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Filipino Immigrants in the United States

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The United States is home to about 1.7 million Filipino immigrants, making them the second-largest immigrant group in the United States after **Mexican immigrants**.

The Filipino immigrant population grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s and has continued to grow (although at a slightly slower pace) since then. In addition, the United States is home to about 1.4 million native-born US citizens who claim Filipino ancestry.

Heavily concentrated in the western United States, the Filipino born account for almost half of all immigrants in Hawaii (for more information on immigrants by state, please see the **ACS/Census Data tool** on the MPI Data Hub). Compared to other immigrant groups, Filipinos are better educated than the immigrant population overall, and Filipino immigrant women are more likely than other immigrant women to participate in the civilian labor force.

This spotlight focuses on Filipino immigrants residing in the United States, examining the population's size, geographic distribution, and socioeconomic characteristics using data from the US Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2000 Decennial Census, and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) for 2008.

Click on the bullet points below for more information:

Size and Distribution

- There were about 1.7 million foreign born from the Philippines residing in the United States in 2008.
- Nearly half of the Filipino born resided in California.
- The Filipino born accounted for a large share of all immigrants in Western states.
- Between 2000 and 2008, three states saw the size of their Filipino immigrant population grow by 25,000 people or more.
- More than one-third of Filipino immigrants resided in three metropolitan areas.
- Filipinos were two of every five immigrants in Honolulu.
- There were 2.9 million members of the Filipino diaspora residing in the United States in 2008, including 1.4 million native-born US citizens of Filipino ancestry.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

- Over one-quarter of all Filipino foreign born in the United States arrived in 2000 or later.
- Almost two-thirds of Filipino immigrants in 2008 were adults of working age.
- Filipino immigrant women outnumbered men in 2008.
- Filipino immigrants were much more likely than other immigrant groups to be naturalized US citizens.
- Less than one-third of Filipino immigrants in 2008 were limited English proficient.
- A minority of limited English proficient Filipinos did not speak Tagalog, one of the national languages of the Philippines.
- Over three-quarters of Filipino foreign-born adults had some college education or higher.
- Filipino immigrant women were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than foreign-born women overall.

- Almost one-third of employed Filipino-born men worked in health-care support or in construction, extraction, and transportation.
- Nearly one of every four employed Filipino-born women worked as a registered nurse.
- Filipino immigrants were far less likely to live in poverty than other immigrant groups.
- Filipino immigrants were more likely than other immigrants to own their own home, but they were also more likely to have a mortgage.
- One in 10 Filipino immigrants did not have health insurance.
- About 87,000 Filipino immigrants have served in the US Armed Forces.

Legal and Unauthorized Filipino Immigrant Population

- The Filipino foreign born accounted for about 4.5 percent of all lawful permanent residents living in the United States in 2008.
- More than half a million Filipinos gained lawful permanent residence in the United States between 1999 and 2008.
- Over half of Filipino-born lawful permanent residents in 2008 were admitted as the immediate relatives of US citizens.
- Filipino-born lawful permanent residents made up 3.7 percent of all those eligible to naturalize as of 2008.
- In 2009, 2 percent of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from the Philippines.
- The number of unauthorized immigrants from the Philippines increased by one-third between 2000 and 2009.

Size and Distribution

There were about 1.7 million foreign born from the Philippines residing in the United States in 2008.

There were 1,684,802 foreign born from the Philippines residing in the United States in 2008, accounting for 4.4 percent of the countrys 38.0 million immigrants.

Relative to other groups, the Filipino-born population in the United States grew rapidly between 1970 and 1990, rising from the 12th largest group to the second largest group behind immigrants from Mexico and ahead of immigrants from India. Since 1990, the Filipino born have remained the second-largest immigrant group in the United States although their share has declined slightly since 1990 from 4.6 to 4.4 percent of all immigrants (see Table 1; see also the pie charts showing the top 10 countries of birth of immigrants residing in the United States over time [here](#)).

Definitions

The US Census Bureau defines the foreign born as individuals who had no US citizenship at birth. The foreign-born population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, legal nonimmigrants (including those on student, work, or certain other temporary visas), and persons residing in the country without authorization.

The terms foreign born and immigrant are used interchangeably.

Table 1. Total and Filipino Foreign-Born Populations, 1960 to 2008

Year	Foreign born	Filipino born		
		Number	Share of all foreign born	Rank ^(a)
1960	9,738,091	104,843	1.1%	21
1970	9,619,302	184,842	1.9%	12
1980	14,079,906	501,440	3.6%	8
1990	19,797,316	912,674	4.6%	2
2000	31,107,889	1,369,070	4.4%	2
2008	37,960,773	1,684,802	4.4%	2

Notes: ^a Rank refers to the position of the Filipino born relative to other immigrant groups in terms of size of the population residing in the United States in a given census year.

Source: Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; data for 2008 from the American Community Survey 2008. Data for earlier decades from Gibson, Campbell and Emily Lennon, US Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1999. **Available online.**

[Back to the top](#)

Nearly half of the Filipino born resided in California.

California had the largest number of Filipino immigrants (787,422, or 46.7 percent of the Filipino-born population) in 2008, followed by Hawaii (99,659, or 5.9 percent), New Jersey (89,098, or 5.3 percent), New York (83,194, or 4.9 percent), Illinois (77,505, or 4.6 percent), and Texas (70,819, or 4.2 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

The Filipino born accounted for a large share of all immigrants in Western states.

In 2008, the Filipino born made up 43.5 percent of all immigrants in Hawaii, 31.9 percent of all immigrants in Alaska, and 12.1 percent of all immigrants in Nevada.

Filipino immigrants also accounted for sizeable shares of the foreign-born populations in California (8.0 percent), North Dakota (7.0 percent), Washington (6.4 percent), Virginia (5.4 percent), and New Jersey (5.2 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Between 2000 and 2008, three states saw the size of their Filipino immigrant population grow by 25,000 people or more.

The Filipino immigrant population grew by 25,000 people or more between 2000 and 2008 in California (+122,000, from 665,000 to 787,000), Nevada (+28,000, from 31,000 to 59,000), and Texas (+25,000, from 46,000 to 71,000).

[Back to the top](#)

More than one-third of Filipino immigrants resided in three metropolitan areas.

Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA was the metropolitan area with the largest number of Filipino born (278,809, or 16.5 percent of the total Filipino-born population), followed by San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA (159,102, or 9.4 percent), and New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (153,367, or 9.1 percent). These three metropolitan areas accounted for 35.1 percent of the 1.7 million Filipino immigrants in the United States.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipinos were two of every five immigrants in Honolulu.

The Filipino born accounted for 40.5 percent of all immigrants in the Honolulu, HI, metropolitan area. They accounted for one-third (33.5 percent) of all immigrants in Vallejo-Fairfield, CA, and one-fifth (21.3 percent) of all immigrants in Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA.

Other metropolitan areas with large concentrations of Filipino immigrants were San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA (13.6 percent of all immigrants); Stockton, CA (13.6 percent); Jacksonville, FL (13.0 percent); San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA (12.6 percent); Las Vegas-Paradise, NV (12.5 percent); Reno-Sparks, NV (12.5 percent); and Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville, CA (10.0 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

There were 2.9 million members of the Filipino diaspora residing in the United States in 2008, including 1.4 million native-born US citizens of Filipino ancestry.

Of the 2.9 million members of the Filipino diaspora residing in the United States in 2008, 54.8 percent were born in the Philippines and 43.5 percent were born in the United States or in US territories. The remaining 1.7 percent were born elsewhere, mainly in Japan, Germany, and Canada.

Note: There is no universally recognized definition of the term diaspora. Most often, the term includes individuals who self-identify as having ancestral ties to a specific country of origin. To calculate the size of the Filipino diaspora in the United States, we included all individuals who selected "Filipino" (either alone or in combination with another response) in response to the two ACS questions on ancestry.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

[Back to the top](#)

Over one-quarter of all Filipino foreign born in the United States arrived in 2000 or later.

As of 2008, 26.5 percent of the 1.7 million Filipino foreign born entered the country in 2000 or later, with 26.0 percent entering between 1990 and 1999, 24.6 percent between 1980 and 1989, 15.5 percent between 1970 and 1979, and the remaining 7.5 percent prior to 1970.

[Back to the top](#)

Almost two-thirds of Filipino immigrants in 2008 were adults of working age.

Of the Filipino immigrants residing in the United States in 2008, 5.8 percent were minors (under age 18), 62.0 percent were adults of working age (between 18 and 54), and 32.2 percent were seniors (age 55 and older).

Of the total foreign-born population in the United States in 2008, 7.4 percent were minors, 69.0 percent were of working age, and 23.6 percent were seniors.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino immigrant women outnumbered men in 2008.

Nearly three of every five Filipino immigrants residing in the United States in 2008 were women (58.8 percent) and 41.2 percent were men. Among all immigrants, 49.8 percent were women and 50.2 percent were men.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino immigrants were much more likely than other immigrant groups to be naturalized US citizens.

Among the Filipino foreign born, 63.1 percent were naturalized US citizens, compared to 43.0 percent among the overall foreign-born population.

[Back to the top](#)

Less than one-third of Filipino immigrants in 2008 were limited English proficient.

About 14.5 percent of Filipino immigrants age 5 and older reported speaking "English only" while 55.5 percent reported speaking English "very well." (English is an official language of the Philippines.)

A relatively small share, 30.0 percent, reported speaking English less than "very well" (making them limited English proficient) — far below the 52.1 percent reported among all foreign born age 5 and older.

(Note: The term limited English proficient refers to any person age 5 and older who reported speaking English "not at all," "not well," or "well" on their survey questionnaire. Individuals who reported speaking only English or speaking English "very well" are considered proficient in English).

[Back to the top](#)

A minority of limited English proficient Filipinos did not speak Tagalog, one of the national languages of the Philippines.

Most limited English proficient Filipino immigrants reported speaking Tagalog (86.0 percent). However, a minority in 2008 spoke Ilocano or Hocano (8.3 percent) or Bisayan (1.2 percent), which are indigenous languages in the Philippines, or other languages (4.5 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Over three-quarters of Filipino foreign-born adults had some college education or higher.

In terms of academic achievement, Filipino immigrants were better educated than other immigrants and the native born. In 2008, 50.7 percent of Filipino-born adults age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 27.1 percent among all 31.9 million

foreign-born adults and 27.8 percent of all 168.1 million native-born adults. An additional 26.5 percent had some college education or an associate's degree compared to 18.4 percent among all immigrant adults and 30.8 percent of all native-born adults.

On the other end of the education continuum, 8.5 percent of Filipino-born adults had no high school diploma or the equivalent general education diploma (GED), substantially lower than the 32.5 percent among all foreign-born adults and the 11.7 percent among native-born adults. About 14.3 percent had a high school diploma or GED compared to 21.9 percent among all foreign-born adults and 29.8 percent among native born adults.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino immigrant women were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than foreign-born women overall.

In 2008, Filipino-born women age 16 and older were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force (76.5 percent) than foreign-born women overall (57.1 percent). However, Filipino-born men were less likely to be in the civilian labor force (69.9 percent) than foreign-born men overall (80.5 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Almost one-third of employed Filipino-born men worked in health-care support or in construction, extraction, and transportation.

Among the 491,000 Filipino-born male workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 15.5 percent reported working in health-care support occupations and 14.5 percent reported working in construction, extraction, and transportation (see Table 2). By contrast, among the 13.6 million foreign-born male workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 0.6 percent reported working in health-care support and 25.9 percent reported working in construction, extraction, and transportation.

Filipino-born men were also concentrated in sales occupations (12.9 percent); management, business, and finance (11.4 percent); and farming, fishing, and forestry (10.0 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Nearly one of every four employed Filipino-born women worked as a registered nurse.

Among the 666,000 Filipino-born female workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 22.9 percent reported working as registered nurses and 16.8 percent reported working in sales (see Table 2). By contrast, among the 9.5 million foreign-born female workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 3.4 percent reported working as a registered nurse and 10.5 percent reported working in sales.

Filipino-born women were also concentrated in health-care support occupations (14.3 percent) and management, business, and finance (12.9 percent).

Table 2. Occupations of Employed Workers in the Civilian Labor Force Age 16 and Older by Gender and Origin, 2008

	Filipino foreign born		All foreign born	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Persons age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force	491,115	665,508	13,630,931	9,505,339
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Management, business, finance	11.4	12.9	10.7	10.4
Information technology	4.1	1.3	4.0	1.9
Other sciences and engineering	5.7	1.8	4.1	2.2
Social services and legal	1.6	1.2	1.1	2.0

Education/training and media/entertainment	2.9	4.0	3.4	7.1
Physicians	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.0
Registered nurses	8.6	if	0.4	3.4
Other health-care practitioners	3.0	7.2	1.0	2.9
Health-care support	15.5	14.3	0.6	5.4
Services	7.3	8.9	17.4	25.7
Sales	12.9	16.8	7.5	10.5
Administrative support	0.3	0.2	5.3	14.7
Farming, fishing, and forestry	10.0	1.0	2.6	0.9
Construction, extraction, and transportation	14.5	5.4	25.9	3.3
Manufacturing, installation, and repair	0.7	0.8	14.6	8.5

Source: 2008 American Community Survey.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino immigrants were far less likely to live in poverty than other immigrant groups.

About 14.0 percent of Filipino immigrants lived in poverty in 2008 compared to 37.9 percent of all immigrants and 28.7 percent of the native born.

Note: Poverty is defined as individuals residing in families with total annual income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Whether an individual falls below the official "poverty line" depends not only on total family income, but also on the size of the family, the number of children, and the age of the household. The ACS reports total income over the 12 months preceding the interview date.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino immigrants were more likely than other immigrants to own their own home, but they were also more likely to have a mortgage.

In 2008, about seven of every 10 (70.5 percent) Filipino immigrants age 18 and older owned the home they resided in compared to just over half (56.5 percent) of all immigrants age 18 and older. Filipino immigrants had similar homeownership rates to native-born US citizens (72.6 percent).

However, Filipino immigrants age 18 and older were also more likely to reside in a household with a mortgage or home loan. About 61.6 percent of Filipino immigrants age 18 and older resided in households with a mortgage or home loan compared to 44.3 percent of all immigrants and 50.8 percent of natives.

[Back to the top](#)

One in 10 Filipino immigrants did not have health insurance.

In 2008, 11.1 percent of Filipino immigrants did not have health insurance — much lower than the one in three uninsured (32.9 percent) among all immigrants and similar to the uninsurance rate among the native born (12.9 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

About 87,000 Filipino immigrants have served in the US Armed Forces.

There are 87,000 immigrants from the Philippines who have served in the armed forces of the United States (army, navy, air force, marines, or coast guard). About 12,000 Filipino immigrants were on active duty military service (within the United States) in 2008 and about 75,000 were veterans of the US armed forces. The Filipino born composed the second-largest group among the 650,000 foreign-born veterans (11.8 percent) after immigrants from Mexico (12.8 percent) and ahead of immigrants from Germany (8.2 percent) and Canada (6.9 percent).

Among these Filipino-born veterans, 23,200 were engaged in active-duty military service during the Vietnam War (August 1964 to April 1975), 4,100 during the Korean War (June

1950 to January 1955), and 6,200 during World War II (December 1941 to December 1946). About 25,000 Filipino immigrants were engaged in active-duty military service in 2001 or later.

(Note: Veterans includes any individual who has served in the military forces of the United States [army, navy, air force, marines, or coast guard] in time of war or peace for any length of time at any place at home or abroad. It excludes current members of the armed forces serving abroad. Since the American Community Survey data on veterans is based on self-reported responses, they may differ from data from other sources, such as administrative records from the Department of Defense or the Veterans Administration.)

[Back to the top](#)

Legal and Unauthorized Filipino Immigrant Population

The Filipino foreign born accounted for about 4.5 percent of all lawful permanent residents living in the United States in 2008.

According to data from the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), the Filipino foreign born accounted for 4.5 percent (570,000) of the 12.6 million lawful permanent residents (LPRs, also known as green-card holders) living in the United States on January 1, 2008. They are the second-largest LPR group after the foreign born from Mexico (26.9 percent or 3.4 million). The third-largest group — Indian born — accounted for 4.1 percent (520,000).

[Back to the top](#)

More than half a million Filipinos gained lawful permanent residence in the United States between 1999 and 2008.

Between 1999 and 2008, about 9.8 million immigrants obtained green cards, including 542,319 Filipino born.

The Filipino born accounted for 4.9 percent (or 54,030) of the 1.1 million immigrants who received lawful permanent residence in 2008. Fewer Filipino-born immigrants received green cards in 2008 compared to the previous two years (74,606 in 2006 and 72,596 in 2007).

[Back to the top](#)

Over half of Filipino-born lawful permanent residents in 2008 were admitted as the immediate relatives of US citizens.

Of the 54,030 Filipino born granted LPR status in 2008, 56.7 percent (30,662) were immediate relatives of US citizens, 25.5 percent (13,799) were family-sponsored immigrants, and 17 percent (9,193) were employment-based immigrants. Together these three groups accounted for 99.3 percent of all Filipino-born new LPRs.

Among all 1.1 million immigrants who became LPRs in 2008, 44.1 percent (488,483) came as US citizens' immediate family, 20.6 percent (227,761) as family-sponsored immigrants, and another 15.0 percent (166,511) as employment-based immigrants. About 15 percent (166,392) of new LPRs were refugees and asylees who were admitted in prior years and adjusted their status to LPR in 2008.

[Back to the top](#)

Filipino-born lawful permanent residents made up 3.7 percent of all those eligible to naturalize as of 2008.

Among the 8.2 million permanent residents eligible to naturalize in 2008, Filipino-born LPRs were the second-largest group (tied with LPRs from the Dominican Republic) after Mexican-born LPRs (2.7 million or 33.3 percent).

According to OIS estimates, 300,000 Filipino-born LPRs, or 52.6 percent of all Filipino-born LPRs, were eligible to naturalize in 2008.

In 2008, 58,792 Filipino-born LPRs naturalized, accounting for 5.6 percent of the 1 million LPRs who became US citizens that year.

[Back to the top](#)

In 2009, 2 percent of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from the Philippines.

OIS has estimated that 270,000, or 2 percent, of the approximately 10.8 million unauthorized migrants in 2009 were born in the Philippines.

[Back to the top](#)

The number of unauthorized immigrants from the Philippines increased by one-third between 2000 and 2009.

The estimated number of unauthorized immigrants from the Philippines has increased by about 33 percent since 2000, rising from 200,000 to 270,000.

[Back to the top](#)

For information about ACS methodology, sampling error, and nonsampling error, click [here](#).

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