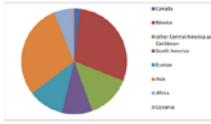


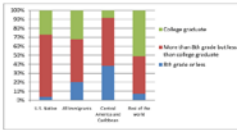
# The Dichotomous Nature of U.S. Immigration

**John F. Long, USA Demography**  
e-mail: johnlong@usademography.com

Regional Distribution of the Population 25 and over Immigrating to the U.S. in the Previous 5 Years: ACS 2005-2007



Educational Attainment of the U.S. Native-born and Immigrants in the Previous 5 Years for Persons 25 and over: ACS 2005-2007



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

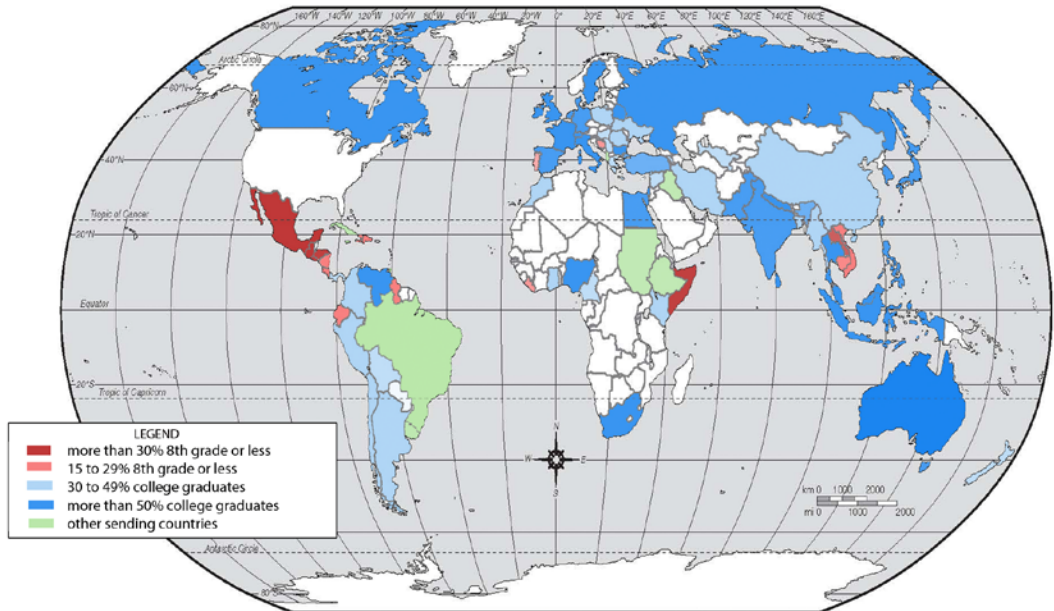
- Immigrant flows to the U.S. are varied and heterogeneous both in origin and in characteristics
- One main difference is in the levels of educational attainment shown by migration stream
- Migrants from Central America, and the Caribbean show much higher levels of persons with 8 or years less of education than the U.S. native-born population
- Migrants from the rest of the world (Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, Oceania, and Canada) have considerably higher levels of college graduates than the U.S. native-born population
- Other countries with relatively lower levels of educational attainment include those with high levels of refugee movement to the U.S. (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Liberia, Somalia, Bosnia).
- Countries with significant immigrant streams having more than twice the level of college graduates than the U.S. native-born population include India, Korea, Japan, Germany, the Philippines, and Russia

Educational Attainment of Persons 25 and over Immigrating to the U.S. in the Previous 5 Years: American Community Survey 2005-2007

Region/Country	8th grade or less	More than 8th grade but not college graduate	College graduate	Total immigrants
U.S. Native	4%	69%	27%	—
Central America/Caribbean	38%	54%	8%	1,951,529
Mexico	42%	53%	6%	1,117,712
Guatemala	56%	40%	6%	109,790
Honduras	44%	48%	8%	69,628
El Salvador	42%	50%	8%	109,678
Cuba	9%	69%	22%	91,058
Dominican Republic	24%	58%	18%	61,366
Haiti	20%	67%	13%	48,408
Jamaica	6%	75%	14%	48,122
Canada	3%	48%	51%	82,561
South America	13%	55%	34%	427,726
Brazil	13%	59%	28%	90,467
Colombia	7%	49%	44%	83,822
Ecuador	26%	56%	18%	49,922
Peru	7%	57%	36%	66,700
Europe	6%	45%	51%	497,079
United Kingdom	1%	44%	55%	69,238
Germany	3%	39%	60%	40,931
Poland	4%	56%	40%	32,320
Russia	3%	38%	59%	42,121
Asia	7%	34%	59%	1,122,754
China	13%	48%	40%	214,576
Japan	1%	36%	63%	79,592
Korea	2%	29%	69%	129,851
Philippines	4%	34%	60%	203,610
Vietnam	18%	68%	14%	85,097
India	3%	17%	80%	115,441
Africa	10%	57%	33%	234,079
Oceania	6%	53%	43%	31,534
All countries	20%	47%	33%	4,578,593

Note: All data have sample error ranges. The 90% confidence interval ranges from +/- 3,000 for flows of 40,000 to +/- 30,000 for flows of 4,000,000. For more information see <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/accuracy2005-2007.pdf>

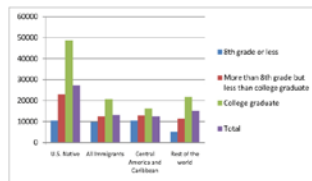
Educational Attainment Levels in Immigrant Flows to the U.S. from Countries with over 5,000 Persons 25 and over Immigrating to the U.S. in the Prior 5 Years: ACS 2005-2007



## CONCLUSIONS

- Migrants from countries immediately to the south of the U.S. show the largest percentages of persons with no more than a primary education.
- The preferences given to reunification of families in the U.S. immigration system along with undocumented immigration may be reasons for this larger proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled immigrants.
- In contrast, movers from longer distances are much more likely to be highly educated even compared to the U.S. native-born population.
- In part this may be due to the expansion of visas for skilled technical professionals.
- However, the income data on the chart to the left show that these higher levels of education may not translate immediately into higher incomes. For these recent immigrants (even those with college educations, income levels are less than half of the native-born U.S. population.

Median Income by Migrant Origin and Educational Attainment for Persons 25 and over for the Native-born U.S. Population and Immigrants in the Prior 5 Years: ACS 2005-2007



## Data Source

U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-2007

This nationwide survey includes 9 million households interviewed over a three year period from 2005 to 2007. The respondents were asked a series of questions similar to those asked on the detailed forms of the 2000 census. Included were questions on country of birth, year of immigration, highest level of education attained, income, and other demographic and social variables. All results contain sampling error but the large sample size permits analysis of smaller subpopulations such as immigrants by country of birth. For more detail on the error structure and on the American Community Survey visit <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/accuracy2005-2007.pdf>.

For the immigration data we constructed a variable that included persons who were living in the United States at the time of the survey and who gave a year of immigration no more than 5 years prior to the survey. Note that this a migrant stock variable in that it only counts immigrants who were still in the country at the time of the survey. Moreover, it is based on respondents' reports of the year they "came to live" in the U.S. rather than formal immigration status. Given the three-year span of the survey, this means that the migration time periods will vary for individual respondents between 2000-2005 and 2005-2007.

Questions of coverage are important in immigration studies particularly where some of the immigrants are in the country illegally. The U.S. census does not collect data on legal status of immigrants but analyses of the 2000 census generally concluded that most illegal immigrants were included in the census totals. The methods of the American Community Survey are designed to replicate census results including illegal immigrants in the totals. To the extent that this effort is not successful the data may underestimate the total number of immigrants.