



Overview and Background

The annual number of persons who naturalize in the United States has remained at or above half a million people since the mid-1990s with a spike in 2008 to over one million. This striking evidence of the United States' ability to continually admit and integrate large numbers of immigrants has been attributed to our cultural heritage. Analysts looking at means of countering terrorism, particularly in Europe, are interested in why some immigrants adapt faster than others and why some groups remain unwilling or unable to integrate. These researchers see the United States as highly successful in its ability to integrate immigrants. Nevertheless, understanding the motivations and timing of naturalization is an area that is understudied and the data available do not consistently provide information on key demographic characteristics such as socio-economic status or employment history. This poster summarizes three different data sets that will soon be available to investigate this issue and provides relative strengths and weaknesses of the different data.

Previous Studies

What do we already know about immigrants' motivations for naturalizing?

- In general, researchers have found that factors such as high personal income, high levels of education, home ownership, business ownership, and citizen spouses are correlated with naturalization (Portes and Curtis, 1987; Yang, 1994).
- Additional determinants of naturalization include demographic and individual characteristics (Bernard, 1936; Barken and Khoklov, 1980) and characteristics of the sending and receiving countries (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1986; Portes and Mozo, 1985; Portes and Curtis 1987; Yang, 1994).
- Immigration legislation and policy may also be a factor. Balistreri and Van Hook (2004) posit that the large number of undocumented Mexicans living in the United States has increased the pressure to naturalize among Mexicans living here legally, so that they can assist family members in attaining legal status.
- Some researchers have also argued that the passage of Welfare Reform in 1996 served as an incentive to naturalize for individuals because of its limits on benefits for noncitizens. This incentive was magnified by harsh immigration legislation passed in the same year.

Future Steps

The information currently available does not portray an accurate or complete picture of immigrants that enter the country and then decide to naturalize. Given these limitations, the following tasks need to be undertaken:

- Analyze demographic characteristics of immigrants that naturalize using existing DHS administrative data.
- Analyze data, when available, from the New Immigrant Survey using demographic characteristics of new immigrants that report they intend to naturalize.
- Analyze data, when available, from the Survey of Recently Naturalized Citizens to determine demographic characteristics and motivations for naturalization.
- Compare results of the three different data sets to form overall conclusions.

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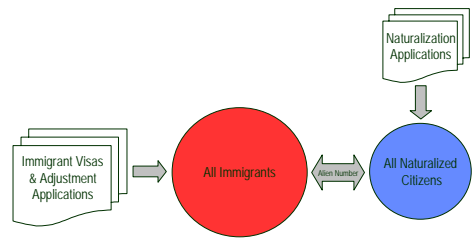
Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Records

Data Source: The Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) maintains and publishes administrative data on immigration to and naturalization in the United States.

Sampling Frame: All electronically captured information from immigrant admission and naturalization applications since fiscal year (FY) 1973.

Frequency: The data is captured continuously, but the data is analyzed and published annually in the *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.

Caveats: Yearly fluctuations in the data, due to the volume of applications filed, agency processing times, and other administrative and legislative issues, inhibits the ability to draw conclusions about trends in the timing of and demand for naturalization from these administrative data.



Data Collected Include:

- Age
- Gender
- Marital Status
- State of Residence
- Occupation (Limited)
- Country of Birth
- Former Nationality
- Date of Naturalization
- Class of Admission
- Date of Immigrant Admission

Strengths:

- All electronic records are available for study, no sampling issues
- Data collected on an ongoing basis over time, continuous data set

Weaknesses:

- Only administrative data available, no insight into motivation and timing of naturalization decision
- Incomplete or no data available on several demographic characteristics like educational background, socio-economic status and occupation
- Individual data not available for public release; only DHS can link immigrant and naturalization files

Conclusions:

- Valuable administrative data that allows comparison with the full universe of immigrants and naturalized citizens.
- Provides data for extrapolation forward and backward over time.

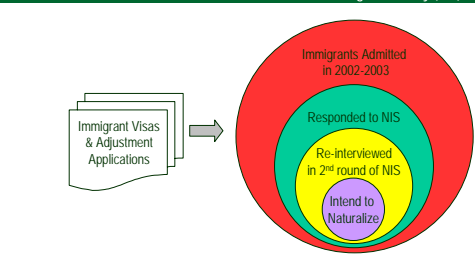
New Immigrant Survey (NIS)

Data Source: The New Immigrant Survey (NIS) is a nationally representative survey of persons who obtained legal permanent resident (LPR) status in the United States.

Sampling Frame: The sampling frame consisted of all adults (age 18+) who had received LPR status in the end of FY2002 or beginning of FY2003.

Frequency: The first round of surveys was fielded in 2004. Beginning in 2007, a second round of interviewing began which ask about changes in the immigrants' experience since receiving their LPR status including whether they intend to naturalize.

Caveats: The second round of interviews are still in process. The original round of surveys had a 68% response rate, the second round of re-interviews can be expected to have a lower rate making non-response bias a potential issue.



Data Collected Include:

- Age
- Gender
- Country of Birth
- Family Composition
- State of Residence
- Occupation
- Income
- Education
- Religion
- Community Engagement
- English Proficiency

Strengths:

- Significant amount of data available on family composition, educational background, socio-economic status, and much more.
- Data collection timing may capture respondents during the decision making process when motivations are fresh.

Weaknesses:

- Only capturing intent to naturalize, no specific question on motivation, no data available (yet) on when naturalization actually occurs.
- Intent to naturalize question not asked in first round.

Conclusions:

- Useful for studying immigrants in depth, which are the potential pool of naturalization applicants in the future.
- Only a small portion of survey respondents pertinent for this analysis.

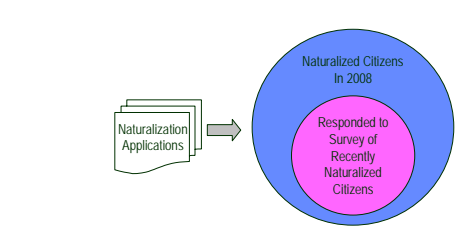
Survey of Recently Naturalized Citizens

Data Source: The Survey of Recently Naturalized Citizens is a nationally representative survey of persons who naturalized during FY 2008.

Sampling Frame: The sampling frame consists of all principal applicants for naturalization who took their oath during FY 2008, proportionately weighted to maintain overall country of origin levels.

Frequency: The survey is currently a one-time data collection event, but could be repeated at regular intervals to gather different cohorts of data.

Caveats: Data collection is scheduled to begin in late summer of 2009 with data and a final report of findings available within a year. Data collection is focused on the principal applicants, unlike the family based data collection focus of the NIS.



Data Collected Include:

- Age
- Gender
- Marital Status
- State of Residence
- Occupation
- Country of Birth
- Former Nationality
- Date of Naturalization
- English Proficiency
- Community Engagement
- Motivation for Naturalization

Strengths:

- Specifically captures motivations for naturalization and impact on timing of naturalization of several motivating factors.
- Population limited to those who have actually naturalized recently.

Weaknesses:

- Limited information about immigration path prior to naturalization.
- Limited information about family composition.

Conclusions:

- Most pertinent available data set for studying motivations for and timing of naturalization.
- Will hopefully allow model creation to more accurately forecast future naturalization application levels.