

A Snapshot of New England's Immigrants: Stocks, Flows, and Origins, 1990–2006

In recent years New England has experienced both net domestic outmigration and slow native population growth. Counteracting these trends, however, is the continued influx of immigrants from abroad. As a result, foreign-born residents play an increasingly important role in replenishing the region's population and labor force. This article provides a snapshot of the size, recent growth, national origins, and period of arrival of the region's foreign-born population.

Size and Relative Shares

New England is home to more than 1.6 million immigrants, a disproportionately high fraction of whom live in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. While those states are home to three quarters of New England's total population, they host 92 percent of its immigrants. More than half of the region's foreign-born population—just over 900,000 immigrants—lives in Massachusetts; another 28 percent lives in Connecticut (see Figure 1).

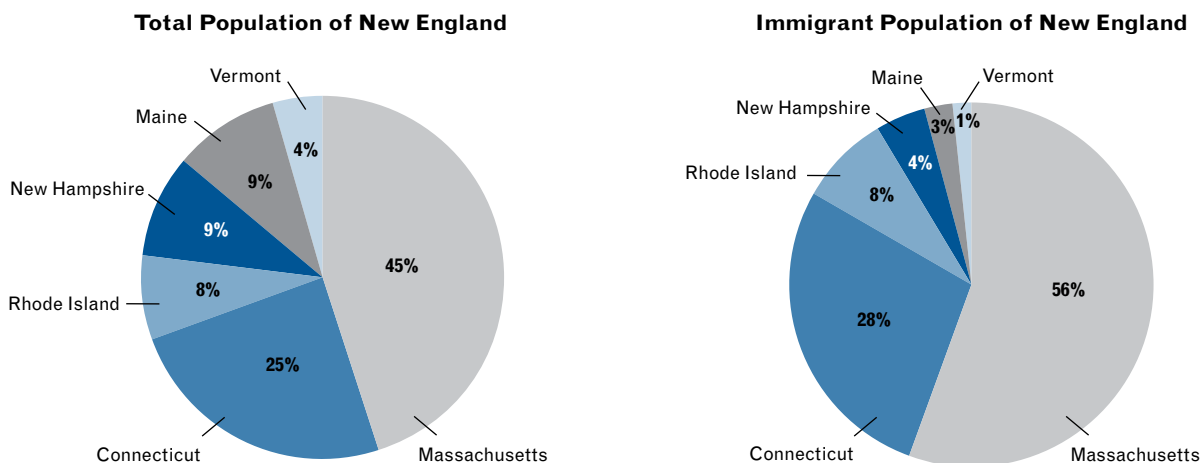
In 2006, 11.4 percent of New England's population was foreign born—up from 7.9 percent in 1990, and 9.9 percent in 2000. Immigrants' share of to-

tal population has been on the rise in each New England state, and has been especially pronounced in southern New England. In all three southern states, immigrants constitute more than 12 percent of all residents, with Massachusetts leading the group with 14.1 percent. In northern New England, the relative shares of immigrants are lower, ranging from 3.2 percent in Maine to 5.4 percent in New Hampshire.

Population Growth

The steady increase in the foreign-born share of New England's population reflects the fact that the immigrant population is growing far faster than its native population. Since 1990, the immigrant population has grown by 57.7 percent in southern New England and by 44.5 percent in northern New England (see Figure 2). Interestingly, while the growth of immigrants in the three southern states has slowed since the 1990s, it has maintained a steady pace in the north. Between 2000 and 2006, the immigrant population in northern New England grew by about 20 percent—equaling growth experienced over the entire preceding decade—while the growth rate in southern New England fell from 33 percent to 18 percent.

Figure 1: Immigrant and Total Population Shares



Source: 2006 American Community Survey.

Immigration is an important driver of population growth in New England. The region's native population grew by less than 4 percent between 1990 and 2006 and was even more anemic recently, rising by only 0.7 percent between 2000 and 2006. During this period, the native population in southern New England actually declined slightly.

Indeed, without new immigrants the region's population would have remained flat since 2000, and would barely have grown in the preceding decade. Between 2000 and 2006, international immigration accounted for as much of the region's population growth as did natural growth, and was just high enough to offset net domestic out-migration from the region.

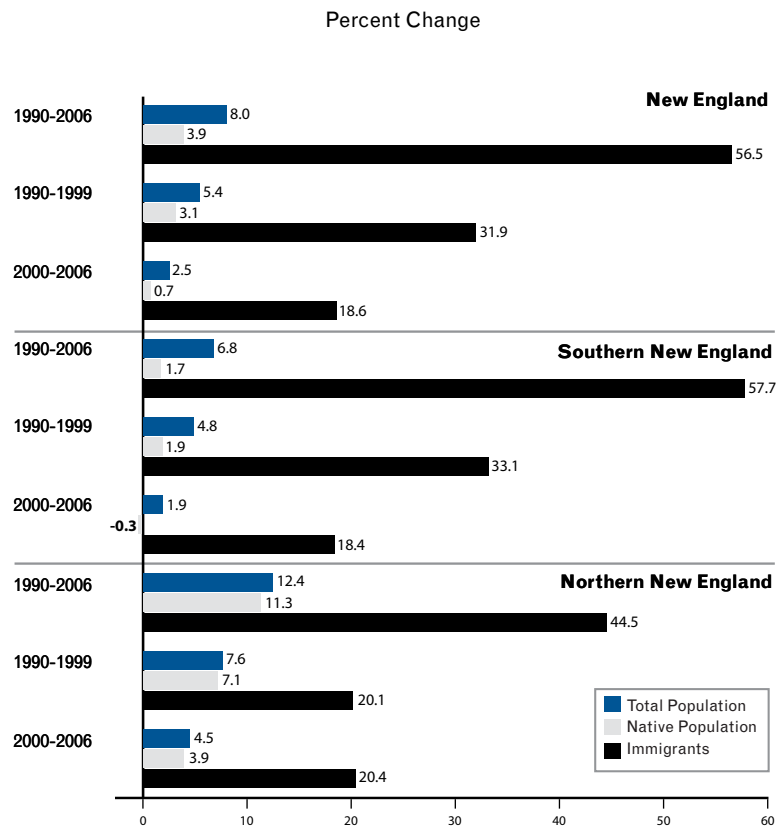
Immigrants' role in total population growth, however, differs across the region. In Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, international immigration is vital: without it, southern New England would have lost population both during the 1990s and since 2000. In northern New England, the importance of immigration is still much less pronounced. Between 1990 and 2006, immigration played a smaller role in population change than did both natural growth and domestic migration, which, on net, was positive for these three states.

National Origins

New England's immigrants have very diverse national origins. The largest shares hail from Latin America, Europe, and Asia, with each of these regions accounting for a quarter or more of the foreign born. Furthermore, the origins of northern New England's immigrants differ from those of the southern states' foreign born (see Figure 3).

The origins of New England's immigrants differ from those of their national counterparts. Whereas more than half of all immigrants in the United States come from countries in Latin America, only a third of New England's immigrants come from that region. The majority of New England's Latin American immigrants hail from countries in the Caribbean and in South America, whereas more than 70 percent of Latin American immigrants come from Central America. This discrepancy is driven by immigration from Mexico, which is much more prevalent in the nation than in New England: over 30 percent of U.S. immigrants hail from Mexico, whereas in New England their share is only 2 percent.

Figure 2: Immigrant Population Growth



The highest share of Latin Americans in our region come from Brazil. Brazilians comprise over 6 percent of region's foreign-born population, and form the largest group of immigrants to the region from a single country (see Table 1). More than 97 percent of Brazilians in New England live in the three southern states, while the northern states have much lower shares of immigrants both from Brazil, and from Latin American countries in general.

Immigrants from Europe have greater representation in New England than elsewhere in the United States. At 29 percent, their share is more than twice as high as in the nation as whole. While half of these Europeans are from countries that have historically sent many immigrants to the region—Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and Germany—more than a third are from countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and former Yugoslavia. Immigration from these latter countries picked up significantly in the 1990s, and now accounts for more than one tenth of all immigrants to the region—almost twice as high as its fraction nationwide.

Table 1: Top Origins of Immigrant Population

Percent of Immigrants from Each Country or Region

New England			United States		
1.	Eastern Europe	6.2	1.	Mexico	30.8
2.	Brazil	6.1	2.	Philippines	4.4
3.	Canada	5.5	3.	India	4.0
4.	Dominican Republic	5.2	4.	China	3.6
5.	China	5.2	5.	Eastern Europe	3.3
6.	Portugal	4.8	6.	Vietnam	3.0
7.	India	4.8	7.	Former USSR	2.8
8.	Former USSR	4.7	8.	El Salvador	2.8
9.	Italy	3.2	9.	Korea	2.7
10.	Guatemala	3.1	10.	Cuba	2.5

Northern New England			Southern New England		
1.	Canada	21.2	1.	Brazil	6.5
2.	Eastern Europe	6.6	2.	Eastern Europe	6.1
3.	China	5.6	3.	Dominican Republic	5.6
4.	United Kingdom	5.6	4.	China	5.2
5.	India	5.6	5.	Portugal	5.1
6.	Former USSR	5.2	6.	India	4.7
7.	Germany	4.4	7.	Former USSR	4.6
8.	Vietnam	2.7	8.	Canada	4.1
9.	Philippines	2.3	9.	Italy	3.4
10.	Korea	2.3	10.	Haiti	3.4

Source: Public Use Microdata, 2006 American Community Survey.

Notes: Northern New England includes Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Southern New England includes Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

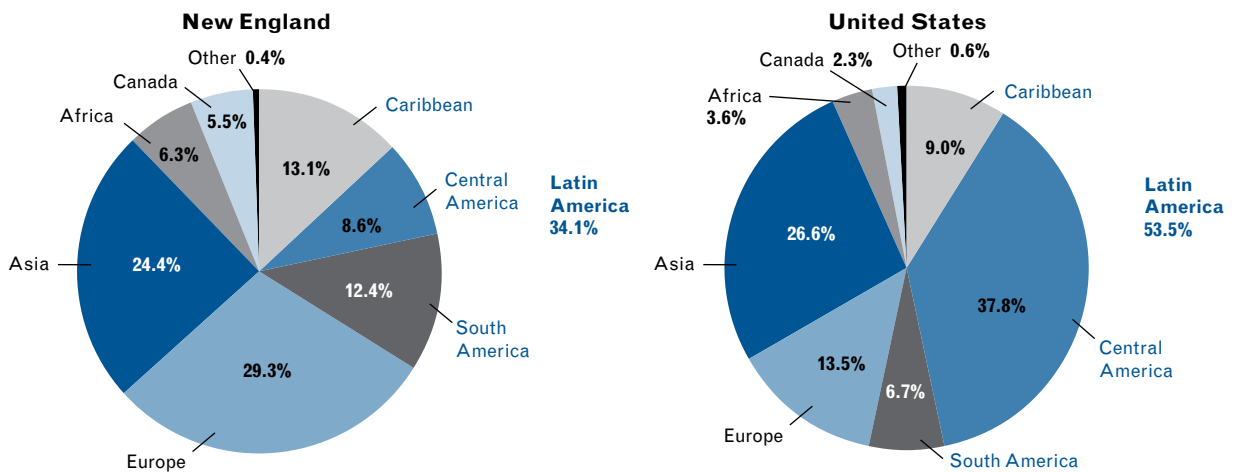
Eastern Europe includes Eastern and Central European countries from the former Communist bloc, excluding those from the former USSR.

Asian countries are the third major source of immigration to New England: immigrants from Asia account for one in four foreign-born persons both in the region and nationwide. Close to half of all Asian immigrants in New England, and 40 percent nationwide, originated from just three countries—China, India, and Korea.

Immigrants from Africa account for 6.3 percent of the region's foreign-born population. Africans in northern and southern New England compose fairly similar shares of the immigrant populations but hail from different countries. In southern New England more than a quarter of African immigrants are from Portuguese-speaking Cape Verde. Northern New England hosts much larger shares of African refugees from war-torn countries such as Somalia and Sudan. These two countries alone account for 42 percent of African immigrants in the northern states.

Finally, immigrants from Canada are more than twice as well represented in New England than in the nation, accounting for 5.5 percent of the region's immigrants. In fact, Canada ranks second only to Brazil in sending the highest number of immigrants to the region. Canadian immigrants are especially well represented in northern New England. They form the single largest group of immigrants in the three northern states and comprise over a fifth of their foreign-born population.

Figure 3: Origins of Immigrant Populations



Source: 2006 American Community Survey.

Table 2: Immigrant Population by Origin and Arrival Period

Percent of Immigrants from Each Country or Region, Arriving in Each Period

	New England				United States			
	Before 1980	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2006	Before 1980	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2006
All Immigrants	27.2	18.6	28.0	26.2	23.1	21.1	30.6	25.2
Latin America	13.7	22.6	31.9	31.8	19.1	22.1	32.0	26.8
Europe	48.0	12.1	22.8	17.0	43.6	12.4	26.1	17.9
Asia	15.8	23.7	30.6	30.0	20.1	25.3	30.2	24.4
Africa	12.0	18.3	31.9	37.8	11.0	15.5	35.8	37.7
Australia	33.3	11.4	20.9	34.4	24.8	16.4	27.7	31.1
Canada	66.0	6.9	16.3	10.8	48.3	11.1	22.2	18.3

Source: Public Use Microdata, 2006 American Community Survey.

Period of Arrival

The arrival of immigrants has ebbed and flowed over the past two centuries, affected by U.S. immigration policy and by economic conditions and political climates in both the United States and their home countries. While 27 percent of New England's current immigrants arrived before 1980, only one in five foreign-born persons in both New England and the nation arrived during the decade between 1980 and 1989 (see Table 2).

During the 1990s, immigration flows surged, particularly from Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. Close to a third of all Latin American and Asian immigrants and 44 percent of immigrants from the former Communist bloc immigrated during that period. Aside from the booming U.S. economy and the collapse of communism, heightened immigration in that decade reflects the fact that the 2.7 million undocumented immigrants granted amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act became eligible to bring over their relatives through family-based immigration.

A weakening economy and stricter immigration policy in the aftermath of 9/11 contributed to a temporary slowdown in immigrant flows in the early 2000s. The annual number of new immigrants declined by nearly a quarter between 2002 and 2003, but has picked up and remained steady since then. Overall, slightly more than a quarter of the region's and the nation's immigrants alike arrived after 2000, largely from countries in Latin America and Asia.

As in the nation as a whole, the origins of the foreign born in New England have shifted significantly

over time. Immigration from Canada and Europe has slowed considerably over the past three decades: more than two thirds of Canadians and close to half of all Europeans now in New England immigrated before 1980, whereas only 11 percent and 17 percent of each respective group arrived between 2000 and 2006.

In contrast, immigration from countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa has accelerated in recent years. Only 14 percent of immigrants from Latin America came to New England before 1980, but a full third immigrated after 2000. Immigration from Asia and Africa has followed similar patterns. While Africans, in particular, still account for only 6 percent of the region's immigrants, their numbers have grown at the highest rate: three times as many Africans immigrated to the region between 2000 and 2006, compared with before 1980.

This article describes findings from *A Profile of New England's Immigrants* by Antoniya Owens, a former Research Associate at the New England Public Policy Center. The full report, including more information for each New England state, is available at <http://www.bos.frb.org/economic/neppc/>.