

# Trends in Naturalization Rates: FY 2014 Update



U.S. Citizenship and  
Immigration Services

Office of Policy and Strategy  
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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes naturalization trends for immigrants who obtained lawful permanent resident (LPR) status between fiscal year (FY) 1973 and FY 2008.<sup>1</sup> Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to a foreign national who fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act.<sup>2</sup> The yearly number of naturalizations depends both on operational factors, such as application processing times, and other factors such as the number of LPRs eligible to naturalize at any given time, as well as their motivation to apply and ability to pay the associated fees.<sup>3</sup>

This fact sheet uses data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization records<sup>4</sup> to provide information on the rates of naturalizations by immigrant cohorts, regions of birth, selected countries of birth, and classes of admission. An immigrant cohort is defined by the fiscal year when LPR status was obtained. A naturalization rate is the percentage of people who naturalized within a specified time period. For example, the 6-year naturalization rate for the FY 1994 LPR cohort (that is, immigrants who obtained LPR status in FY 1994) is the percentage who naturalized by FY 2000; the 10-year rate for the FY 1994 LPR cohort is the percentage who naturalized by FY 2004; and the 20-year rate for the FY 1994 LPR cohort is the percentage who naturalized by FY 2014. The year 1994 was chosen because it is the most recent year for which a 20-year rate is available, and 2004 was chosen because it is the most recent year for which a 10-year rate is available. Because immigrants who obtain LPR status are eligible to naturalize after 5 years (or 3 years if married to a U.S. citizen), we present the 6-year naturalization rate in addition to the 10-year and 20-year rates.

## NATURALIZATION RATES

The 6-, 10-, and 20-year naturalization rates have risen over time. The 6-year rate has increased from 19.8 percent (for the 1973 LPR cohort) to 34.7 percent (for the 2008 LPR cohort). This means that for those who obtained LPR status in 1973, only 19.8 percent naturalized within 6 years, whereas 34.7 percent of those who obtained LPR status in 2008 naturalized within 6 years. Similarly, the 10-year naturalization rate has increased from 31.4 percent (for the 1973 LPR cohort) to 54.3 percent (for the 2004 LPR cohort). The 20-year rate has also increased, from 41.7 percent (for the 1973 LPR cohort) to 61.7 percent (for the 1994 LPR cohort). See Figure 1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an update to the fact sheet produced by Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics on naturalization trends through FY 2008. This updated fact sheet also includes data on naturalized citizens' region of birth, country of birth, and class of admission. The Federal fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. As such, FY 2014 was October 1, 2013, through September 30, 2014.

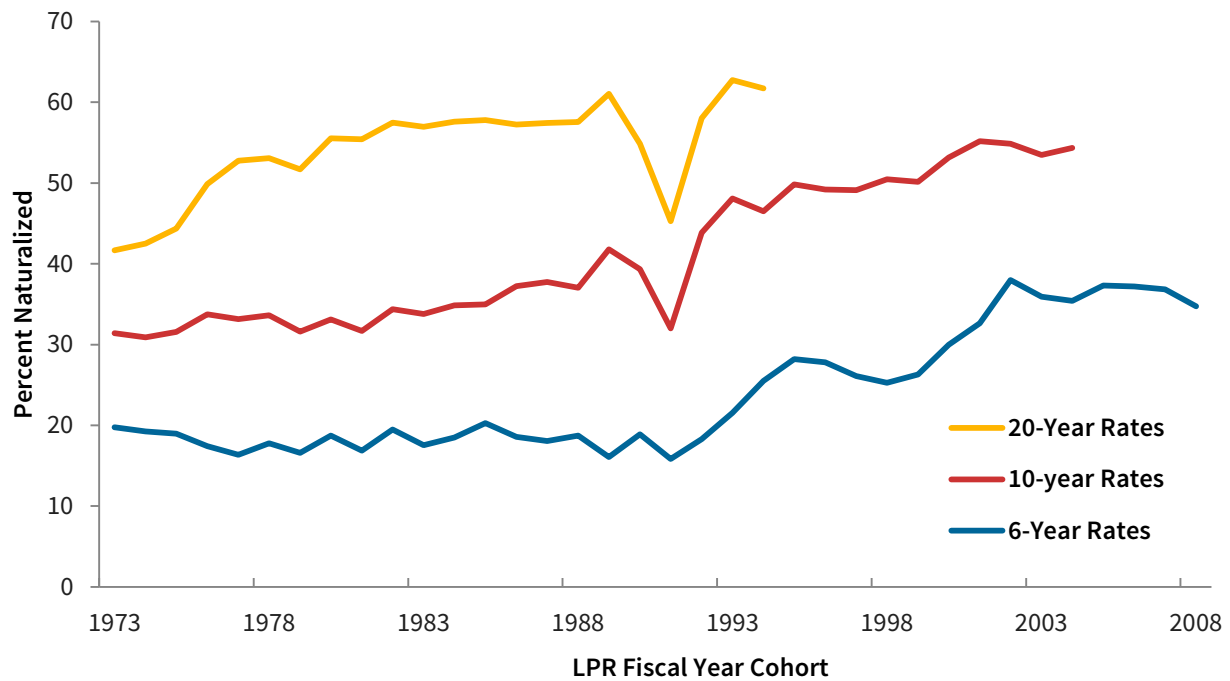
<sup>2</sup> USCIS, "Citizenship through Naturalization" <http://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/citizenship-through-naturalization>, accessed November 9, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> For current filing fees for Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, see <http://www.uscis.gov/n-400>. There is also an \$85 biometrics fee where applicable. The filing fee may be waived if the applicant can demonstrate an inability to pay. There is no charge for filing the Form N-400 through service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

<sup>4</sup> The data were restricted to immigrants who were 18 years of age and older when they obtained LPR status.

Naturalization rates are low for the 1990 and 1991 LPR cohorts because those included large numbers of persons legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986.<sup>5</sup> These persons generally have lower naturalization rates than other people who obtained LPR status.<sup>6</sup> When naturalization rates are calculated after excluding people who obtained LPR status under IRCA, the rates are similar to, or higher than, other cohorts. The 1991 LPR cohort that excludes IRCA beneficiaries, for example, had 10- and 20-year naturalization rates of 49.3 percent and 63.7 percent, respectively.

**Figure 1**  
**6-Year, 10-Year, and 20-Year Naturalization Rates for FY 1973-2004 LPR Cohorts through FY 2014 (Percent Naturalized)**



<sup>5</sup> The IRCA of 1986 legalized unauthorized immigrants who entered the United States before 1982, had resided continuously in the United States, and did not owe back taxes or have a criminal record.

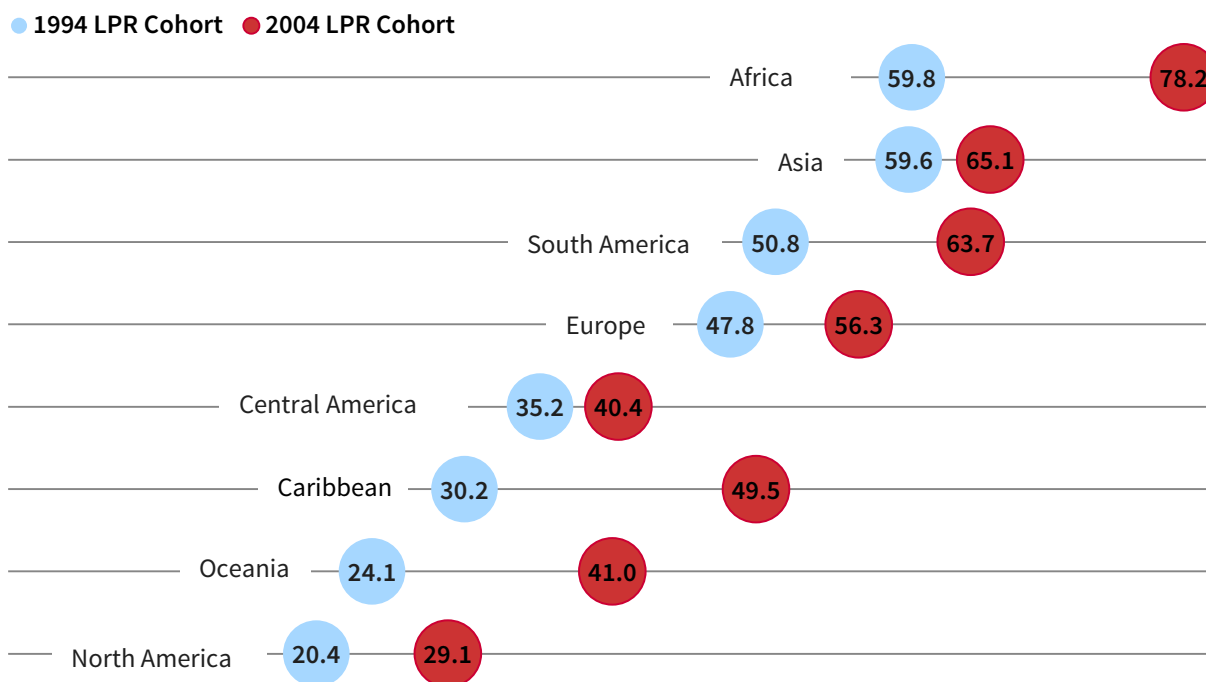
<sup>6</sup> For more information on IRCA, see “IRCA Legalization Effects: Lawful Permanent Residence and Naturalization through 2001,” Nancy Rytina, 2002, Office of Policy and Planning, Statistics Division, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/irca0114int.pdf>.

## NATURALIZATION RATES BY REGIONS OF BIRTH

Naturalization rates vary for those born in different regions of the world. Comparing the 10-year naturalization rates between the 1994 LPR cohort and the 2004 LPR cohort, the rate of naturalizations increased across all regions of birth. The overall naturalization rate for the 1994 LPR cohort was 46.5 percent, and the overall naturalization rate for the 2004 cohort was 54.3 percent. However, some regions experienced larger increases in naturalizations than others. For example, Africa and the Caribbean saw larger naturalization rate increases (by 18.4 percentage points and 19.3 percentage points, respectively) than other regions. Ten-year naturalization rates for North America, Oceania, the Caribbean, and Central America were below the overall naturalization rates for both the 1994 LPR cohort and 2004 LPR cohort. In contrast, the 10-year naturalization rates for Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa were above the overall naturalization rates for both the 1994 and 2004 cohorts. See Figure 2 below. The 10-year naturalization rates by region for the 1974 and 1984 LPR cohorts can be found in Table 2 of the Appendix.

**Figure 2**

**10-Year Naturalization Rates for FY 1994 and FY 2004 LPR Cohorts by Regions of Birth (Percent Naturalized)**

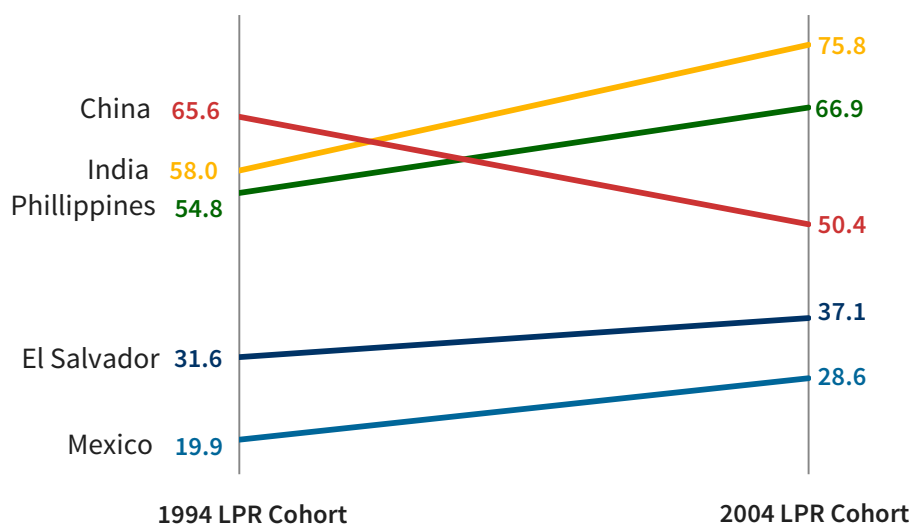


## NATURALIZATION RATES BY SELECTED COUNTRIES OF BIRTH

Similar to regions of birth, naturalization rates vary by country of birth for each LPR cohort. Comparing the 10-year naturalization rates between the 1994 LPR cohort and the 2004 LPR cohort, there was an increase in naturalization rates for people who obtained LPR status from many countries as well as an increase in the overall number of people who obtained LPR status. For example, the 10-year naturalization rate for people who obtained LPR status from Mexico was 19.9 percent in 1994 compared to 28.6 percent in 2004 while the overall number of people who obtained LPR status from Mexico increased from 68,523 in 1994 to 141,640 in 2004.<sup>7</sup> For people who obtained LPR status from India, the 10-year naturalization rate was 58.0 percent in 1994 compared to 75.8 percent in 2004 while the overall number of people who obtained LPR status from India increased from 27,121 in 1994 to 61,249 in 2004.

Naturalization rates declined for people who obtained LPR status from some countries, such as China (65.6 percent in 1994 compared to 50.4 percent in 2004). The five countries listed in Figure 3 below (El Salvador, China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines) were selected because people who obtained LPR status from those countries comprised over 30 percent of the 1994 and 2004 LPR cohorts. The 10-year naturalization rates for the 1994 and 2004 LPR cohorts for additional countries can be found in Table 3 of the Appendix.

**Figure 3**  
**10-Year Naturalization Rates for People Who Obtained LPR Status from Selected Countries for FY 1994 and FY 2004 LPR Cohorts (Percent Naturalized)**



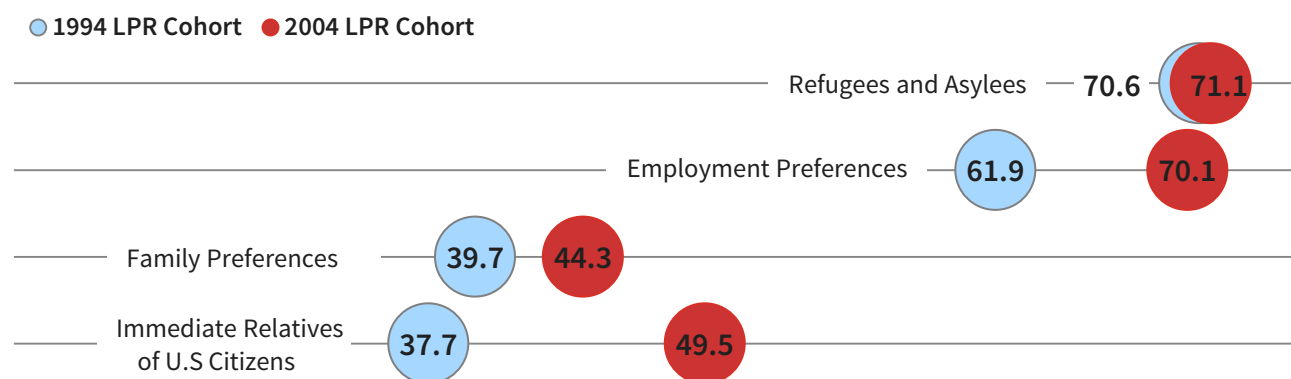
<sup>7</sup> The number of people who obtained LPR status is calculated by dividing the number of people naturalized by the naturalization rate. See Table 3 in the appendix.

## NATURALIZATION RATES BY CLASS OF ADMISSION<sup>8</sup>

Refugees and asylees have the highest naturalization rates, followed in order by those who were admitted under employment preferences, family preferences,<sup>9</sup> and as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, for the 1994 and 2004 cohorts.<sup>10</sup> The 10-year naturalization rates for the 1994 and 2004 LPR cohorts increased for all classes of admission. Ten-year naturalization rates for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens increased the most (from 37.7 percent in 1994 to 49.5 percent in 2004).

**Figure 4**

### 10-Year Naturalization Rates for FY 1994 and FY 2004 LPR Cohorts by Select Classes of Admission (Percent Naturalized)



<sup>8</sup> Class of admission reflects the immigration category held when becoming a LPR. The four classes of admission depicted in Figure 4 comprised more than 88 percent of admissions for both the FY 1994 and FY 2004 LPR cohorts.

<sup>9</sup> Preference categories apply to family members who are not immediate relatives, such as adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens, brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens, and adult sons and daughters of LPRs. The visas allotted for these categories are subject to annual numerical limits. A visa becomes available to a preference category based on the priority date. In family-based immigration, this is generally the date a petition was filed with USCIS.

<sup>10</sup> Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens include spouses, children (unmarried and under 21), and parents (where the petitioning U.S. citizen is 21 or older).

## APPENDIX

**Table 1**  
**6-Year, 10-Year, 20-Year, and Cumulative Naturalization Rates by LPR Cohort**

LPR Cohort (Fiscal Year)	6-Year		10-Year		20-Year		Cumulative Rate as of 2014 <sup>a</sup>	
	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)
1973	53,810	19.8	85,476	31.4	113,393	41.7	161,566	59.4
1974	51,312	19.2	82,382	30.9	113,354	42.5	158,857	59.6
1975	50,228	19.0	83,563	31.6	117,461	44.3	159,525	60.2
1976	61,294	17.4	118,834	33.8	175,494	49.9	219,959	62.5
1977	54,687	16.4	110,763	33.1	176,360	52.8	213,297	63.8
1978	74,190	17.8	140,314	33.6	221,464	53.1	268,850	64.5
1979	46,487	16.6	88,471	31.6	144,715	51.7	173,892	62.1
1980	70,872	18.7	125,183	33.1	210,005	55.5	244,160	64.6
1981	71,146	16.9	133,725	31.7	233,892	55.4	271,792	64.4
1982	75,112	19.5	132,561	34.4	221,521	57.5	252,709	65.6
1983	70,456	17.6	135,627	33.8	228,558	57.0	262,667	65.5
1984	73,449	18.5	138,491	34.9	228,891	57.6	260,252	65.5
1985	85,726	20.3	147,941	35.0	244,574	57.8	275,652	65.1
1986	83,210	18.6	166,823	37.2	256,316	57.2	286,996	64.1
1987	81,799	18.0	171,198	37.8	260,467	57.4	289,533	63.8
1988	92,779	18.7	183,484	37.1	284,948	57.5	308,487	62.3
1989	139,562	16.1	362,239	41.8	529,237	61.0	559,154	64.5
1990	242,016	18.9	504,502	39.3	703,797	54.9	748,569	58.4
1990 <sup>b</sup>	126,603	26.0	222,128	45.7	297,321	61.2	311,465	64.1
1991	257,253	15.8	520,246	32.0	735,701	45.3	787,250	48.4
1991 <sup>b</sup>	142,691	27.4	257,261	49.3	332,080	63.7	343,954	66.0
1992	137,619	18.3	329,731	43.9	436,253	58.0	452,660	60.2
1993	144,274	21.5	322,194	48.1	420,598	62.8	429,443	64.1
1994	151,147	25.5	275,470	46.5	365,851	61.7	365,851	61.7
1995	146,768	28.2	259,442	49.9			331,894	63.8
1996	187,593	27.8	331,869	49.2			417,204	61.8
1997	155,082	26.1	292,018	49.1			363,883	61.2
1998	122,032	25.3	243,563	50.5			285,848	59.2
1999	122,968	26.3	234,721	50.2			263,413	56.3
2000	191,040	30.0	338,659	53.1			374,715	58.8
2001	271,033	32.7	457,891	55.2			500,442	60.3
2002	317,989	38.0	459,273	54.9			488,044	58.3
2003	197,674	35.9	294,102	53.5			305,374	55.5
2004	270,528	35.4	415,000	54.3			415,000	54.3
2005	332,527	37.3					459,330	51.6
2006	375,506	37.2					472,522	46.8
2007	310,072	36.8					351,783	41.8
2008	307,940	34.7					307,940	34.7

Source: USCIS Legal Permanent Resident and Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, data, FY 1973 – FY 2014.

<sup>a</sup> The cumulative naturalization rate is the percentage of all people who obtained LPR status in a given year who have become citizens.

Cumulative naturalization rates through FY 2014 were calculated for each LPR cohort. More recent cohorts generally have lower cumulative naturalization rates because they have spent less time in LPR status

<sup>b</sup> Excludes persons who obtained LPR status under IRCA.

**Table 2****10-Year Naturalization Rates for FYs 1974, 1984, 1994, and 2004 LPR Cohorts by Region of Birth**

Region	1974 LPR Cohort		1984 LPR Cohort		1994 LPR Cohort		2004 LPR Cohort	
	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)
All Regions	82,382	30.9	138,491	34.9	275,470	46.5	415,000	54.3
Africa	1,944	40.7	6,828	51.7	12,637	59.8	43,130	78.2
Asia	47,983	51.6	84,618	46.0	140,756	59.6	180,125	65.1
Caribbean	10,507	26.3	12,232	23.3	22,329	30.2	31,906	49.5
Central America <sup>a</sup>	1,632	26.5	4,431	26.8	9,254	35.2	21,178	40.4
Europe	12,660	21.1	14,707	29.3	55,994	47.8	54,092	56.3
North America <sup>b</sup>	2,866	6.4	5,437	10.7	16,270	20.4	44,661	29.1
Oceania <sup>c</sup>	346	16.0	472	16.5	893	24.1	2,042	41.0
South America	4,284	27.7	9,762	35.3	17,337	50.8	37,866	63.7
Unknown	160	46.9	4	19.0	0	-	0	-

Source: USCIS Legal Permanent Resident and Form N-400 naturalization data, FY 1974 – FY 2014.

<sup>a</sup> Central America is comprised of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

<sup>b</sup> North America is comprised of Canada, Greenland, Mexico, and the United States.

<sup>c</sup> Oceania includes Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and surrounding island countries.

**Table 3<sup>a</sup>****10-Year Naturalization Rates for FYs 1974, 1984, 1994, and 2004 LPR Cohorts by Select Countries of Birth**

Country	1974 LPR Cohort		1984 LPR Cohort		1994 LPR Cohort		2004 LPR Cohort	
	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)
All Countries	82,382	30.9	138,491	34.9	275,470	46.5	415,000	54.3
Brazil	126	16.8	272	20.0	1,759	51.6	6,223	68.0
Canada	342	7.1	811	10.5	2,625	22.9	4,084	34.3
China	7,631	56.0	8,137	42.9	30,553	65.6	21,007	50.4
Colombia	893	22.1	2,683	32.4	4,051	50.8	9,947	64.7
Cuba	4,944	35.4	1,891	22.9	4,882	38.1	8,425	53.4
Dominican Republic	1,442	15.0	2,461	15.5	5,999	17.4	6,973	35.9
El Salvador	366	24.7	1,448	24.9	3,498	31.6	10,139	37.1
Guatemala	294	24.7	582	20.6	1,605	34.1	5,796	41.5
Haiti	681	27.4	2,172	29.2	3,344	37.9	5,541	52.5
India	4,720	46.5	6,806	34.2	15,730	58.0	46,427	75.8
Iran	912	40.6	5,451	46.3	6,065	61.1	6,698	74.7
Jamaica	1,793	27.3	3,359	25.8	4,475	45.4	6,670	61.2
Mexico	2,521	6.3	4,625	10.8	13,636	19.9	40,509	28.6
Pakistan	1,121	54.9	2,391	54.1	3,698	62.1	6,973	74.1
Peru	566	35.7	1,570	44.1	3,375	48.8	6,156	61.8
Philippines	12,640	55.6	19,569	60.8	22,309	54.8	30,649	66.9
Poland	1,050	31.8	4,214	55.5	8,992	44.3	6,622	55.0
South Korea	9,883	56.6	5,614	26.8	4,431	40.3	7,387	49.7
United Kingdom	1,014	13.3	1,448	14.0	2,948	22.1	4,550	37.1
Vietnam	1,075	60.2	13,353	55.1	22,961	69.1	18,274	70.8

Source: USCIS lawful permanent resident and Form N-400, Application for Naturalization data, FY 1974 – FY 2014.

<sup>a</sup> The countries presented above have some of the highest numbers of people who obtained LPR status for the FY 2004 cohort.



**Table 4**  
**10-Year Naturalization Rates for FY's 1974, 1984, 1994, and 2004 LPR Cohorts by Classes of Admission<sup>a</sup>**

Class of Admission	1974 LPR Cohort		1984 LPR Cohort		1994 LPR Cohort		2004 LPR Cohort	
	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)	Number of People Naturalized	Naturalization Rate (Percent)
All Classes of Admission	82,382	30.9	138,491	34.9	275,470	46.5	415,000	54.3
Employment preferences	11,149	49.8	15,356	40.9	58,540	61.9	88,797	70.1
Family-sponsored preferences <sup>b</sup>	24,680	39.8	48,606	33.7	52,076	39.7	66,692	44.3
Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens <sup>c</sup>	22,930	25.8	45,331	29.4	78,595	37.7	172,970	49.5
Refugees and asylees	7,624	39.4	29,066	47.8	64,812	70.6	37,716	71.1
Other (Diversity Visa, IRCA, parolees, etc.)	15,999	21.7	132	26.2	21,447	32.2	48,825	58.0

Source: USCIS lawful permanent resident and Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, data, FY 1974 - 2014.

<sup>a</sup>Class of admission reflects the immigration category held when becoming a LPR.

<sup>b</sup>Preference categories apply to family members who are not immediate relatives, such as adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens, brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens, spouses and unmarried children (those under the age of 21) of permanent residents, and unmarried adult sons and daughters (those 21 years of age or older) of permanent residents. The visas allotted for these categories are subject to annual numerical limits. A visa becomes available to a preference category based on the priority date. In family-based immigration, this is generally the date a petition was filed with USCIS.

<sup>c</sup>Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens include: spouses, children (unmarried and under 21), and parents (where the petitioning U.S. citizen is 21 or older).