



MIGRATION INFORMATION SOURCE

FRESH THOUGHT, AUTHORITATIVE DATA, GLOBAL REACH

Haitian Immigrants in the United States

By Aaron Terrazas
Migration Policy Institute

January 15, 2010

The United States is home to about 535,000 Haitian immigrants — the largest concentration in any single country of Haitians abroad. As the country descended into chaos following the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship in the late 1980s, Haitians began arriving in the United States in large numbers. Many received humanitarian protection. Between 1980 and 2000, the Haitian-born population residing in the United States more than quadrupled from 92,000 to 419,000. The Haitian immigrant population in the United States has continued to grow since 2000, although at a slower rate. Recent natural disasters in Central America and the Caribbean have pushed large numbers of migrants to the United States and in the wake of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, emigration pressures from the devastated country are likely to grow.

The Haitian diaspora in the United States has also traditionally played an important role in assisting Haiti recover from natural disasters. More than half of all Haitian immigrants resided in just two states, Florida and New York, although they are also concentrated in New Jersey and Massachusetts (for more information on immigrants by state, please see the [ACS/Census Data tool](#) on the MPI Data Hub).

This spotlight focuses on Haitian immigrants 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 535,000 foreign born from Haiti residing in the United States in 2008.
- About one of every 20 Haitians resides in the United States.
- More than 70 percent of the Haitian born resided in Florida and New York.
- Between 2000 and 2008, two states saw the size of their Haitian immigrant population grow by more than 10,000 people.
- More than three-quarters of Haitian immigrants resided in five metropolitan areas.

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 other temporary visas), and persons residing in the country without authorization.

The terms foreign born and immigrant are used interchangeably.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

- Over one-quarter of all Haitian foreign born in the United States arrived in 2000 or later.
- Two-thirds of Haitian immigrants in 2008 were adults of working age.
- Haitian immigrant women outnumbered men in 2008.
- Haitian immigrants were more likely than other immigrant groups to be naturalized US citizens.
- About half of Haitian immigrants in 2008 were limited English proficient.

- Nearly half of Haitian foreign-born adults had some college education.
- Haitian immigrant women were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than foreign-born women overall.
- Nearly half of employed Haitian-born men worked in services or in construction, extraction, and transportation.
- Over one of every four employed Haitian-born women worked in healthcare support.
- Haitian immigrants were less likely to live in poverty than other immigrant groups.

Legal and Unauthorized Haitian Immigrant Population

- There were about 230,000 Haitian lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in 2008.
- Based on the 2000 Census, the federal government estimated that there were 76,000 unauthorized Haitian immigrants living in the United States.
- Most Haitians who received LPR status in 2008 came to the United States as family-based immigrants.
- Over half of Haitian-born lawful permanent residents in 2008 were eligible to naturalize.
- In 2008, the United States deported 1,098 Haitian nationals.

Size and Distribution

There were 535,000 foreign born from Haiti residing in the United States in 2008.

There were 534,969 foreign born from Haiti residing in the United States in 2008, making up 1.4 percent of all immigrants. The population has more than quintupled since 1980, when the decennial census counted 92,395 Haitian immigrants, and nearly 20-fold since 1970 when there were 28,026 Haitian-born in the United States.

Up until 1990, the foreign born from Haiti ranked behind most foreign-born groups in terms of size (see Table 1). For instance, in 1980, the number of Haitian born in the United States (92,395) was smaller than the foreign-born population from the Netherlands (103,136), Hungary (144,368), and Austria (145,607).

By 2008, the Haitian-born population was more than five times larger than the Dutch (85,635) and Hungarian (80,333) immigrant populations and ten times larger than the foreign-born population from Austria (52,707).

In 2008, the Haitian born were the fourth largest immigrant group from the Caribbean basin following the foreign born from Cuba (974,657), the Dominican Republic (771,910), and Jamaica (636,589) (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 [INSERT LINK]).

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

Year	Foreign born	Haitian born		
		Number	Share of all foreign born	Rank ^(a)
1960	9,738,091	4,816	0.0%	61
1970	9,619,302	28,026	0.3%	41
1980	14,079,906	92,395	0.7%	30
1990	19,797,316	225,393	1.1%	22
2000	31,107,889	419,317	1.3%	18
2008	37,960,773	534,969	1.4%	16

Notes: ^a Rank refers to the position of the Haitian 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](#)

About one of every 20 Haitians resides in the United States.

The 535,000 Haitian immigrants in the United States represent about one-twentieth (5.5 percent) of the total population of Haiti (9.8 million in 2008).

[Back to the top](#)

More than 70 percent of the Haitian born resided in Florida and New York.

Florida had the largest number of foreign-born residents from Haiti (247,991, or 46.4 percent of the total Haitian-born population) in 2008, followed by New York (128,750, or 24.1 percent).

The next two states with large Haitian-born populations accounted for an additional 14.7 percent of Haitians residing in the United States: New Jersey (40,773, or 7.6 percent) and Massachusetts (37,936, or 7.1 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Between 2000 and 2008, two states saw the size of their Haitian immigrant population grow by more than 10,000 people.

In two states the Haitian immigrant population grew by more than 10,000 people between 2000 and 2008: Florida, where it grew by 66,000 from 182,000 to 248,000) and Georgia where the population tripled from 5,000 to 15,000.

[Back to the top](#)

More than three-quarters of Haitian immigrants resided in five metropolitan areas.

Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, was the metropolitan area with the largest number of Haitian born (183,108, or 34.2 percent of the total Haitian-born population), followed by New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (159,444, or 29.8 percent), Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH (34,757, or 6.5 percent), Orlando-Kissimmee, FL (24,183, or 4.5 percent), and Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA (14,449, or 2.7 percent). These five metropolitan areas accounted for 77.8 percent of the 535,000 Haitian immigrants in the United States.

[Back to the top](#)

Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

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

As of 2008, 27.7 percent of the 535,000 Haitian foreign born entered the country in 2000 or later, with 28.8 percent entering between 1990 and 1999, 26.5 percent between 1980 and 1989, 11.2 percent between 1970 and 1979, and the remaining 5.8 percent prior to 1970.

[Back to the top](#)

Two-thirds of Haitian immigrants in 2008 were adults of working age.

Of the Haitian immigrants residing in the United States in 2008, 8.4 percent were minors (under age 18), 67.3 percent were adults of working age (between 18 and 54), and 24.3 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.

The median age of Haitian immigrants in the United States in 2008 was 43.1 compared to 40.8 among all foreign born and 38.2 among all immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean.

[Back to the top](#)

Haitian immigrant women outnumbered men in 2008.

Of all Haitian immigrants residing in the United States in 2008, 54.0 percent were women and 46.0 percent were men. Among all immigrants, 49.8 percent were women and 50.2 percent were men.

[Back to the top](#)

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

Among the Haitian foreign born, 48.4 percent were naturalized US citizens, compared to 43.0 percent among the overall foreign-born population.

[Back to the top](#)

About half of Haitian immigrants in 2008 were limited English proficient.

About 7.5 percent of Haitian immigrants age 5 and older reported speaking "English only" while 39.0 percent reported speaking English "very well." In contrast, 53.6 percent reported speaking English less than "very well," similar to 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](#)

Nearly half of Haitian foreign-born adults had some college education.

In terms of academic achievement, Haitian immigrants were concentrated in the middle of the education continuum. In 2008, 28.5 percent of the 458,000 Haitian-born adults age 25 and older had some college education or an Associate's degree compared to 18.4 percent among the 31.9 million foreign-born adults. An additional 16.9 percent of Haitian immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 27.1 percent among all foreign-born adults.

On the other end of the education continuum, 26.0 percent of Haitian-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. About 28.6 percent had a high school diploma or GED compared to 21.9 percent among all foreign-born adults.

[Back to the top](#)

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

In 2008, Haitian-born women age 16 and older (71.7 percent) were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than all foreign-born women (57.1 percent) overall. Haitian-born men were about equally as likely to be in the civilian labor force (80.7 percent) as foreign-born men overall (80.6 percent).

[Back to the top](#)

Nearly half of employed Haitian-born men worked in services or in construction, extraction, and transportation.

Among the 168,000 Haitian-born male workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 26.1 percent reported working in services and 22.3 percent reported working in construction, extraction, or 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, 17.4 percent reported working in services and 25.9 percent reported working in construction, extraction, or transportation.

[Back to the top](#)

Over one of every four employed Haitian-born women worked in healthcare support.

Among the 182,000 Haitian-born female workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2008, 27.2 percent reported working in healthcare support occupations and 22.7 percent reported working in service occupations (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, 5.4 percent reported working in healthcare support and 25.7 percent reported working in service occupations.

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

	Haitian foreign born	All foreign born

	Male	Female	Male	Female
Persons age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force	168,032	181,587	13,630,931	9,505,339
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Management, business, finance	6.7	4.4	10.7	10.4
Information technology	1.2	0.4	4.0	1.9
Other sciences and engineering	1.4	0.5	4.1	2.2
Social services and legal	2.4	2.8	1.1	2.0
Education/training and media/entertainment	2.9	3.7	3.4	7.1
Physicians	0.6	0.6	1.2	1.0
Registered nurses	0.4	7.0	0.4	3.4
Other health-care practitioners	1.8	6.2	1.0	2.9
Health-care support	2.9	27.2	0.6	5.4
Services	26.1	22.7	17.4	25.7
Sales	8.1	9.4	7.5	10.5
Administrative support	10.7	9.8	5.3	14.7
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.6	0.1	2.6	0.9
Construction, extraction, and transportation	22.3	2.4	25.9	3.3
Manufacturing, installation, and repair	11.9	2.9	14.6	8.5

Source: 2008 American Community Survey.

[Back to the top](#)

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

The poverty rate among Haitian immigrant families was 12.9 percent in 2008, lower than the poverty rate among all foreign born families (14.9 percent). The difference was even larger among immigrant families headed by a female householder with no spouse present. Among Haitian immigrant households headed by a female with no husband present, the poverty rate was 20.8 percent in 2008, compared to 30.7 percent for all immigrants.

[Back to the top](#)

Legal and Unauthorized Haitian Immigrant Population

There were about 230,000 Haitian lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in 2008.

There were about 230,000 Haitian-born lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in the United States in 2008, about 1.8 percent of the estimated total 12.6 million LPRs.

[Back to the top](#)

Based on the 2000 Census, the federal government estimated that there were 76,000 unauthorized Haitian immigrants living in the United States.

The most recent published estimates from the Department of Homeland Security, based on analysis of the 2000 Census, suggest that the unauthorized immigrant population from Haiti grew from 67,000 in 1990 to 76,000 in 2000. Haitians accounted for 1.1 percent of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States in 2000, the 11th-largest unauthorized immigrant group in the country.

[Back to the top](#)

Most Haitians who received LPR status in 2008 came as family-based immigrants.

In 2008, 26,007 LPRs were admitted from Haiti, 2.3 percent of the 1.1 million LPRs admitted. Of these, 37.2 percent (9,675) came as family-based immigrants and an

additional 34.4 percent (8,958) arrived as the immediate relatives of US citizens. An additional 21.6 percent (5,620) arrived as refugees or asylum seekers.

[Back to the top](#)

Over half of Haitian-born lawful permanent residents in 2008 were eligible to naturalize.

About 140,000 of the estimated 230,000 Haitian-born LPRs (60.9 percent) were eligible to naturalize as of January 2008.

[Back to the top](#)

In 2008, the United States deported 1,098 Haitian nationals.

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) located and deported 1,098 Haitian nationals. In January 2010, DHS announced a temporary stay on deportations to Haiti in the wake of the massive earthquake that hit the country.

[Back to the top](#)

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

Sources

Monger, Randall and Nancy Rytina. 2009. *U.S. Legal Permanent Residents : 2008*. US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. **Available online.**

Rytina, Nancy. 2009. *Estimates of the Legal Permanent Resident Population in 2008*. October 2009. US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. **Available online.**

US Census Bureau. 2008 American Community Survey. Accessed from Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center, 2004.

US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. *2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Various tables. **Available online.**

World Bank. 2009. World Development Indicators. Washington, DC. **Available online.**

US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Office of Policy and Planning. Nd. Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990 to 2000. Washington, DC. **Available online**

Copyright © 2010 Migration Policy Institute. **All rights reserved.**
MPI • 1400 16th St. NW, Suite 300 • Washington, DC 20036
ph: (001) 202-266-1940 • fax: (001) 202-266-1900
source@migrationpolicy.org