



PRESS RELEASE

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What effect has the “Great Recession” had on immigration trends in the U.S.?

How has the immigrant population changed in the last 25 years?

Which immigrant group has most assimilated since 2007?

Has the pre-recession wave of Mexican immigrants subsided?

Which U.S. cities have the highest assimilation rates?

IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION RISING IN U.S. SINCE GREAT RECESSION

New York, NY: As the debate over comprehensive immigration reform unfolds in Washington, a new Manhattan Institute report reveals dramatic changes in immigrant assimilation as a result of the so-called Great Recession.

On Monday, March 25, 2013, the Manhattan Institute’s Center for State and Local Leadership released the fourth installment of its Index of Immigrant Assimilation. The report, *Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in Post-Recession America*, is authored by adjunct fellow and Duke University professor Jacob Vigdor.

Census Bureau statistics show that in the five year since the recession the foreign-born population has crossed a major milestone—the 40-million mark—for the first time in American history. The report utilizes the assimilation index, which is comprised of economic, cultural, and civic indicators, and reveals that immigrants are now more assimilated, on average, than at any point since the 1980s.

While opposition to immigration reform has focused on newly arrived, unassimilated, and often undocumented immigrants from Mexico and nearby countries in Central America, Vigdor’s analysis of current demographic trends raises the possibility that the era of rapid immigration from Mexico is already behind us.

The report’s key findings include the following:

The immigrant population has shifted dramatically since the recession. Migration rates from Mexico have been very slow for the past five years, while rates from other parts of the world—notably Asia—have quickened.

- **Between 2006 and 2011, overall immigration from Asia has seen a net increase of 1.4 million people.** This includes major cohorts from mainland China and Vietnam as well as English-speaking countries such as India and the Philippines.
- **By 2011, the total number of Mexican immigrants and the total number of immigrants from all Asian countries were roughly equal.** In 2007, Mexican immigrants exceeded the number of Asian immigrants by 1.5 million.

Immigrants are now more assimilated, on average, than at any point since the 1980s. The rise in assimilation can be attributed to this slowdown and shift in the arrival rate of new immigrants. The rise in assimilation has been most apparent along cultural and civic dimensions.

The immigrant population shows signs of recovering from the recession. Economic assimilation declined as growth slowed, but has regained its pre-recession level.

- **Post-recession immigrants are more assimilated than those who arrived before the recession.** In general, more recently arrived immigrants tend to be less assimilated. In a stark reversal of this historical pattern, post-recession immigrants are more culturally and economically similar to natives than immigrants arriving as much as a decade earlier.
- **The bursting of the housing bubble played a role in increasing assimilation.** Metro areas with the largest increases in immigrant assimilation tend to be those that were most affected by the housing boom-and-bust cycle. The evaporation of easy mortgage credit and construction-related jobs likely reversed the flow of new immigrants to these areas.

Assimilation Trends in Major U.S. Metro Area

- New York and Miami top the list of destination areas with the most assimilated immigrants.
- The most noteworthy departures occur in Houston and the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, where assimilation levels fall well below average—in the high teens in the Dallas area.
 - **Low assimilation in Texas cities reflects the high concentration of immigrants from Mexico and Central America in that region.**
- Mexican immigrants are also found in significant number in Southern California
 - **The Los Angeles area posts the third-lowest assimilation level among the top ten immigrant destinations.**
- In spite of its proximity to the Mexican border, the San Diego metro area posts an assimilation index above the national average.
 - Assimilation has increased most rapidly in the “inland empire” encompassing Riverside and San Bernardino in Southern California.
 - Two other metropolitan areas with significant housing price fluctuations in recent years—Orange County, California and Miami, Florida—have also witnessed large increases in assimilation.

This report demonstrates that the economic recession and its aftermath have altered the flow of migrants coming to the United States. This change is critical to the formulation of a forward-looking immigration policy.

REPORT GRAPHS/TABLES OF NOTE:

- Assimilation of Ten Largest Immigrant Groups, 2011
- Change in Assimilation Since the Recession
- Assimilation in the Ten Largest Destinations, 2011
- Assimilation Trends Since the Recession, by Metro Area

To read the report visit http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_76.htm
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Jacob Vigdor is an adjunct fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a professor of public policy and economics at Duke University, a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and an external research fellow at the Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration. His research interests are in the broad areas of immigration, education policy, housing policy, and political economy. Within those areas, he has published numerous scholarly articles in outlets such as *The Journal of Political Economy*, *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, *The Journal of Public Economics*, *The Journal of Human Resources*, and *The Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. He received a B.S. in policy analysis from Cornell University in 1994 and a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University in 1999.