



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

*...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America*

October 19, 2009

## **AMERICAN ROOTS IN THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE: Immigrants and Children of Immigrants Comprise Nearly One Quarter of the U.S. Population**

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released [data](#) on the Latino population of the United States that underscores the extent to which the immigrant experience is embedded in the social (and political) fabric of the United States in three important ways:<sup>1</sup>

1. Nearly one out of every four people in the United States in 2008 was either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant. Two-thirds of Latinos, and one-in-ten non-Latino whites, were immigrants or children of immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
2. Immigrants who are naturalized U.S. citizens (and entitled to vote) accounted for 5 percent of the total U.S. population in 2008.
3. Two-in-five immigrants came to this country before 1990 and therefore have deep U.S. roots. More than one-third of Latino immigrants came to the United States prior to 1990.

The political significance of these statistics should be apparent. Latinos comprise the [fastest-growing](#) group of voters in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The number of naturalized U.S. citizens is [increasing rapidly](#).<sup>4</sup> And the electoral clout of “[New American](#)” voters who share a direct, personal connection to the immigrant experience—that is, naturalized citizens and the U.S.-born children of immigrants—is on the rise.<sup>5</sup> Successful politicians will pay close attention to these demographic trends.

### **Immigrants and the children of immigrants account for:**

- 23.4 percent (or 69.8 million) of all people in the United States.
  - There were 37.3 million immigrants, and 32.5 million children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.
- 67.9 percent (or 31.2 million) of all Latinos.
  - There were 17.8 million Latino immigrants, and 13.4 million Latino children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.
- 10.4 percent (or 20.6 million) of all non-Latino whites.
  - There were 7.9 million non-Latino white immigrants, and 12.7 million non-Latino white children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.

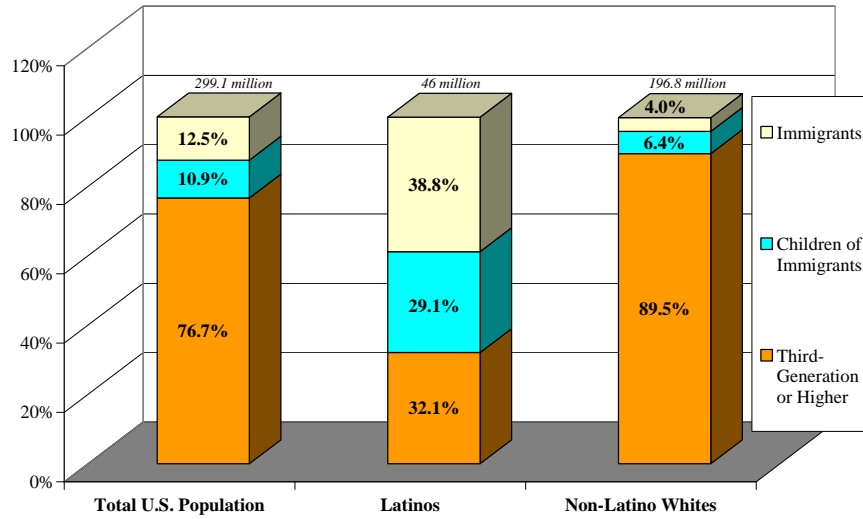
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**THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER**

1331 G STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

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**Figure 1: Total U.S. Population, Latinos & Non-Latino Whites, by Generation, 2008**

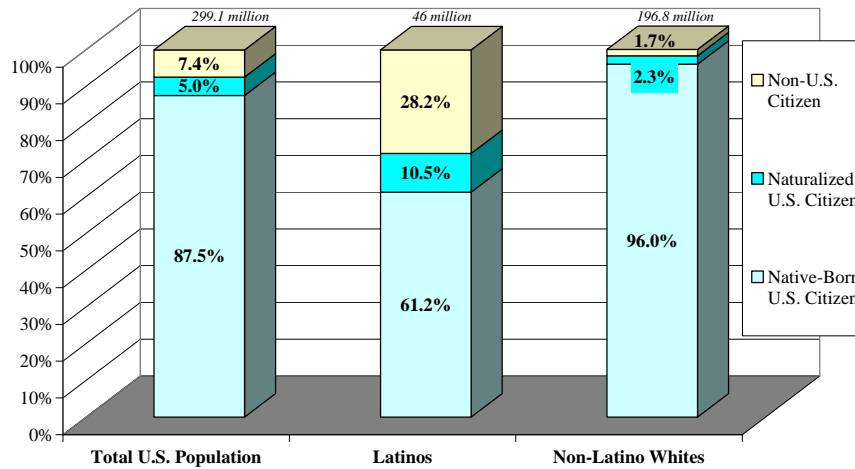


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social & Economic Supplement, 2008.

**Naturalized U.S. citizens account for:**

- 5 percent (or 15.1 million) of all people in the United States.
- 10.5 percent (or 4.9 million) of all Latinos.
- 2.3 percent (or 4.5 million) of all non-Latino whites.

**Figure 2: Total U.S. Population, Latinos & Non-Latino Whites, by Citizenship Status, 2008**

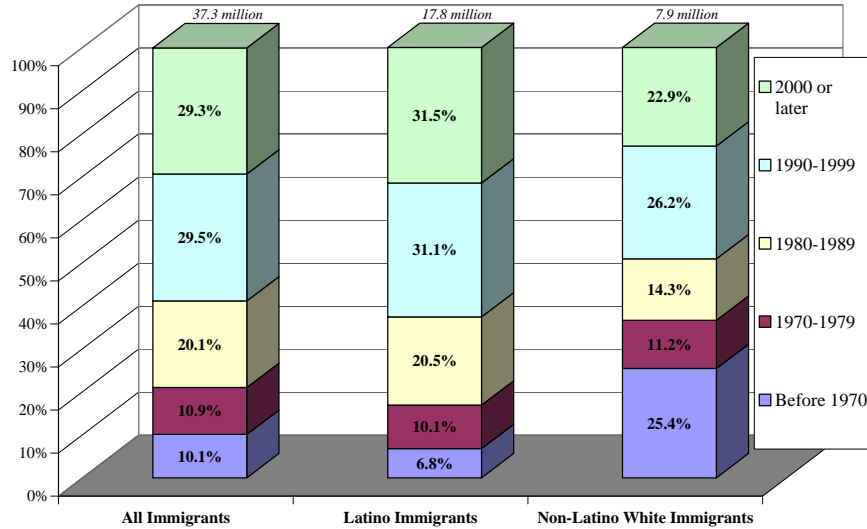


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social & Economic Supplement, 2008.

**Immigrants who came to the United States *before 1990* account for:**

- 41.1 percent (or 15.3 million) of all immigrants.
- 37.4 percent (or 6.7 million) of all Latino immigrants.
- 50.9 percent (or 4 million) of all non-Latino white immigrants.

**Figure 3: All Immigrants, Latino Immigrants & Non-Latino White Immigrants, by Year of Entry, 2008**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social & Economic Supplement, 2008.

**For more information contact:**

Walter Ewing  
[wewing@ailf.org](mailto:wewing@ailf.org)  
 202-507-7507

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, [The Hispanic Population in the United States: 2008—Detailed Tables](#).  
<sup>2</sup> The tables released by the Census Bureau on September 30 do not contain data on Asian Americans or Asian immigrants.  
<sup>3</sup> Walter Ewing, [Latino and Asian Clout in the Voting Booth: Census Data Underscores Growing Power of Minority Voters](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, August 13, 2009).  
<sup>4</sup> Walter Ewing, [Citizenship by the Numbers: The Demographic and Political Rise of Naturalized U.S. Citizens and the Native-Born Children of Immigrants](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, September 16, 2009).  
<sup>5</sup> Rob Paral & Associates, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, October 2008).