

IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

A legal permanent resident (LPR) or “green card” recipient is defined by immigration law as a person who has been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States

In 2007, a total of 1,052,415 persons became Legal Permanent Residents of the United States. The majority of new LPRs (59 percent) already lived in the United States when they were granted lawful permanent residence. Two-thirds were granted permanent residence based on a family relationship with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident of the United States. The leading countries of birth of new LPRs were Mexico (14 percent), China (7 percent) and the Philippines (7 percent).

Each year thousands of persons who fear or face persecution in their country of nationality seek asylum or refugee status in the United States. Those living outside the United States may be referred for refugee status, and if approved, enter the United States as refugees.

A total of 48,217 persons were admitted to the United States as refugees during 2007. The leading countries of nationality for refugees were Burma, Somalia, and Iran. Also in 2007, there were 25,270 individuals granted asylum, including 12,463 who were granted asylum affirmatively by U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) and 12,807 who were granted asylum defensively by an immigration judge during removal proceedings. The leading countries of nationality for granted asylum cases were China, Colombia, and Haiti.

Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon foreign citizens or nationals after fulfilling 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 that the Constitution gives to native born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote.

In 2007, the total number of persons naturalized was 660,477. The leading countries of birth of new citizens were Mexico (122,258), India (46,871), Philippines (38,830), China (33,134), and Vietnam (27,921). The largest number of persons naturalized live in California (181,684), New York (73,676), and Florida (54,563).