

Estimates of the Legal Permanent Resident Population and Population Eligible to Naturalize: 2002

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This paper presents a method for producing annual estimates of the legal permanent resident population (LPRs) living in the United States and of the population eligible to naturalize by country of origin, state of residence, year of admission, age and gender. This information is needed by immigration researchers and policymakers, state and local planning agencies, and other organizations engaged in providing services to immigrants.

The estimates are based primarily on administrative records from the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service). Estimates for 2002 are used to illustrate the method.

Method

OIS has automated records beginning in 1973 for immigrants becoming LPRs and naturalizing each year. The records include basic demographic information such as age, gender, country of birth and state of residence at the time of immigration (naturalization). Matching immigrant with naturalization records by alien or A-number makes it possible to isolate the population of LPRs admitted since 1973 who had not naturalized by 2002. This base LPR population is then adjusted (reduced) for 1) derivative citizenship, 2) mortality, and 3) emigration. Adding the estimated pre-1973 LPR population, obtained from Census data on year of entry of the noncitizen population results in the total estimated LPR population in 2002.

Derivative citizenship. Immigrants must be 18 years old to naturalize, but LPR children who are under 18 years old automatically derive citizenship upon the naturalization of their parents. Since an application is not required for derivative citizenship, a complete count of this population does not exist. The number of LPRs deriving citizenship was estimated by assuming that the naturalization rate through 2002 for LPRs who were under 16 years old at immigration was the same as that of LPRs who were 16 years old.

Mortality. LPRs were survived from year of admission to 2002 using mortality rates by age and gender from 1989-91 life tables (National Center for Health Statistics, 1997). The average age at immigration is about 28 years so mortality has very little effect on the estimates for recent LPRs but a larger effect for earlier LPRs.

Emigration. Estimating emigration accurately is a serious challenge since there is no recent information yet most observers agree that its impact is substantial—historically about one-third of all immigrants. This analysis uses emigration rates developed for the 1980-1990 period for the legally resident foreign born population by Ahmed and

Robinson (1994) and modified to take into account more years in immigrant status. The impact of alternative emigration schedules (high, medium, and low) will be evaluated.

Pre-1973 LPR population. The number of pre-1973 LPRs was estimated using the March 2002 Current Population Survey on foreign born noncitizens who entered the United States prior to 1973.

LPRs eligible to naturalize. This population consists of the LPR population minus those admitted within the most recent 3-5 year period. Most LPRs have a five year residency requirement for naturalization. However, spouses of U.S. citizens are eligible in 3 years and most refugees, asylees, and cancellation of removal immigrants are eligible in 4 years. Immigrant class of admission and year of admission were used to make these adjustments.

Preliminary Results

The total base population of LPRs admitted for permanent residence between 1973-2002 was 21.9 million. The non-naturalized LPR population was 14.3 million. Adjustment for derivative citizenship, mortality, and emigration reduced the population to 9.3 million. Adding back in 1 million pre-1973 LPR entrants results in a total estimated LPR population of 11.5 million in 2002. (See below). The estimated LPR population eligible to naturalize is 7.8 million.

LPR population estimate: 2002

<u>Step</u>	<u>Million</u>
Immigrants 1973-2002	21.9
-Naturalized (N-400)	7.6
=Not naturalized through N-400	14.3
-Derived (N-600, N-643)	0.6
=LPR (1973-02) not citizen as of 2002	13.6
-Emigration/mortality	3.0
=LPR 1973-2002 survivors	10.6
+LPRs < 1973 (Census)	1.0
Total	<u>11.5</u>

The full analysis will provide details for each step in the calculations and show the impact of each estimated component--derivative citizenship, mortality, and emigration. The analysis will display the final estimated LPR population (population eligible to naturalize) by year of admission to the United States, country of birth, and state of residence (including efforts to take post admission internal migration into account). The estimates will also be compared with other research. Preliminary comparisons suggest

that the results using the method presented here produce estimates that are similar to those obtained by Jeffrey Passel using a somewhat different methodology (Fix et al, 2003). Using the above method to estimate the 2000 LPR population is consistent with an estimate by Robert Warren that uses the methodology he employed for estimating the unauthorized immigrant population (Warren, 2003).

References

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