

# Proportion of Immigrants in U.S. Rises

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If present trends continue, within two decades the proportion of immigrants in the United States will surpass the peak reached more than a century ago, a new analysis concludes.

The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan research group, estimates that sometime between 2020 and 2025, the foreign-born will account for 15 percent of the American population, or more than 1 in 7 residents. They represented about 12 percent of the population in 2005, 14.7 percent in 1910 and about 15 percent in the late 19th century.

Trends farther ahead are typically harder to predict. Still, the Pew Center projects that in 2050, 19 percent of Americans will be foreign-born; that the share of Hispanic residents will more than double to 29 percent from 14 percent in 2005; and that the proportion of Asians will almost double, from 5 percent to 9 percent.

The center estimates that the total population will grow to 438 million in 2050, with immigrants accounting for 82 percent, or 117 million, of the increase. But because births in the United States to Hispanic and Asian immigrant parents will play a progressively greater role in population growth, according to the analysis, by 2050 a smaller proportion of both groups will be foreign born in than is the case today.

The native-born Hispanic population, already about 60 percent of all Hispanic residents, would rise to 67 percent in 2050. In 2005, about 58 percent of Asians were foreign born, but by 2050, only 47 percent would be.

The analysis, by Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, projects a higher rate of immigration than a number of federal agencies do. But it concludes, as the federal agencies have, that the share of blacks in the population will remain roughly steady — about 13 percent in 2050, compared with 12 percent in 2005 — while the proportion of non-Hispanic whites will shrink below half the population, to 47 percent.

Because the vast wave of baby boomers will be joining the ranks of the elderly, the number of young and elderly compared to the number of working people — the so-called dependency ratio — would rise to 72 per 100 in 2050, compared with 59 per 100 in 2005. The ratio would be even higher in the future, according to the projections, if the rate of immigration slows.

The authors caution that their projections are subject to changes in behavior, legislation and other events, but that they “offer a starting point for understanding and analyzing the parameters of future demographic change.”

