

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE IMMIGRATION-FACT SHEET

Immigrants are people who have come from another country to live in the United States. Undocumented immigrants are those who live here without legal authorization. Roughly one third to one half of undocumented immigrants have entered the U.S. legally and overstayed their tourist, student or work visas. Many are seeking legal remedies.

Immigrants in the U.S.

42 million people in the U.S. are foreign born (13%)

18 million of those are naturalized citizens

13 million are documented non-citizens

11 million are undocumented immigrants

Key Terms

Immigrant: People who come to live permanently in a foreign country

Refugee: People fleeing conflict, danger, or persecution who are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk.

Asylum seeker: People meeting the definition of refugee, and are already in the U.S., or are seeking admission at a port of entry.

WHY DO IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE U.S.?

Motivations range from fleeing violence, political unrest or environmental disaster, to rejoining family, escaping a life of poverty, or simply seeking opportunity and freedom. The U.S. is a land of immigrants and has been since the beginning for these same reasons.

WHERE ARE U.S. IMMIGRANTS FROM? WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

- In 2014, 48% of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are from Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and places other than Mexico.
- Fifty-two percent of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are from Mexico, down almost a million since 2009.
- Six states accounted for 59% of undocumented immigrants in 2014: California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey and Illinois.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT?

The definition of who is “legal” – and who is not – changes with the evolution of immigration laws. The U.S. immigration system was very different in the past and families who entered the country easily in past generations might not have been allowed to enter at all under today’s laws. When many families arrived in the U.S., there were no numerical limitations on immigration, no requirements to have family or employment here, and no requirements to obtain a visa prior to arriving. Claims common today by some U.S. citizens that their grandparents and great-grandparents came “legally” are simply inaccurate.

Key Terms

Visa: an endorsement indicating that the holder is allowed to enter, leave, stay, or work for a specified period of time in a country.

Green Card: A green card holder is someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis.

Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals: DACA allows for undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit. Approximately 750,000 “Dreamers” qualified under the 2012 act.

Did you know?

Many people living in the United States without authorization today could qualify for a green card by virtue of having a relative who is a U.S. citizen. But laws passed in 1996 would require these individuals to leave the U.S. for at least 10 years before becoming eligible to reunite with their families. As a result many are forced to remain undocumented in the United States to avoid exile from their loved ones.

Millions of U.S. citizens and documented immigrants have undocumented family members. In 2011, 16.6 million people lived in “mixed status” families – those with at least one undocumented immigrant. Nine million of these families had at least one U.S. born child. In 2012, 4.7 million undocumented adults were parents of minor children living in the U.S., including 3.8 million whose children were U.S. citizens.

Many undocumented immigrants own homes. Among undocumented immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for 10 plus years, 45 percent were homeowners in 2008. Among those who had lived in the U.S. for less than 10 years, 27 percent were homeowners in 2008.

According to a 2009 Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project study of undocumented immigrants, 52 percent have at least a high school diploma and 15 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Immigration and Customs Enforcements (ICE) can make arrests during work place raids or in homes. Police may also arrest and detain undocumented immigrants at routine traffic stops.

Vulnerable Children

At least 5,100 U.S. citizen children were living in foster care in 2011 because their undocumented immigrant parents were detained or deported.

An estimated 205,000 parents of children who are U.S. citizens were deported between 2010 and 2012.

Source: www.heartlandalliance.org

Questions

- 1) Define the following terms:
 - a) Immigrant
 - b) Refugee
 - c) Asylum seeker
 - d) Visa
 - e) Green card
 - f) Deferred action for childhood arrivals

- 2) Why do immigrants come to the U.S. (legal or illegal)?

- 3) Where are the immigrants who live in the United States from?

- 4) In what U.S. states do a large percentage of immigrants live?

- 5) How did the immigration law that was passed in 1996 change qualifying for a green card?

- 6) Can an undocumented immigrant own a home in the United States?

- 7) What does ICE stand for and what are their duties and responsibilities?