

## United States

Permanent immigration to the United States rose 2% in the US Fiscal Year 2009 (1 October 2008 through 30 September 2009), with more than 1.13 million people receiving lawful permanent residency status. The previous year had seen a 5% increase. Admissions under the employment-based preferences category, on the other hand, fell 13%, to 144 000. Almost half (45%) of the employment-based visas went to principal applicant, with the remainder for their family members. 92% of those granted permanent residence based on their employment were already in the United States on a temporary visa.

Humanitarian migration, comprising resettled (“quota”) refugees and those receiving asylum inside the United States, has been increasing since FY2006. The number of quota refugees admitted to the United States rose 24% to 74 600, primarily from Iraq, Burma and Bhutan. 22 100 individuals were granted asylum status, of which the largest groups (27%) were Chinese.

The US Department of Labour certifies employer applications for both permanent and temporary foreign workers. Certification procedures, required for most applicants, vary according to visa type, but generally require that the employer announces the job or intent to hire and that the position meets certain wage conditions. The number of certifications for employment-based permanent visas fell from 85 000 in FY2007 to 30 000 in FY2009, suggesting a sharp decline in employer demand; certifications rose slightly to 32 600 in FY2010.

Temporary H-1B visas for employment are the usual pathway from a temporary visa category to permanent residence, and are subject to a cap of 85 000, although there are exemptions. The number of H-1B visas issued fell from 129 000 in FY2008 to 111 000 in FY2009. Demand for the visa has fallen; prior to the economic downturn, visas were taken the first day they were available. In contrast, it took five weeks to exhaust the FY2010 cap, and more than eight months for the FY2011 cap. Employer requests for certification for H-1B visas, required for most new visas and for changes of employer, fell from 692 000 in FY2008 to 495 000 in FY2010.

Temporary migration schemes for lower-skilled workers broadly remained at the pre-crisis levels. The number of employer requests for the uncapped seasonal agricultural worker programme (H-2A) approached 95 000, although visa issuances were only

about 60 000, mostly for Mexican nationals. A stricter wage requirement and labour market test for H-2A employers were imposed in March 2010.

Temporary workers for other sectors (H-2B) are capped at 66 000. Certifications reached more than 250 000 in FY2007-2009, before falling to 154 000 in FY2009. The programme, traditionally oversubscribed, has fallen short of its cap in FY2009 and FY2010 – and likely for FY2011 – and visas were not used even for approved applications. The J-1 Summer Work-Travel Programme, under which young foreign students may work in the United States for several months, primarily in tourism, also shrank during the economic downturn, from 150 000 in 2007 and 2008 to less than 100 000 in 2009 and 2010.

The official estimate of undocumented immigrants fell, for the first time, to 10.8 million in 2009, from pre-crisis estimates of 11.8 million in 2007. Increased border and workplace enforcement, along with reduced employment opportunities during the downturn, contributed to reduce inflows. Border interceptions have been falling for a decade, and fell 36% from FY2008 to FY2010. On the other hand, there is little evidence of increased voluntary outflows. About 400 000 undocumented foreigners were forcibly removed from the United States in each FY 2009 and 2010.

The number of active foreign students and exchange visitors (on F and M visas) reached 848 000 in September 2010, according to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Most (70%) are in higher education. The rise in the programme between 2008 and 2010 (+174 000) is partly due to the doubling of the number of Chinese participants, to 159 000.

While comprehensive immigration reform remains on the list of priorities for the current Administration, attempts to pass legislation in 2010 were unsuccessful. Comprehensive reform did not come to congressional debate, and the DREAM Act, a regularisation for undocumented college students and veterans who came to the United States as children, was not approved.

### **For further information:**

[www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/](http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/)

[www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/](http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/)

[www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-ina.htm](http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-ina.htm)

## Recent trends in migrants' flows and stocks

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Migration flows (foreigners) National definition	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level ('000)
					2000-04	2005-09	2009
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Inflows	3.0	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.8	1 130.8
Outflows	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<b>Migration inflows (foreigners) by type</b>	<b>Thousands</b>		<b>% distribution</b>		<b>Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners</b>		
<i>Permit based statistics (standardised)</i>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>			
Work	75.9	65.6	6.9	5.8			
Family (incl. accompanying family)	806.8	838.0	72.9	73.1			
Humanitarian	166.4	177.4	15.0	15.7			
Free movements	..	..	..	..			
Others	58.0	61.4	5.2	5.4			
Total	1 107.1	1 130.2	100.0	100.0			
<b>Temporary migration</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>Average 2005-09</b>			
<i>Thousands</i>							
International students	237.9	340.7	331.2	296.4			
Trainees	1.8	3.4	2.1	2.5			
Working holiday makers	88.6	152.7	116.4	122.4			
Seasonal workers	31.9	64.4	60.1	48.9			
Intra-company transfers	65.5	84.1	64.7	74.3			
Other temporary workers	266.1	290.1	209.8	260.9			
<b>Inflows of asylum seekers</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		Level
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	37 683
<b>Components of population growth</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Total	10.6	9.3	8.9	8.5	9.6	9.2	2 606
Natural increase	5.7	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.7	6.0	1 761
Net migration	4.6	3.3	2.9	2.8	3.6	3.0	845
<b>Stocks of immigrants</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Percentage of the total population</i>							
Foreign-born population	10.5	12.3	13.0	12.7	11.4	12.7	38 948
Foreign population	6.3	7.3	7.3	6.9	6.8	7.3	21 274
<b>Naturalisations</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		Level
<i>Percentage of the foreign population</i>							
	5.0	2.8	4.7	3.5	3.2	3.4	743 715
<b>Labour market outcomes</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>							
Native-born men	77.2	73.3	73.0	68.1	74.9	72.4	
Foreign-born men	82.0	81.7	80.9	77.3	80.9	81.1	
Native-born women	68.4	65.3	65.6	63.5	66.9	65.2	
Foreign-born women	57.7	56.4	59.1	57.7	57.4	58.1	
<i>Unemployment rate</i>							
Native-born men	4.5	6.3	6.0	11.3	6.1	7.0	
Foreign-born men	4.5	5.1	6.0	10.0	5.7	6.0	
Native-born women	4.2	5.2	4.8	7.4	5.0	5.3	
Foreign-born women	5.5	5.2	5.6	8.6	6.6	5.7	
<b>Macroeconomic indicators</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	Average		Level
<i>Annual growth in %</i>							
Real GDP	4.2	3.1	0.0	-2.7	2.6	1.0	
GDP/capita (level in USD)	3.0	2.1	-0.9	-3.5	1.6	0.1	36 936
Employment (level in thousands)	2.5	1.8	-0.5	-3.8	0.9	0.1	139 881
<i>Percentage of the labour force</i>							
Unemployment	4.0	5.1	5.8	9.3	5.2	5.9	

Notes and sources are at the end of the chapter.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932441724>