

Changes in naturalization rates have potentially important public policy implications, with respect to the size and composition of the population eligible to vote, employment eligibility and the population eligible to sponsor family members for subsequent immigration. This analysis updates and expands previous work by the Department of Homeland Security and examines whether the effect of demographic factors on the rate of naturalization of legal immigrants.

Data were obtained by matching DHS administrative records for same-year cohorts of persons becoming legal permanent residents (LPRs) with subsequent naturalization records. Same-year cohorts selected for analysis include immigrants becoming LPRs in 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1995. Although the demographic information available from DHS is limited, naturalization rates calculated from these data more accurately measure/reflect the experiences of actual cohorts of immigrants than naturalization rates calculated from Census cross-sectional data.

The first section of the analysis will include descriptive material—tables and charts that display cumulative naturalization rates through 2004 by years duration in immigrant status for each cohort and charts by selected countries/region of origin and tables comparing the immigrant cohorts by composition (region/country of birth; administrative category of admission (e.g. family/employment preference, immediate relative of U.S. citizen, or refugee); gender; and age, marital status, and occupation when granted legal permanent residence).

The second section of the analysis uses Cox proportional hazard models to examine the effect of demographic factors on the rate of naturalization across the different cohorts. Model estimates for each cohort will be used to indicate the relative effect on the rate of naturalization of a number of demographic/immigration related factors. These include gender; country/region of birth; immigrant class of admission, and age, marital status, and occupation at the time of immigration.

Preliminary results show that the rate of naturalization is highest for legal immigrants: who were young when they became legal permanent residents, are from Asian countries, or were refugees.