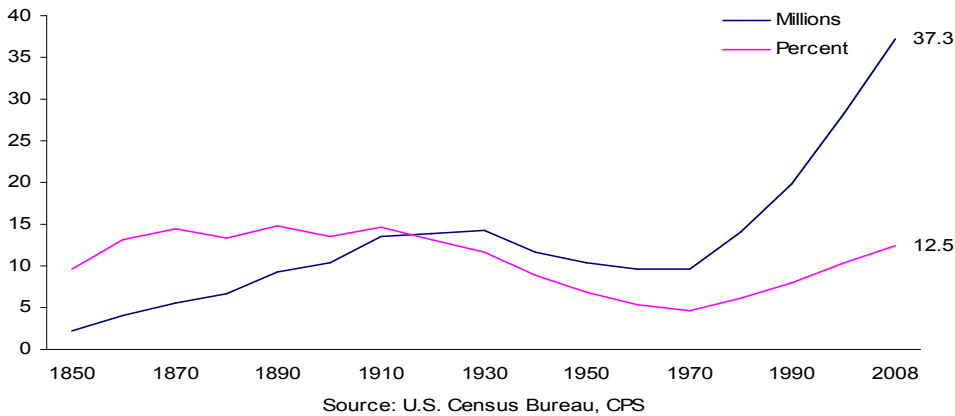


## Demographics and Poverty

The rapid influx of immigrants to the U.S. in recent years is one of the more dramatic demographic developments with implications for both the number and profile of poor people in the U.S. In absolute terms, the number of immigrants currently living in America is at an historic high (37.3 million).

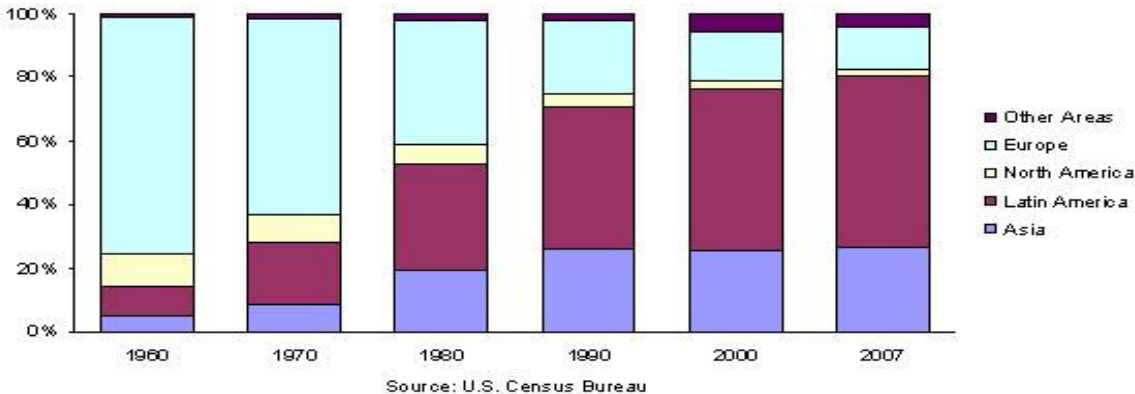
**U.S. Foreign-Born Population: 1850-2008**



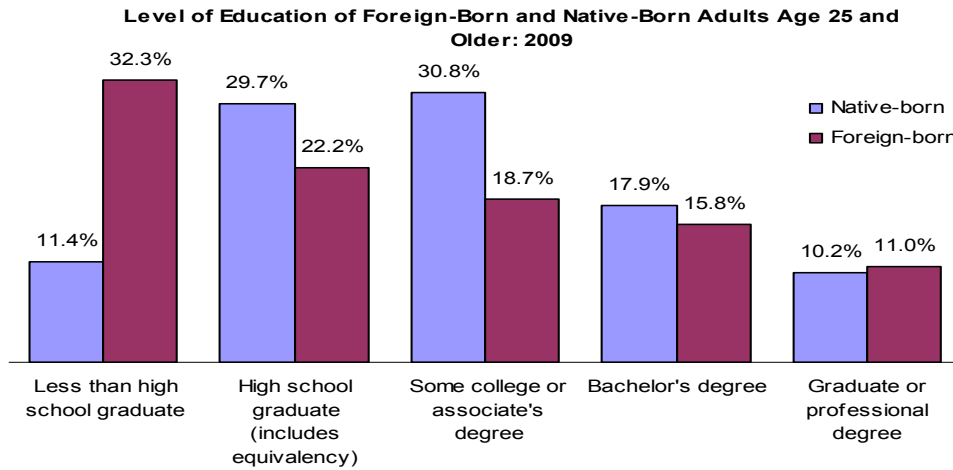
However, in relative terms, the share of the U.S. population that was foreign born in 2008 (12.5%) is actually lower than the share of the population that was foreign born at the start of the 20th century (14.7%). Immigration was restricted between World War I and 1964, so in comparison to this period of lower immigration flows, current immigration rates may seem particularly high.

A distinguishing feature of immigrant flows since 1965 is that they are more racially and ethnically diverse than previous waves that primarily brought immigrants first from Northern and Central Europe (largely pre-1900), and later from Southern and Eastern Europe (from around 1890 to 1924). As shown below, the share of the foreign born population hailing from Latin America has grown from less than ten percent (9.4%) in 1960 to over half (53.6%) in 2007. The share from Asia has also greatly increased from 5.1% to 26.8%.

**Place of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population: 1960 to 2007**



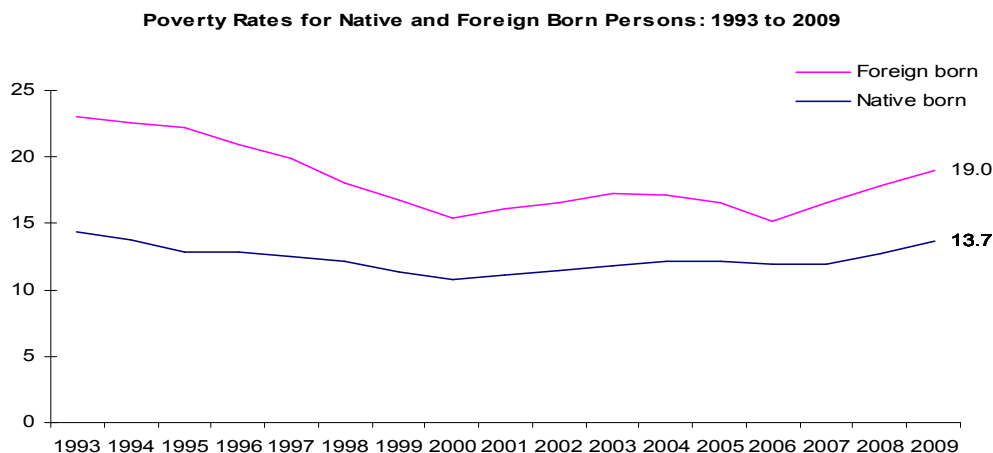
A second important distinction between old and new immigrant waves lies in their educational characteristics. While immigrants arriving since 1965 tend to be better educated than the largely illiterate turn-of-the-twentieth century immigrants, they have less education, on average, than the mostly professional class permitted to enter the U.S. between 1924 and 1964. As a result, there is great diversity in the educational distribution of the foreign born. Immigrants are nearly three times more likely than U.S. natives to have less than a high school education, as shown in the figure below, but roughly equal shares of foreign-born and native-born adults have four-year or advanced degrees.



There are important ethnic distinctions in the relative levels of education across native and foreign-born adults (not shown). Asians – whether native or foreign born – are more likely to have a college degree than U.S. natives of any ethnicity. Among non Hispanic whites and blacks, the share that is college educated is higher among the foreign born than among the native born. For Hispanics, the reverse is true. Because Hispanics represent over half of the foreign born population, their educational background has a large influence on the overall educational profile of the immigrant population.

### How Are Immigrants Faring?

Given relatively low levels of education among Hispanic immigrants, who represent the largest share of immigrants in 2009, it is not surprising that the foreign-born tend to have a higher poverty rate (19.0%) compared with native born people (13.7%). Despite the higher rate of poverty among the foreign born in 2009, poverty remains lower among this group than it was in 1993 (23.0%)



In comparing the poverty rate of immigrants and natives, whether an immigrant is an American citizen is an important distinction (not shown). In 2009, immigrants who were naturalized citizens had a lower poverty rate than native-born Americans (10.8% vs. 13.7%). In contrast, immigrants who were not citizens had much higher rates of poverty, with about one in four (25.1%) counted as poor. This gap in poverty between naturalized citizens and non-citizens likely reflects differences in a host of factors, including educational background, the length of time spent in the U.S., English language ability, legal status, and country of origin.

## **How Are the Children of Immigrants Faring?**

Immigrants made up roughly 13% of the U.S. population in 2008. Nearly one in four children (23%) is the son or daughter of an immigrant (i.e., has at least one immigrant parent). Nearly nine out of ten of these children of immigrant parents (86%) are American citizens.

The children of immigrants are more likely to be poor than children of native born parents. According to the Urban Institute, more than one in five children of immigrant parents (22%) were poor in 2005-06, compared with 16% of children with U.S. born parents. According to data from 2002, immigrant families were more likely to live in overcrowded housing (26.8%) and to be paying at least half of their income for rent or mortgage (13.8%). The children in these families were more likely to lack health insurance (18.0%) and a regular source of health care (12.4%), and to be in fair or poor health (9.2%).