Immigration to the United States: Recent Trends and Future Prospects

Charles Hirschman
Fulbright Visiting Professor

International Conference on Migration, Urbanization and Development
University of Malaya
8 July 2013
Overview

• Historical and Current Trends
  – Response to Immigration

• Characteristics of Immigrants & Children
  – Selectivity

• Is Immigration Good or Bad?
  – Diversity, Economy, Identity

• Impact of Immigration on American Culture
  – Nation of Immigrants is who we are

• Does the US case offer any lessons?
Legal Immigration to the United States: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2010 (in millions)

Note: These data represent persons admitted for legal permanent residence during the 12-month fiscal year ending September 30 of the year designated. The total for 1976 includes both the fiscal year and transitional quarter data.

Figure 1.
Foreign-Born Population and Percent of Total Population, for the United States: 1850 to 2010
(Numbers in millions)

Contemporary Fears
Fears of Immigrants

Germans
  – Ben Franklin on Germans (1751)
  – Theodore Roosevelt (1907)

Irish, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Slavs, & Eastern European Jews
  – Unfair economic competition
  – Could not assimilate
  – Not real Americans
Irishman and Ape: Each is thankful that other is behind bars
Motley horde of potential immigrants must be restrained
Who are the New Immigrants?

Compare the Post 1965 Wave with the Age of Mass Migration from 1880 to 1920
Where they come from

Change in Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth

1960
- Europe: 75%
- Northern America: 10%
- Latin America: 9%
- Asia: 5%
- Other: 1%

2010
- Europe: 12%
- Northern America: 2%
- Latin America: 53%
- Asia: 28%
- Other: 5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Census.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Top 10 Countries of Birth

1960

Millions of Foreign-Born Residents

- Italy: 1.3
- Germany: 1.0
- Canada: 1.0
- United Kingdom: 0.8
- Poland: 0.7
- Soviet Union: 0.7
- Mexico: 0.6
- Ireland: 0.3
- Austria: 0.3
- Hungary: 0.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Census.
2010

 Millions of Foreign-Born Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Figure 1.
Foreign-Born Population by Period of Entry and World Region of Birth: 2010
(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Caribbean</th>
<th>Central America</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>South America</th>
<th>Other regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 2005</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 to 2007</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 or later</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: "Other regions" includes Northern America and Oceania.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Foreign-Born Population as a Percent of State Population

1960
About two-thirds of all states had less than 5 percent foreign born.

In 1960, the median age of the foreign-born population was 57.3 years.

70 percent of the foreign born resided in the Northeast and Midwest.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 Decennial Censuses.
Figure 1. Foreign-Born Population as Percent of State Population: 2010
(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)

Percent
- Blue: 20.0 or higher
- Dark blue: 15.0 to 19.9
- Light blue: 10.0 to 14.9
- Slightly dark blue: 5.0 to 9.9
- Slightly light blue: Less than 5.0

U.S. percent: 12.9

Figure 13. 
**Educational Attainment: 2010**

(Percent distribution of population 25 and older. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than high school graduate</th>
<th>High school graduate or equivalency</th>
<th>Some college or associate's degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree or higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern America</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Central America</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100.0 due to rounding.
Impact on American Society?

• Do Immigrants Assimilate?

• Jobs and Economy

• American Society:
  – Family and Crime
  – Sports
  – Arts and Culture
Socioeconomic Progress of Immigrants

- 1880-1924 Wave: Southern and Eastern Europe
  - Considered to be not real Americans for decades
  - Popular hostility—also from elites and professors

- Assimilation was an inter-generational process
  - Educational parity by 1920s

- By 1950s
  - Residential integration
  - Intermarriage
What are Prospects for New Immigrants?

• 2\textsuperscript{nd} Generation fluency in English

• High levels of education
  – 2\textsuperscript{nd} Generation Advantage in schooling

• Universities and High-Tech Sector

• Intermarriage
  – Esp. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Generation Hispanics and Asians
Figure 1. Percent Foreign Born of the Population Aged 25 and Older, by Educational Attainment and Field of Degree: 2010
(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Findings from:

The impact of immigration on the wages of native born American workers is near zero.

- White and Black
- Men and Women
- Skilled and Unskilled
Immigrants in the Arts, Sports, and Culture
Most US Chess Champions Foreign Born:
17 of the Top 24 Ranked Men Players
7 of the Top 8 Women Players

Source: http://main.uschess.org/content/view/169/203/
2008 National Spelling Bee Champions

Sameer Mishra, First Place: 8th Grade, Indiana

Sidharth Chand, Second Place: 7th Grade, Michigan

Source: http://public.spellingbee.com/public/results/finishers
In recent years, descendants of Indian immigrants - less than 1 percent of the population - have dominated this contest, snatching first place in five of the past seven years, and making up more than 30 of the 273 contestants this year.
Reasons for Immigrant Impact

• Scale of Immigration

• Selectivity
  – Hardworking, driven, strivers
  – Reinforced with return migration

• Innovative
  – Multiple cultural resources
  – Marginality

• American institutions are receptive
Clouds on the horizon

• Continuing influx of new immigrants
  – Undocumented are vulnerable

• Dysfunctional schools in major cities

• Polite (& impolite) racism

• Attractions of crime/drugs

• One parent families
Conclusions

• Almost all Americans are descendants of immigrants
  – Most since founding of nation

• Current Post 1965 Wave is not an exception
  – But hostility and backlash are also quite “American”

• The children of immigrants do assimilate
  – If given rights and opportunity: past and present
  – Immigrants are selective, 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation is a bonus

• Immigrants also shape Culture
  – What is means to be an American