Employment and Wages

► The studies that measure the impact of immigration on wage levels and job availability have indicated that immigration has a negligible impact on the overall U.S. labor market. Those who are most likely to be affected, in fact, are immigrants who directly preceded the most recent immigrants. However, there is a caveat to these studies. In local level areas where low-wage, low-skill jobs comprise a significant portion of the economy and immigration is high, immigration does contribute to reduced earnings for low-skilled workers.

► Recent studies document that in states with high immigration, lower-income whites are more likely to migrate out of the state. This migration pattern occurs in California, Texas, New York, New Jersey and Illinois. "White flight" is one of

the hidden effects of immigration and suggests that the impact of immigration is greater than the economic dislocation which is revealed by earnings and job growth indicators.



Taxes and Social Spending

► One of the public misperceptions about immigration is that they do not contribute to the economy. Immigrants add to economic demand (they purchase products), supply (they produce products) and the tax base (sales, income and property taxes on the local, state and national level). The balance between these economic contributions and welfare deductions is the key to assessing the overall fiscal impact of immigration. Recent surveys indicate that immigrant households are an asset to the Federal Government, but social spending and tax revenue generally offset each other on the state level. Local level governments usually spend more on immigrants than they receive from them in tax revenue.

► As the number of immigrants has grown over the last decade, the welfare demand of immigrants increased. Between 1983 and 1993 the number of immigrants receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rose from 151,000 to 683,000 as the overall share of the SSI caseload dedicated to immigrants rose from four to 11 percent. Similarly, immigrant share of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has grown from five to eight percent over the same period. In 1993, \$4.5 billion in AFDC and SSI were allotted to immigrants (\$5.3 billion if food stamps are included).

► According to data based on the 1990 Census, 9.1 percent of immigrant households receive cash benefits (compared with 7.4 percent of native households) and they are 50 percent more likely than native households to receive public assistance (in both cash and non-cash forms). The increase in the proportion of immigrant households that receive public assistance may be explained by the increasing number of refugee immigrants who are typically less educated and earn less money than non-refugee immigrants.

► In 1994 six states with high immigration levels (Arizona, California, Florida, New Jersey, New York and Texas) filed law suits in federal district courts to recoup costs which the states claim are a result of the federal government's failure to effectively regulate illegal immigration. The costs stemmed from incarceration activities, educational spending and social services for illegal immigrants. Proposition 187, a California initiative that attempts to prevent illegal immigrants from using public education, health care (except emergency care) and social services, is expected to save an estimated \$200 million on local and state expenditures.

This Executive Summary was prepared in June of 1996 by Eric Keuffel and Alissa Pemberton, research assistants at the Population Resource Center and reviewed by Dr. Thomas Espenshade of Princeton University. Sources include the 1994 INS Statistical Yearbook, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* by Michael Fix and Jeffery Passel (Urban Institute, 1994), "Fiscal Impacts of Immigrants and the Shrinking Welfare State" by Thomas Espenshade, "The Foreign-Born Population: 1994" by Kristin Hansen and Amara Bachu of the U.S. Census Bureau, "Profile of the Foreign-born Population in 1995" by Kristin Hansen and "Immigration, Welfare Magnets and the Geography of Child Poverty in the U.S." by William Frey. For more information, contact the Center at (202) 467-5030, 1725 K Street, NW, Suite 1725, Washington, DC 20006 or (609) 452-2822, 15 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540.



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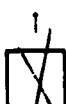
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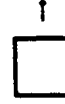
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