Breaking the Barriers

The Promise of Citizenship for Los Angeles County

By Manuel Pastor, Justin Scoggins, Jared Sanchez, and Rhonda Ortiz

May 2016

Table of Contents

➲ Executive Summary

Naturalization can have large economic and civic benefits for both immigrants and the native-born. Yet there are 8.5 million adults in the U.S. who are eligible to naturalize but have not—and nearly one tenth of them live in Los Angeles County. This paper makes use of a new method to estimate the "eligible to naturalize" at national, county, and even neighborhood levels, and provides a detailed analysis of the barriers and opportunities for naturalization. We find that:

- There are significant economic gains to be made with naturalization, with analysis from multiple researchers indicating an **income gain of at least eight percent from naturalization**;

- There are important civic gains to be made, with **naturalized voters often voting at higher rates than their U.S.-born counterparts** and gaining the right to run for and serve in public office;

- **The barriers to naturalization** are both individual, including English-language ability and fear of the citizenship test, as well as structural, including the relatively high cost of naturalization and the civic infrastructure that does (or does not) encourage citizenship;

- In **Los Angeles County**, the largest national-origin group among the eligible to naturalize are from **Mexico**—and Mexicans, along with Central American counterparts, exhibit one of the lower rates of naturalization and one of the longest lags in deciding to naturalize;

- By contrast, **Asian American immigrants** have higher rates of naturalization and tend to naturalize with less years of eligibility; suggesting an early reach would further boost numbers while efforts for Mexicans might focus on those with more years of eligibility;

- **A sense of "rootedness"**—which we examine by looking at home ownership, having U.S.-citizen children, and other factors—seems to promote naturalization, suggesting significant opportunities to work through children to encourage parental naturalization;

- **"Defensive" naturalization** can rise in time of heated rhetoric around immigration and immigrants, with mid-1990s California providing a key example of the pattern and the possibilities; and

- This may be particularly salient now given the dramatic rise in **mixed-status families**; with the lives of the eligible to naturalize often deeply interwoven with the lives of undocumented immigrants, there is ample reason to find a political voice.

Overall, this paper discusses the *who*, the *why*, and the *what* of naturalization: we offer a profile of the eligible to naturalize, we suggest reasons why they should be supported in naturalizing, and we detail which individual and structural obstacles to naturalization matter. We also provide a discussion of the *where*: we provide tract-level maps of where the eligible to naturalize reside in Los Angeles County, seeking to help groups focus on those areas generally "rich" in naturalization opportunities and improve their outreach to particular sub-groups.

We conclude by focusing on the *when* – and that is now. While the country is roiled by immigration politics, California and Los Angeles County have a unique opportunity to demonstrate to the nation what goes right when we welcome rather than reject immigrants. After all, immigrant integration is in everyone's interests—and developing local partnerships to encourage naturalization is a positive step toward achieving the broader economic prosperity and strengthened civic infrastructure necessary for the future of our region and our state.

➲ Introduction

Naturalization is the process by which immigrants lawfully residing in the U.S. can become citizens. The requirements to do so can seem complex: generally, one needs to have been in the country lawfully at least five years, pay what is for many a substantial fee, and take a citizenship test in English. But the benefits of naturalization are far simpler: with citizenship comes the right to vote and participate in formal decision-making and as well as improved economic outcomes.

In short, the social and economic benefits that come with naturalization are substantial, including for the native-born who benefit from a more robust civic life as well as the spillover effects of higher immigrant incomes. While these benefits are important anywhere in the U.S., the issue may be especially salient in Los Angeles County: one in ten adults in the County are Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) who are eligible to naturalize, but have not yet done so.

To close that naturalization gap, we need to educate Angelenos—native-born allies as well as immigrants themselves—about the benefits, barriers, and motivations for naturalization, and also supply data that is useful for those working to increase naturalization rates. This brief seeks to do just that, providing arguments, data, and even maps to more effectively encourage naturalization.

Utilizing a new method to estimate the "eligible-to-naturalize" population and applying it to a pooled sample of the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) microdata, we at the University of Southern California (USC) Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) provide a detailed analysis of naturalization-eligible adults in L.A. County. While the focus on L.A. County is partly driven by our own location—this is home—it is important to note that the County is home to far more LPRs and naturalization-eligible LPR adults than any other county in the U.S.; indeed, L.A. County hosts about one in ten eligible adults nationwide.[1] Our hope for this analysis is threefold:

❶ By highlighting the multiple benefits of naturalization and assessing the barriers faced by immigrants from different origins, we seek to inform the work of those in the public and private sectors promoting naturalization in the County;

❷ By understanding how politics can mobilize civic participation, we seek to inform strategy of organizers seeking to seize the right moments to boost naturalizations;

❸ By providing detailed neighborhood-level maps of where the eligible to naturalize are, we seek to contribute to efficient outreach of those working on the ground to promote citizenship, helping to maximize their impact.

Of course, the good news for L.A. County and its communities is that they are well positioned to realize the promise of citizenship. While the County has the greatest numbers of those who are eligible to naturalize, it also has a vibrant ecosystem of immigrant-serving organizations and partnerships and strategies for immigrant integration. It is our hope that this analysis will contribute to the work already being done to realize and capitalize on the opportunity presented by the large segment of eligible-to-naturalize residents—thus contributing to increasing economic prosperity and strengthening civic infrastructure for all.

---

[1] See the appendix for a brief description of our methodology; a longer description is online: http://bit.ly/1rRVkOU

➲ What's at Stake for L.A. County?

The L.A. Context

L.A. County is home to about 770,000 adults who are eligible to naturalize, but have not, accounting for more than one-third of the California total and nearly one-tenth of the U.S. total. That L.A. County makes up only one-quarter of the state's overall population and about 3 percent of the U.S. population suggests that there is a higher concentration of eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County. As Figure 1 shows, this is indeed the case: the eligible to naturalize account for a larger share of the County's adult population than for California or the nation as a whole. Specifically, 10 percent of the adult population in L.A. County is eligible to naturalize. This is 2 percentage points higher than

for California as a whole and more than double the U.S. share. Of course, it is not only the eligible to naturalize themselves that will potentially be affected by naturalization; their children and households are likely to benefit as well, particularly to the extent that incomes and civic participation rise. Looking at the share of all households that include an eligible-to-naturalize adult, we find that L.A. County has almost three times the share for the nation as a whole (17 percent and 6 percent, respectively).

Moreover, almost one-fifth of L.A. County's children have at least one eligible-to-naturalize parent, compared to 15 percent in California and only 7 percent in the U.S. If we look at just children who live below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, the share rises to 23 percent, suggesting that those children in greatest need are more likely to have an eligible-to-naturalize parent.

In short, eligible-to-naturalize immigrants, and their children and spouses, are deeply woven into the fabric of L.A. County. With such a large eligible-to-naturalize adult population, L.A. County has even more to gain than other places from renewed organizing efforts to increase naturalization. The potential gains are social and economic in nature, and we describe those directly in the next section.

Figure 1. Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults in Los Angeles County, California, and the United States, 2010-2014

	Los Angeles County	State of California	United States
Percent of **all adults** that are eligible to naturalize	10%	8%	4%
Percent of **all households** that include an eligible-to-naturalize adult	17%	13%	6%
Percent of **all children** that have an eligible-to-naturalize parent	19%	15%	7%
Percent of **all children living below 150% of the poverty level** that have an eligible-to-naturalize parent	23%	19%	9%

Notes:
For the poverty calculation, 150 percent of the federal poverty level is used as a more accurate measure of poverty for Los Angeles County and California given the state's high housing costs.

The Social and Economic Benefits of Naturalization

Arguably one of the largest benefits to becoming a citizen is obtaining the right to vote. Nationally, our estimates for 2010-2014 suggest that there are about 8.5 million adult LPRs who are eligible to naturalize and thus could potentially participate in the electoral process. This means that a large share of the population is governed by policies that they have no effective means of influencing—something anyone committed to democratic values should hope to correct. This situation is not lost on organizers, of course, as organizations like the Latino Victory Fund and National Partnership for New Americans have launched campaigns to help naturalize and register new citizens to vote across the country (Gamboa, 2015; Latino Victory Project, 2015).

The potential impacts in Los Angeles County are, as usual, especially dramatic: among all adults in Los Angeles County, only 77 percent are citizens and thus eligible to vote but full naturalization of the eligible to naturalize would increase that share to 86 percent, getting closer to democratic ideals. Even more directly: research suggests that naturalized Latinos actually voter at higher rates than U.S.-born Latinos (54 percent versus 46 percent in 2012) and so direct civic participation overall could rise, strengthening local democracy (Gonzalez-Barrera, Lopez Hugo, Passel, & Taylor, 2013).

Newly naturalized citizens also gain the ability to run for public office (Sumption & Flamm, 2012). Expanding and diversifying the electorate can be coupled with the development of new candidates and leaders to run for office, and this can help tilt the balance on crucial issues like immigration and the economy. Of course, greater civic participation—through both voting and getting elected to office—can yield greater resources for immigrant communities, including those who remain undocumented. Given the current volatile—and often hostile—rhetoric toward the undocumented population, greater representation in government decisions can lead to better lived outcomes and integration-friendly policymaking (Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, 2010).

While improving civic participation is a key reason for encouraging naturalization, economic benefits are also important. Research shows that naturalization is associated with increased earnings and income even when controlling for many other important determinants (Bratsberg, Ragan, & Nasir, 2002; Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015; Pastor & Scoggins, 2012; Shierholz, 2010). The most recent estimate from (Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015) is based on an analysis of 21 U.S. cities and finds that, controlling for other important factors (as well as self-selection bias), naturalization produces an earnings gain of 8.9 percent (although the period of time over which that gain would be realized was not examined). Pastor & Scoggins (2012) similarly find a gain of between 8 and 11 percent and their analysis suggests that a little over half of that gain is realized in the first few years after naturalizing. Research also shows that naturalized immigrants, compared with non-citizen immigrants or eligible-to-naturalize LPRs, fare better in terms of other significant economic indicators like poverty, unemployment, home ownership, and health insurance coverage (Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015; Pastor & Scoggins, 2012; Shierholz, 2010; Sumption & Flamm, 2012).

Some analysts have used their estimated gains in individual earnings from naturalization along with estimates of the number of eligible-to-naturalize workers to project the aggregate impact on local economies (Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015; The Center for Popular Democracy, USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, & The National Partnership for New Americans, 2014).

For example, The Center for Popular Democracy et al. (2014), using data from 2012, project local economic impacts from increased naturalization rates in terms of increased earnings, output (Gross Domestic Product, or GDP), and state and local tax revenues in the cities of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Their results for the City of Los Angeles suggest that a program to reduce the number of eligible-to-naturalize workers by half over five years (through increased naturalization rates) would result in a cumulative increase in earnings of between $2.1 and $2.8 billion over ten years, which would in turn increase GDP by $2.5 to $3.3 billion, and state and local tax revenues generated in the City by $241 to $318 million over the same period (The Center for Popular Democracy et al., 2014). Given that the City of Los Angeles contains less than half (about 44 percent) of all of L.A. County's eligible adults, these figures would be much larger if calculated for the County as a whole.

Not only does naturalization bring social and economic benefits, but the naturalization process, itself, can be a capacity-building tool for organizers and community institutions. Indeed, organizations such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), PICO, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (AAAJ-LA), the AFL-CIO, SEIU and many more have created programs that engage LPRs on a broad range of issues throughout an extended amount of time.[2] The hope is that through further local engagement year-round, naturalized citizens can play a crucial role in helping to bring about grassroots policy change, yet another boost to civic life.

---

[2] More information can be found about the respective organizations' campaigns by visiting their websites.

➲ Why Some Naturalize, and Some Do Not

What Matters to the Naturalization Decision

If naturalization promotes civic engagement, provides a formal voice in elections, and can even lead to enhanced household income, why do so many eligible-to-naturalize immigrants remain non-citizens? The reasons are both individual (such as a lack of English language skills and/or a fear that the citizenship test is too difficult) and administrative (mainly, the cost of the application is too high) (Battistelli, 2013; Taylor, Gonzalez-Barrera, Passel, & Lopez, 2012). These have all translated to very low naturalization rates for groups in L.A. County that exhibit lower levels of income, education, and English language abilities, such as Mexican and Central American immigrants.

On the flip side, research shows that a number of broad factors like economic, political, social, and cultural conditions in a host country can increase the likelihood of naturalization in the U.S. (Aguirre & Saenz, 2002; Logan, Oh, & Darrah, 2012; Yang, 1994). Specific to the California experience, the anti-immigrant political climate in the mid-1990s seemed to increase naturalization rates and voter turnout of new citizens (Pantoja, Ramirez, & Segura, 2001). Of course, the hope is that one does not have to see anti-immigrant sentiment to see naturalization rise—and it is the case that policies and systems aimed at welcoming immigrants and helping them adapt to the U.S. (for example, fostering economic engagement and facilitating English language acquisition and literacy (Yang, 1994)) can also have a positive impact on naturalization.

Of course, experience in the U.S. and years of residency has an impact on naturalization, too. Several studies have found that longer residence in the U.S. is associated with higher rates of naturalization (Abascal, 2015; Johnson, Reyes, Mameesh, & Barbour, 1999; Logan et al., 2012; Pantoja, & Gershon, 2006). While more time in the U.S. generally increases naturalization rates, there is also evidence that the positive effect of

➲ Requirements for Naturalization

We began the paper by saying that to become a citizen, "generally, one needs to have been in the country lawfully at least five years, pay what is for many a substantial fee, and take a citizenship test in English." The system, as one might expect is actually more complex:

For example, for those with the requisite five years, they must also be 18 or older (which is why we focus on adults in this paper; children acquire "derivative citizenship" through their parents' decision) and they must also have resided in the U.S. continuously for those five years (although some time out of country is permitted).

In addition, spouses of U.S. citizens can apply for citizenship after three years of lawful residence, providing they have been married to that U.S. citizen the whole time. There are also faster tracks for those serving in the U.S. military (or with service in the military) and some acceleration for those with refugee status.

Finally, the citizenship test and the demonstration of English ability are separate things, with the latter demonstrated in an interview setting. However, those individuals who are 50 years or older and have lived as a lawful permanent resident (LPR) for 20 years can apply for a waiver and have the citizenship interview and test administered in a native language; there is also a similar waiver for those who are 55 or older and have lived as a permanent resident in the United States for 15 years.

While we are big proponents of English-learning, partly because of the enhanced job mobility and improved civic participation that comes with mastery of English, this suggests that the language barriers we discuss in this paper can be overcome for older residents by making them more aware of the possibilities of testing in their native language.

each year in the U.S. has increased among immigrants who have arrived in more recent periods. Passel (2007) finds that the share of LPRs admitted into the U.S. between 1992 and 1995 that became citizens within their first 10 years of residence was markedly higher than those admitted in earlier periods. Some pointed to the 1998 change in Mexican policy to allow dual citizenship for Mexican citizens as a major reason for the increase in naturalization rates among more recent arrivals (Gonzalez-Barrera et al., 2013).

Aside from time, other characteristics that reflect "rootedness" in the U.S. have been associated with increased likelihood of naturalization, such as marriage, home ownership, and having children (Johnson, 1999; Portes & Curtis, 1987; Yang, 1994). As indicated in Johnson et al. (1999), the positive effect of being married and having children on a person's odds of naturalizing is actually driven more specifically by being married to a U.S. citizen and having U.S.-born (citizen) children. The authors suggest the positive impact of citizen spouses is both because it reduces the amount of time before an LPR is eligible to naturalize and increases information about the naturalization process. While the general explanation in the literature for the positive effect of U.S. citizen children on naturalization rates is indirect—i.e., that it is really the increased rootedness in the U.S. that these traits reflect that is the driving force—it is also possible that children could have a direct impact on their parents' naturalization rates and we explore this idea further in our analysis below.

Geography matters, too. For example, being in a city can facilitate naturalization because an urban concentration of immigrant communities can help foster information exchange (Yang, 1994). This is important given that the lack of awareness or information outreach around specific naturalization requirements is a core barrier to naturalizing. Conversely, this type of concentration can potentially insulate LPRs from the necessity of citizenship all together (Aguirre & Saenz, 2002; Logan et al., 2012; Yang, 1994).

What does all this mean for Los Angeles County? When we examine data on eligible-to-naturalize adults in L.A. County by country of origin (Figure 2), we see that Mexicans are by far the largest group, representing almost half of all eligible adults. Part of the reason Mexican-origin immigrants are such a large share: they have fairly low naturalization rates (meaning the percent of eligible-to-naturalize adults who have actually become citizens) and also delay the decision, with half of those in the pool of the eligible to naturalize having been eligible for at least 20 years (and hence in the country for even longer). Similarly low naturalization rates and lengths of eligibility are observed for immigrants from Central America. For example, Salvadorans and Guatemalans do only slightly better with naturalization rates of 59 and 56 percent and median years of eligibility of 18 years.

Figure 2 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults by Country of Origin, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

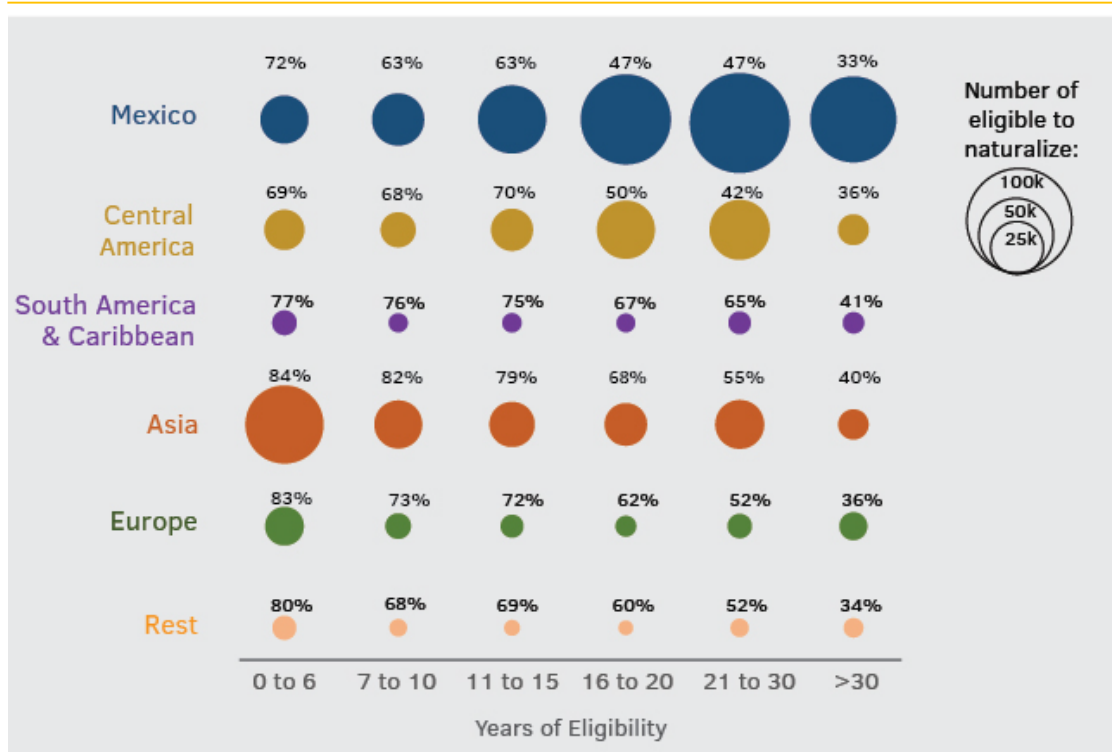| Country of Origin	Total Population	%	Median Years of Eligibility	Naturalization Rate
Mexico	373,969	49%	20	54%
El Salvador	72,999	10%	18	59%
Guatemala	39,647	5%	18	56%
Philippines	32,561	4%	9	82%
Korea	26,679	3%	11	78%
China	24,567	3%	7	78%
Japan	15,491	2%	16	46%
India	10,657	1%	5	69%
Armenia	10,440	1%	6	80%
Iran	10,062	1%	9	89%
Canada	9,124	1%	19	60%
Honduras	8,484	1%	16	50%
Vietnam	8,445	1%	15	91%
Taiwan	8,225	1%	8	85%
Nicaragua	6,940	1%	19	70%
Peru	6,560	1%	15	67%
England	5,174	1%	18	62%
Germany	4,650	1%	19	69%
United Kingdom, ns	4,345	1%	12	54%
Thailand	4,261	1%	18	77%
All Other	84,744	11%	14	80%
Total	**768,024**	**100%**	**12**	**68%**

Notes:
The naturalization rate is defined as the ratio of naturalized adults to the sum of the naturalized adults and eligible-to-naturalize adults.

Hondurans, while only making up about one percent of all eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County, have one of the lowest naturalization rates of any group examined at 50 percent. Asian American immigrants in L.A. County tend to have the highest rates of naturalization. In descending order by naturalization rates among all country-of-origin groups, Vietnam, Iran, Taiwan, and the Philippines top the list with naturalization rates of over 80 percent and relatively low median years of eligibility of under ten years (except for eligible-to-naturalize adults from Vietnam, for which the median is 15 years). Other Asian countries such as China, Korea, and Thailand also have high rates of naturalization of over 75 percent, while the rate for Indians is a bit lower at 69 percent—though they also have the lowest median years of eligibility among all groups of only five years, so their rates are likely to increase with a few more years of eligibility.

The relationship between the numbers of the eligible to naturalize and the years of eligibility is shown graphically in Figure 3. Each bubble is drawn in proportion to the size of the eligible-to-naturalize adult population in each cohort by country/region of origin and years of eligibility category, and the naturalization rates for each cohort are reported in the labels. This graphic is useful to gain a quick understanding of which groups represent the greatest potential for increasing naturalization rates, and shows that Mexicans (as well Central Americans) who have been eligible for more than ten years account for a very large share of all of all eligible adults, and have the lowest naturalization rates. The next largest group is Asian Americans who have only been eligible for less than ten years, and this group of potential new citizens has a high naturalization rate. Thus, a promising strategy to increase naturalization rates overall in the County, thereby reducing the pool of eligible-to-naturalize adults, would be to focus outreach on these two populations.

Figure 3 - Number of Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults by Country/Region of Origin and Years of Eligibility, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

Notes: Size of bubble indicates number eligible to naturalize. Naturalization rates are indicated in the data labels, and are defined as the ratio of naturalized adults to the sum of the naturalized adults and eligible-to-naturalize adults for each cohort. For naturalized adults, years of eligibility includes only years of eligibility prior to naturalization.

For long-term eligible Mexicans, the aforementioned barriers may be more important in explaining the low rates—along with perhaps a sense of it being "too late" for them to pursue citizenship and/or a realization that there is not much time left to enjoy the benefits of citizenship, making it less appealing as a value proposition. Therefore, a strategy to encourage naturalization may be to work toward reducing barriers as well as educating those eligible about the benefits and importance of naturalization. The high naturalization rates for eligible-to-naturalize Asian American immigrants who have been eligible for relatively few years, however, suggests that the barriers may be less daunting and the desire to naturalize is there; for these groups, encouraging naturalization may be achieved by more focused and effective outreach.

To be sure, this is not to say that encouraging naturalization among other groups is less important. Indeed, the gains to immigrant families and L.A. County would be greatest if citizenship were achieved by all eligible immigrants. However, for those seeking to boost the overall number of naturalizations, it is useful to consider the numbers presented in Figure 3. And a focus on long-term eligible Mexicans, for example, does not mean that strategies aimed at increasing their naturalization rates will not improve those of other groups; Central Americans share a similar language and culture (and are in the same Spanish-language media market), and also have large numbers who have delayed naturalization, so any targeted strategies to accelerate the naturalization of Mexicans could have important "spill-over" effects.

When we examine L.A. County's eligible-to-naturalize adult population data by language spoken at home and ability to speak English (Figure 4), our analysis confirms past research that shows language is an important barrier to naturalization—but not across the board.

For example, on the one hand, over two-thirds of eligible adults speak Spanish at home. That group has one of the lowest levels of both English speaking abilities and naturalization rates of any language group. Thus, the data suggest that for the Spanish-speaking population, language appears to be a significant barrier to naturalization. On the other hand, several language groups among the eligible-to-naturalize Asian population also report very low levels of English speaking proficiency yet have some of the highest naturalization rates, including Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and those speaking other languages found in East and Southeast Asia. This suggests that while English language fluency may be important, it clearly not the only factor at play. It also suggests that given a variety of barriers and motivations that differ between immigrant groups, it is useful to examine data on barriers separately for each group.

Figure 4 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults by Language Spoken at Home, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

Language	Total Population	%	% Speak English Well	Naturalization Rate
Spanish	513,462	67%	43%	55%
English	59,562	8%	100%	73%
Chinese	37,153	5%	43%	83%
Filipino, Tagalog	29,521	4%	90%	83%
Korean	26,332	3%	44%	77%
Armenian	18,423	2%	55%	84%
Japanese	14,260	2%	76%	41%
Hindi and related	10,124	1%	83%	75%
Vietnamese	5,707	1%	33%	91%
French	4,873	1%	97%	68%
Russian	4,811	1%	70%	84%
German	4,382	1%	99%	64%
Persian, Iranian, Farsi	4,353	1%	69%	90%
Other East/ Southeast Asian	3,609	0.5%	38%	79%
Thai, Siamese, Lao	3,542	0.5%	52%	75%
Hebrew, Israeli	3,291	0.4%	90%	75%
Arabic	3,018	0.4%	62%	85%
Indonesian	2,782	0.4%	82%	60%
Dravidian	2,590	0.3%	88%	59%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,739	0.2%	96%	77%
All other	14,496	2%	82%	76%
Total	**768,030**	**100%**	**53%**	**100%**

Notes:
The naturalization rate is defined as the ratio of naturalized adults to the sum of the naturalized adults and eligible-to-naturalize adults.

Complicating the L.A. Story

To delve a bit deeper into which other sorts of socio-economic barriers to naturalization seem most important in L.A. County—and for whom—we examined additional measures. In addition to English language ability, we considered poverty, median annual earnings, and homeownership. While low levels of English speaking proficiency, high poverty rates, and low earnings are clearly potential economic barriers to naturalization, low levels of homeownership could reflect both an economic barrier (i.e. lower financial assets) and perhaps less of an intention to remain in L.A. and the U.S. for the long term.[3]

The basic approach is to compare the eligible to naturalize to the naturalized on each measure, with large differences indicating that the particular measure may reflect an important barrier in L.A. County. However, to provide for a more consistent comparison we do two things. First, based on the notion that barriers and motivations are likely to differ between immigrant groups, we look at differences *within* three broad immigrant groups: those from Mexico and Central America, those from Asia, and those from all other parts of the world. Second, while we report data for all naturalized adults combined, we focus our analysis on comparing the recently naturalized—that is, those who naturalized during the year of the ACS survey or the year prior.[4]

Comparing the eligible to naturalize to the recently naturalized is what we term a "flow" analysis, and is important when looking at socioeconomic measures which can change over time—particularly in light of the economic benefits that are associated with naturalization itself. For example, just because naturalized adults have higher earnings than the eligible to naturalize does not necessarily mean that they had higher earnings when they made the decision to apply for citizenship. Thus, the question of which

factors matter more in making the decision to naturalize is best answered by comparing those who naturalized very recently (and thus have not had a chance to realize the economic and other gains that come with citizenship) to those who were eligible to naturalize in the same time period but did not.

Figure 5 shows the results of our flow analysis. We find evidence that poverty is an important factor in the decision to naturalize for Mexican and Central American immigrants in L.A. County, but does not appear to be important for other groups. Among eligible-to-naturalize Mexican and Central American adults in the County, 43 percent live below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, while only 32 percent of their recently naturalized peers do. Poverty rates are identical for both eligible and recently naturalized Asian American adults, at 25 percent (implying that Asian Americans were equally likely to naturalize regardless of whether they lived above or below the poverty line), while poverty rates are actually higher among recently-naturalized adults from all other parts of the world (28 percent) than for those who are eligible to naturalize (25 percent).

A similar pattern is seen in the results for median annual earnings and home ownership. Interestingly, however, the differences in median earnings between recently-naturalized and eligible-to-naturalize Mexican and Central American immigrants is relatively smaller than the difference in poverty rates. Given that poverty status is a family-based measure and takes into account the number of children and combined income from all workers in the family, this result suggests that individual earnings matter but family composition matters too; having more children to take care of and fewer other working adults to help out can reduce the odds of achieving citizenship.

---

[3] See the appendix for more detailed demographic and socio-economic data on naturalized and eligible-to-naturalize adults in L.A. County.

[4] Due to the sampling design of the ACS, this captures only about a year and a half of naturalizations (rather than two years). See the appendix for more information.

Figure 5 - Flow Analysis, Adults in Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

	All Naturalized	%	Recently Naturalized	%	Eligible to Naturalize	%
Below 150% of Poverty Line	373,242	23%	24,928	28%	283,927	37%
Mexican and Central American	172,711	27%	11,291	32%	218,931	43%
Asian American	141,848	20%	9,342	25%	40,907	25%
All Other	58,683	21%	4,295	28%	24,090	25%
Median Annual Earnings	$42,681		$34,741		$28,871	
Mexican and Central American	$33,678		$28,454		$24,970	
Asian American	$51,827		$40,649		$41,900	
All Other	$54,283		$43,427		$50,517	
Homeownership (householders)	445,588	56%	13,416	38%	95,249	32%
Mexican and Central American	166,811	54%	5,804	43%	58,414	30%
Asian American	195,813	59%	5,412	37%	21,625	34%
All Other	82,964	54%	2,200	31%	15,210	35%
Speak English Well or Better	1,204,569	72%	63,450	72%	407,776	53%
Mexican and Central American	418,610	66%	22,523	65%	223,298	44%
Asian American	540,290	75%	28,172	74%	105,185	64%
All Other	245,670	86%	12,755	83%	79,294	82%

Notes:

Median annual earnings is in inflation-adjusted, 2014 dollars, and is reported for full-time workers only, defined as those who worked at least 50 weeks and had usual work hours of at least 35 hours per week during the year prior to the survey.

The results for English speaking abilities reflect what was found earlier—namely, that limited English seems to matter the most for Mexican and Central American immigrants in the decision/ability to naturalize. Among Mexican and Central American immigrant adults, 65 percent of the recently-naturalized report speaking English "well" or better while only 44 percent of the eligible to naturalize do. A command of spoken English appears to be a significant factor for Asian American immigrants as well, but to a lesser degree, with 11 percentage-point gap between recently-naturalized and eligible-to-naturalize adults (75 percent and 64 percent, respectively). It does not appear to be much of a factor for immigrants from all other parts of the world.

One final pattern that is interesting to note in Figure 5 when comparing all naturalized to the recently naturalized is that while poverty, earnings, and homeownership all seem to improve in the years following naturalization, English speaking ability does not seem to change much. This suggests that, at least in a highly diverse place with many ethnic enclaves like L.A. County, while some level of English proficiency is necessary to achieve naturalization, the economic gains from naturalization can be realized without further improvements in English speaking abilities.

➲ What Other Factors Matter for Naturalization?

Mobilizing LPRs and New Citizens

Thus far we have focused our data analysis on the size and characteristics of the eligible-to-naturalize adult population in L.A. County, and the extent to which different socioeconomic barriers seem to matter for the decision to naturalize in L.A. County. There are, of course, many other factors that influence the decision to naturalize. We present two contextual factors that may also impact naturalization: the ways in which an anti-immigrant political environment and living in a mixed-status family might impact naturalization.

Immigration has had a tremendous impact on the overall make-up of the U.S. population. Since 1965, over half of our population growth (72 million out of 131 million) is somehow linked to immigration, including children and grandchildren of immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2015). Changes to the immigration system ushered in by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which shifted the focus from country-of-origin quotas to family ties, are argued to have helped facilitate large-scale migration from mostly Latin American and Asian countries (Hipsman & Meissner, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015).

Since 1965, the number of naturalizations rose steadily by an average of 5 percent annually until 1993 (Passel, 2007). Between 1992 and 1995, the number of naturalizations increased twofold, going from 240,000 to 490,000—and surpassing 1 million in 1996 (Johnson et al., 1999; Passel, 2007). We can attribute the sudden spike in naturalizations to the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, which created a pathway to legalization for an estimated 2.6 million unauthorized immigrants (Passel, 2007). Also at the federal level, new restrictions to benefits and rights for legal immigrants were approved by the Clinton Administration in 1996 while reforming welfare law (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) and effectively boosted naturalization (Fix, 2009; Singer, 2004). With benefits limited for non-citizen immigrants, local areas across the country, including California's Santa Clara County, set up programs to encourage naturalization to ensure their residents were eligible for federally funded programs, and thus off their own local rolls for certain welfare benefits (Singer, 2004).

California's political context also played a role in the uptick of naturalizations during the mid-1990s—including in Los Angeles County. In 1994, California's voters passed Proposition 187 which aimed to make undocumented immigrants ineligible for public benefits and facilitated the systemic marginalization of immigrant communities in California from public services, such as education and healthcare (Ayres Jr., 1994). Its passage, and the subsequent anti-immigrant measures proposed during the mid-1990s, not only served to boost newly naturalized citizens but also increased voter turnout of new citizens during this time in California (Pantoja et al., 2001). Immigrants' rights groups played a critical role in the community outreach and education of eligible-to-naturalize LPRs assisting with the citizenship surge (Navarrette Jr., 1995).

Of course, the defensive naturalization of that era was able to draw on a ready pool of eligible-to-naturalize LPRs created in part because of IRCA; that reform had granted LPR status to many who were previously undocumented and so directly felt the sting of that era's negative politics. The driver today may be different but the sting is nearly the same: the growth and presence of mixed-status families means that many take the anti-immigrant tone quite personally and the spike of naturalizations in the 1990s seen in California may be possible for the country as a whole (Jaffe, 2015). Connections are already being made between the anti-immigrant tone of the 2016 Republican Party presidential primary and a 14.5 percent jump in naturalization applications in June-December of 2015 (Lah & Moya, 2016).

Mixed-Status Families and Naturalization

Since the 1990s, the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has increased dramatically, from about 5.7 million in 1995 to about 12.2 million in 2007 (Krogstad & Passel, 2015). While it has declined by at least a million since then, there are still far more mixed-status families—that is, families that include undocumented, documented, and native-born residents—than there were in the mid-1990s (Passel & Cohn, 2009). If the anti-immigrant climate targeting the undocumented triggered a surge in civic engagement among eligible-to-naturalize adults in California at that time, when fewer of them actually had undocumented family members, we would expect an even greater reaction now.

Figure 6 shows why this argument is particularly salient in L.A. County. Of all eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County, one in four has an undocumented family member living in the same household. This rate would certainly be higher if we included all family members, but the ACS microdata we use for our analysis only allows for the identification of family relationships for
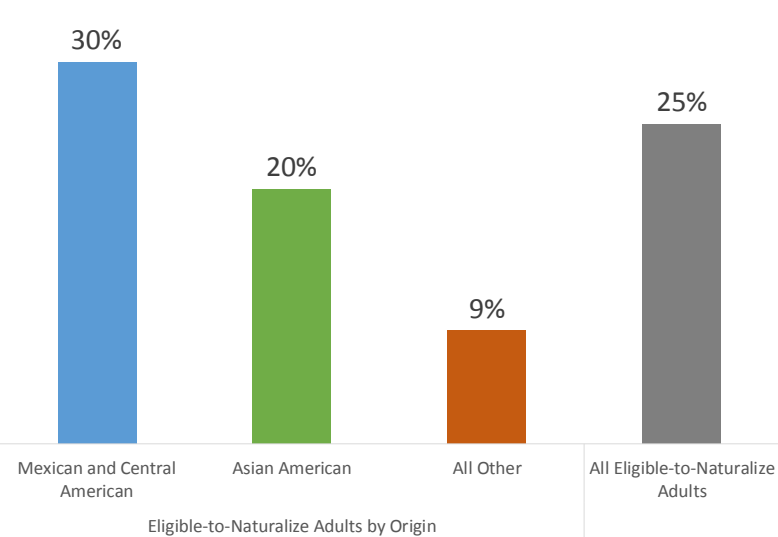
people living in the same household. The share of eligible-to-naturalize adults living with an undocumented family member highest for Mexicans and Central Americans (combined) at nearly one in three, but is also higher than might be expected for Asian Americans at one in five (20 percent).[5] Such close family ties to the undocumented suggest that the inflammatory rhetoric subsuming real questions of immigration policy in the current election cycle are likely to "hit home" for the eligible to naturalize; what begins as dinner-table conversation can drive eligible adults toward citizenship and the voting booth.

The other potential wind behind the back of the eligible to naturalize is their U.S.-born children. As noted earlier, having children—and U.S.-born citizen children in particular—has been associated a greater likelihood of naturalizing. This is presumably the case because having U.S.-born children instills a deeper sense of rootedness in the U.S. and immigrant parents want their status to be just as permanent as that of their children (note that while the word "permanent" is included in the status LPRs hold, the status is still temporary and must be renewed every ten years). This notion of parents seeking citizenship to avoid being separated from their children is particularly relevant—and rational—in the midst of threats of deportation being aired in national debates and some findings suggesting that LPRs represent 10 percent of all deportees (Immigration Policy Center, 2010).

It is also possible, however, that children may have a direct impact in terms of motivating their eligible-to-naturalize parents to become citizens. After all, they are bound to be exposed to the same

Figure 6 - Percent with an Undocumented Family Member in the Household, Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults in Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

---

[5] It is interesting to note that the rates of living with an undocumented family member are much lower for naturalized

adults (only 7 percent for all naturalized adults combined)—perhaps because they are able to petition for family members to come to the U.S. legally with a visa.
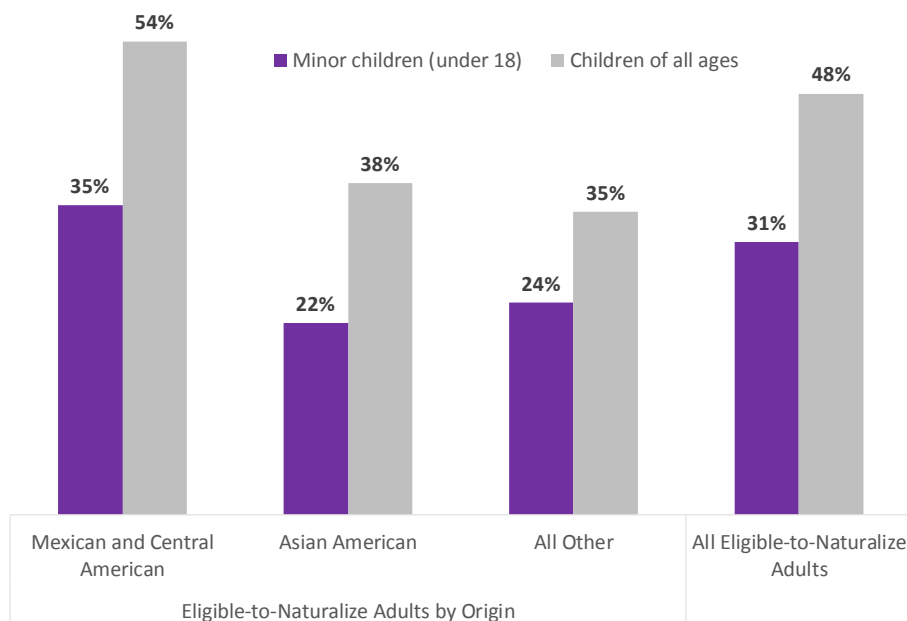
political rhetoric around immigration, are likely to be learning about the constitution, civics, and voting in school, and are likely part of the same sorts of family dinner-table conversations noted above (that may or may not include undocumented family members). Thus, citizen children could have both direct and indirect effects in terms of steering their eligible-to-naturalize parents toward citizenship.

How large is the potential impact of citizen children when considering all eligible-to-naturalize adults in L.A. County? Figure 7 shows that nearly half (48 percent) of all eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County live with at least one of their own U.S. citizen children when including children of all ages, and nearly one in three (31 percent) have a U.S. citizen child that is under 18 in the household. The shares living with citizen children are highest for Mexican and Central American eligible-to-naturalize adults—the group that tends to have the lowest naturalization rates and represents the largest pool of the eligible to naturalize. However, even for

eligible-to-naturalize adults from Asia and all other parts of the world, more than one in three live with citizen children of all ages, and nearly one in four have a minor child in the household who is likely to be in school.

Thus, there is clearly potential for children to be part of a strategy for boosting citizenship—in addition to the ways in which they already motivate their parents to naturalize in order to make their status in the U.S. as concrete as possible. Beyond encouraging naturalization among their parents, the impact of children is likely to be felt in the political arena as well. The continued debate around immigration reform—marked by its intensity and seeming permanence of inaction—in the midst of large swaths of U.S.-born children becoming eligible to vote may result in large political consequences in general election cycles to come (Oakford, 2014; Pastor, Scoggins, Carter, Sanchez, & Center for American Progress, 2014).

Figure 7 - Percent with U.S.-Citizen Children in the Household, Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults in Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

➲ Where are the Eligible to Naturalize?

Mapping the Eligible to Naturalize

We have suggested above that we need to make the economic and civic case for naturalization, reduce the barriers and obstacles, and take advantage of key political moments, including the contemporary period of heated debate about immigrants and immigration, to encourage immigrants to make the passage to citizenship. But after we have committed to a program of naturalizations, we also need to determine *where* the eligible to naturalize are in order to maximize the efficiency of outreach efforts.

We do this below by providing maps that display our estimates of eligible-to-naturalize adults at the neighborhood (census tract) level.[6] While we have recently released an [interactive map](#) of data on the eligible to naturalize covering the entire nation, the large and diverse immigrant population in L.A. County allows us to make estimates at a much finer scale.[7] And given that the region of origin and culture of the eligible to naturalize are important to consider in the design and deployment of on-the-ground organizing strategies, we present separate maps for the three largest groups of eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County: Mexicans, Central-Americans, and Asian Americans.

We look first at the share of the total adult population comprised of eligible-to-naturalize adults, a figure that provides us a sense of concentration rather than total numbers—that is, the likelihood that any adult encountered on the street might be eligible to naturalize. As Figure 8 on the next page shows, the eligible adult population in L.A. County is vast and spreads far and wide. Key concentrations can be seen in many well-known immigrant enclaves. Several

neighborhoods of the City of L.A. just east, west, and south of downtown are major hubs, including Boyle Heights to the east, Pico-Union, Westlake, and East Hollywood to the west, and the communities of Central-Alameda and Historic South-Central to the south. There is also a concentration of adult eligibility in the "Gateway Cities" between the port of L.A. and downtown, including South Gate, Huntington Park, Bell, and Commerce, as well as in other cities along the 710 corridor and in the L.A. neighborhood of Wilmington near the port.

The two valleys—the San Fernando Valley in the northwestern portion of the City of L.A. and the San Gabriel Valley east of the city—also have areas of high concentration. For example, the L.A. neighborhood of Pacoima in the San Fernando Valley has one of the highest concentrations of eligible-to-naturalize adults in the entire County while nearby North Hills is not far behind. In the San Gabriel Valley, the cities of South El Monte, Industry, and parts of Pomona stand out as having large shares of eligible-to-naturalize adults. Last but not least, the City of Palmdale in the far northern portion of the County has significant concentration of the naturalization-eligible, as does the City of Lennox near the airport (LAX).
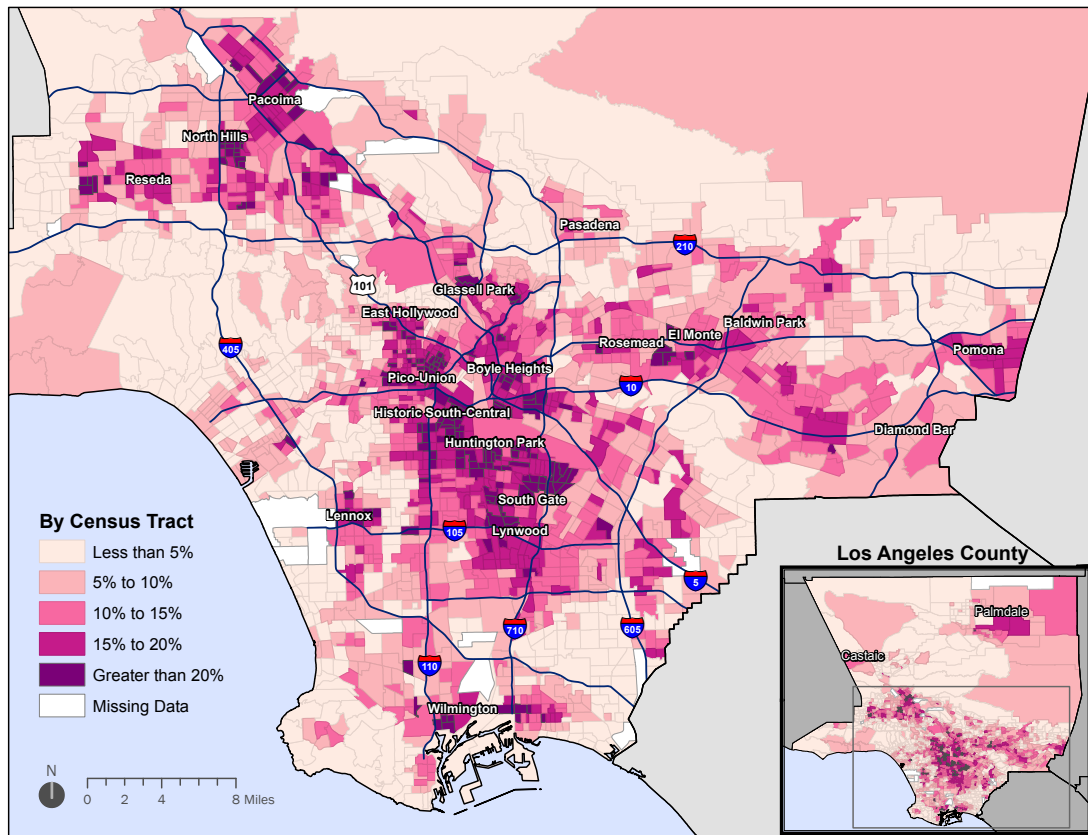
> ➲ Download full-page PDF versions of the eligible-to-naturalize population maps for L.A. County at
>
> http:dornsife.usc.edu/CSII/eligible-to-naturalize-reports/

---

[6] See the methodology for details on our estimation strategy.

[7] Our nationwide interactive map of eligible-to-naturalize adults is available here: http://dornsife.usc.edu/csii/eligible-to-naturalize-map/.

Figure 8 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults as Share of the Total Adult Population, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

➲ Looking at Sub-Groups

Our analysis above showed eligible-to-naturalize Mexicans and Central Americans as having some of the lowest naturalization rates among all groups examined and the largest presence in L.A. County. Figures 9 and 10 on the following page show the geographic distribution of these populations, this time mapping the total number rather than the concentration. The rationale for this approach is that, once areas with a high likelihood of finding eligible-to-naturalize adults are identified using the concentration map shown in Figure 8, areas with the greatest numbers of the eligible to naturalize can be prioritized—with some understanding of the language and culture of the people being reached out to.

In Figure 9, we see that the greatest numbers of eligible-to-naturalize Mexicans tend to be found in the same areas that have greatest concentration of all eligible-to-naturalize adults, but with greatest numbers found in the Gateway Cities (including the inner-ring suburbs of Lynwood, South Gate, Bell, and Bell Gardens), in Boyle Heights and the City of East Los Angeles, as well as in San Fernando Valley near Pacoima.

In Figure 10 we see some very distinct locations with large numbers of Central American eligible-to-naturalize adults. Portions of South L.A. just west of the 110 freeway stand out including Vermont Square, Exposition Park, and Vermont-Slauson, as do areas a bit further north such as Pico-Union, Westlake, and East Hollywood. Large numbers are also found in parts of the San Fernando Valley, especially in the areas around Reseda and Van Nuys.

Although Asian American immigrant adults in L.A. County tend to have much higher naturalization rates, there are still large numbers that are eligible to naturalize, but have not, and their geographic distribution is shown in Figure 11 (see page 20). Given the great diversity in terms of language and culture within the Asian American immigrant community in L.A. County, we would ideally provide separate maps for the largest groups in terms of eligible-to-naturalize adults. However, our data does not allow for such demographic precision (at least at the neighborhood level), so we simply provide a single map covering all eligible-to-naturalize Asian American adults. As can be seen, the highest numbers are found in the San Gabriel Valley, particularly in the cities of Rosemead, Monterey Park, San Gabriel, parts of City of Industry and Rowland heights, and out east in Diamond Bar. Parts of the City of Los Angeles, such as Koreatown and its surrounding neighborhoods have large numbers too, as do a handful of other neighborhoods scattered throughout the County, such as parts of the City of Glendale in the north, the City of Cerritos in the southeast, and areas near the city of Torrance toward the southern tip of the County.

Figure 9 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Mexican Adults, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014
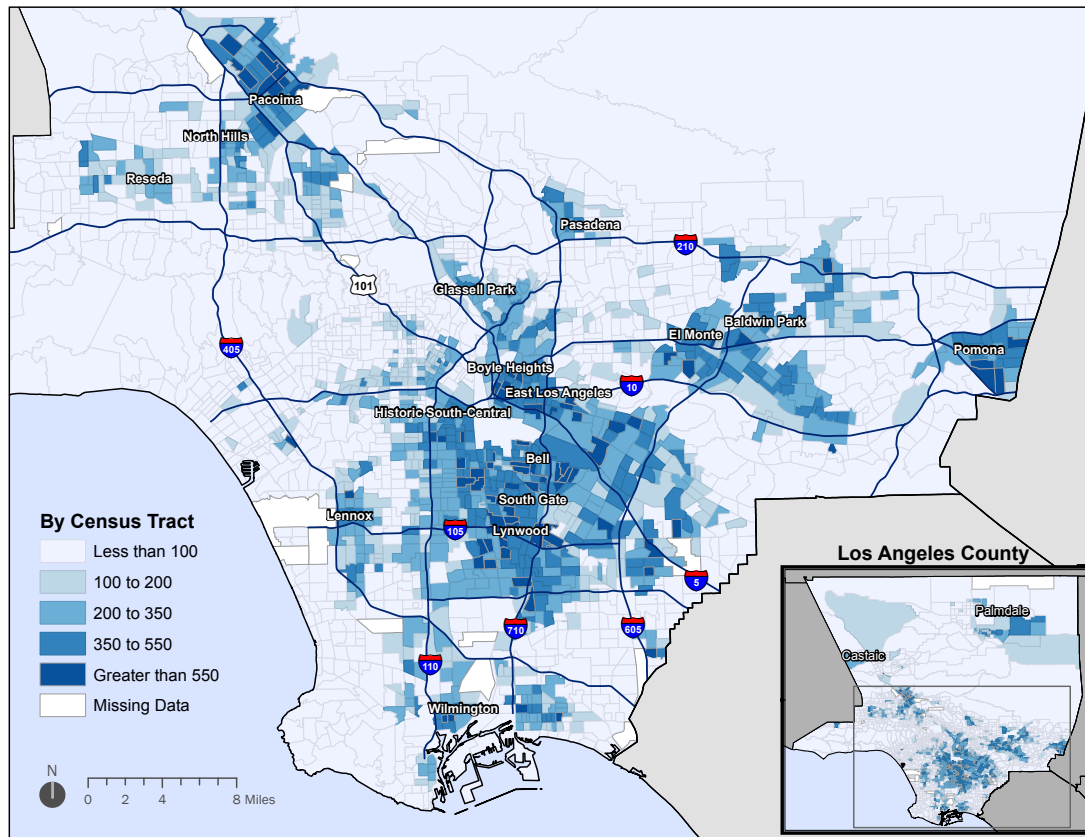

Figure 10 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Central American Adults, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014
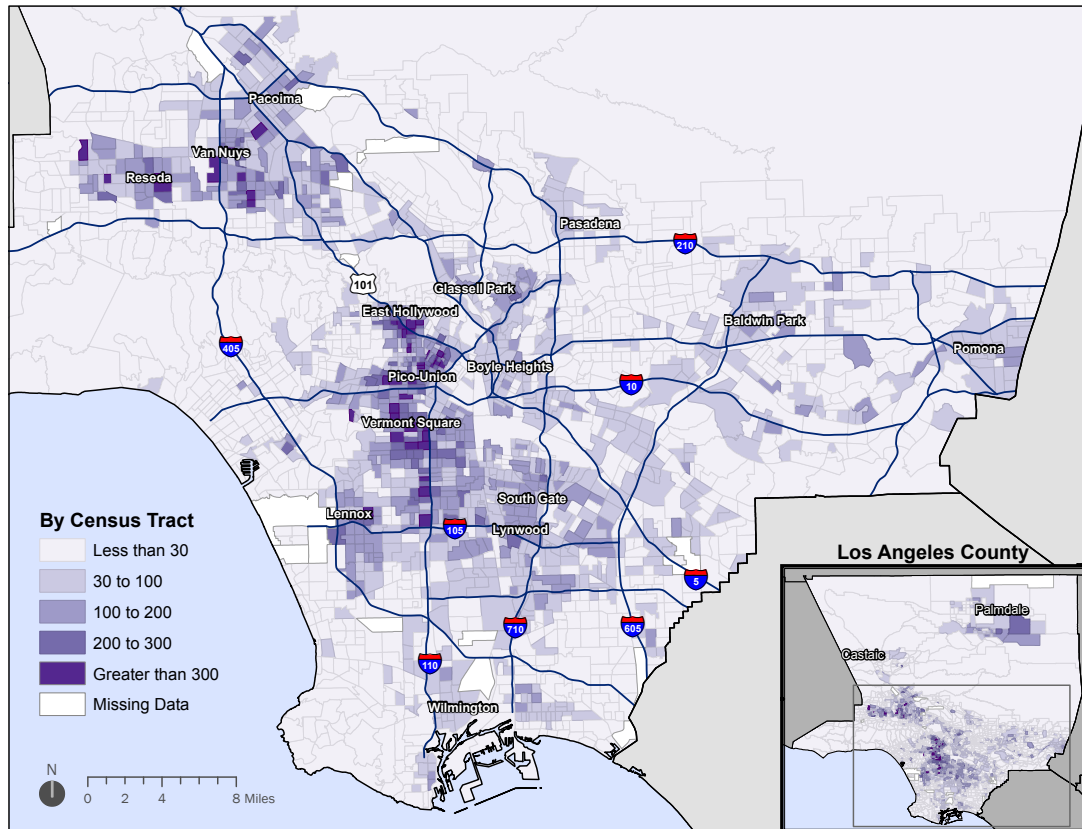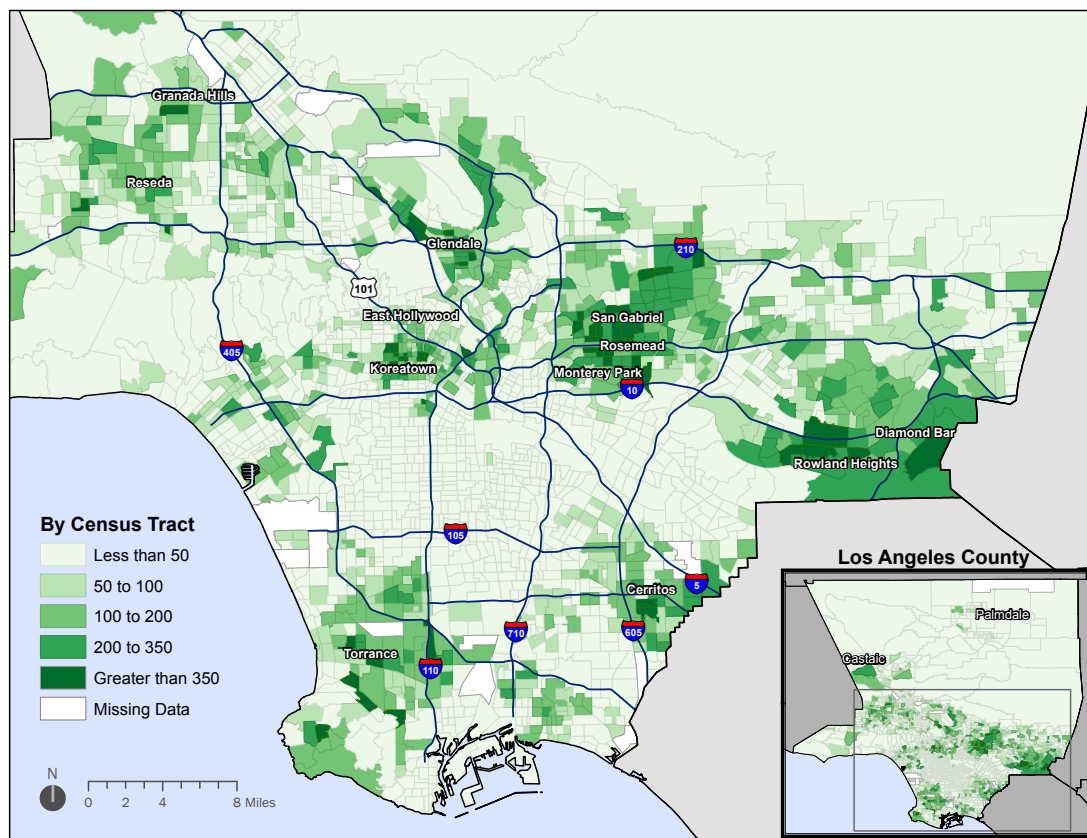
Figure 11 - Eligible-to-Naturalize Asian Adults, Los Angeles County, 2010-2014

➲ Conclusion

Naturalization brings economic and civic benefits—and Los Angeles County, with nearly a tenth of the nation's eligible-to-naturalize adults, is in a unique position to realize those potential gains. Not only are the numbers larger and the concentration greater than in other parts of California or the nation, but the County also has a well-developed infrastructure of immigrant-serving organizations and is at the forefront of innovative policies and partnerships for immigrant integration. While significant barriers to naturalization remain, encouraging non-citizen immigrants to more formally join the polity will make for improved civic and economic engagement that will benefit all Angelenos. So what stands in the way?

Our analysis of the data suggests that language and financial barriers appear to be most pervasive for Mexican and Central American immigrants, while other, less tangible barriers, such as lack of information and a clear understanding of the many benefits that are associated with citizenship, may be more important for Asian American and other immigrants. Of course, working against the barriers are factors that motivate the naturalization-eligible to seek citizenship, and we have highlighted two in particular that seem to hold promise at the moment: the opportunity presented by the recent spike in anti-(undocumented) immigrant political rhetoric at the national level, and the role that U.S.-citizen children and other family members can play in facilitating naturalization of their parents and relatives. These factors should be considered by organizers in developing outreach strategies, and we hope that the detailed neighborhood-level maps we provide can help maximize the efficiency of those outreach efforts.

In a county of immigrants, low naturalization rates among some of the largest immigrant populations undermines their representation and thus threatens to degrade the quality of our local governments and institutions. While the upcoming 2016 elections are certainly a driving force behind current efforts to boost naturalizations, the impacts would go far beyond this one (albeit critical) moment in time. We hope a better understanding of eligible-to-naturalize adults in the County assists the efforts of those working so hard to promote citizenship. Los Angeles County, like any other county, is unique in its populations, but in few other counties is there so much to reap from encouraging citizenship.

Appendix: Detailed Data on Naturalization Dynamics in L.A. County

For those interested in more data on eligible-to-naturalize adults in L.A. County than what is presented in the body of this brief, we provide the detailed table below. In the table, we compare naturalized, recently naturalized, and eligible-to-naturalize immigrant adults in L.A. County.

2010-2014 Immigrant Adult Population Profile: Los Angeles County

	All Naturalized num.	%	Recently Naturalized num.	%	Eligible to Naturalize num.	%
Total Population	1,640,825	21	88,350	1	768,024	10
Race and Ethnicity[1]						
Non-Hispanic White	315,260	19	16,970	19	78,003	10
Latino	692,948	42	37,171	42	527,265	69
Asian or Pacific Islander	581,103	35	30,660	35	146,262	19
Black	28,454	2	2,339	3	9,338	1
Other	23,061	1	1,211	1	7,157	1
Sex						
Female	897,865	55	48,800	55	396,967	52
Male	742,960	45	39,550	45	371,057	48
Places of Origin						
Mexico	443,243	27	22,152	25	373,969	49
Central America	193,486	12	12,631	14	132,891	17
South America & Carribean	75,120	5	3,383	4	27,864	4
Asia	719,351	44	38,286	43	164,767	21
Africa	35,464	2	2,216	3	7,972	1
Europe	154,177	9	8,564	10	46,985	6
Rest of the World	19,985	1	1,118	1	13,576	2
Age and Tenure (medians)						
Age	53		43		48	
Years Residing in the USA	29		16		23	
Age First Arrived in Country	22		23		23	
Years of Adult Eligibility[2]	9		12		18	
Years of Adult Eligibility[2]						
Less than 6 years	512,592	36	24,196	28	109,777	14
6-10 years	278,523	19	17,255	20	104,622	14
11-20 years	411,093	29	23,719	27	253,412	33
Greater than 20 years	234,467	16	22,466	26	300,213	39
Educational Attainment (ages 25+)						
Less than HS degree	439,061	27	23,213	29	367,910	50
HS grad	310,938	19	15,849	20	146,761	20
Some College/AA	361,206	23	17,869	22	116,452	16
BA Degree	328,824	21	16,584	21	72,696	10
MA or Higher	157,685	10	7,144	9	35,124	5
Homeownership (households)	445,588	56	13,416	38	95,249	32
Health Insurance (ages 25-64)	929,105	77	50,016	72	348,707	56

	All Naturalized num.	%	Recently Naturalized num.	%	Eligible to Naturalize num.	%
Median Annual Earnings, Full-time Workers[3]	$42,681		$34,741		$28,871	
Female	$40,170		$32,570		$25,406	
Male	$45,730		$36,000		$30,933	
Poverty						
Above 500% of Poverty line	411,840	25	16,325	19	88,599	12
250% to 500% of Poverty line	518,708	32	26,314	30	198,421	26
150% to 250% of Poverty line	325,939	20	20,456	23	192,630	25
Below 150% of Poverty line	373,242	23	24,928	28	283,927	37
Poverty (Mexicans only)						
Above 500% of Poverty line	47,789	11	2,022	9.1	15,068	4
250% to 500% of Poverty line	150,803	34	6,215	28	88,431	24
150% to 250% of Poverty line	122,746	28	6,679	30	106,475	29
Below 150% of Poverty line	119,557	27	7,203	33	162,389	44
English Speaking Ability						
Yes, speaks only English	161,099	9.8	6,124	6.9	59,479	8
Yes, speaks well or very well	1,043,470	64	57,326	65	348,297	45
Yes, but not well	328,706	20	17,341	20	213,096	28
Does not speak English	107,551	6.6	7,559	8.6	147,152	19
Top 5 Languages Spoken at Home						
Spanish	668,513	41	35,851	41	513,462	67
English	161,231	10	6,124	7	59,562	8
Chinese	176,356	11	8,917	10	37,153	5
Filipino, Tagalog	130,881	8	8,148	9	29,521	4
Korean	85,491	5	3,473	4	26,332	3
All other	418,354	25	25,836	29	102,000	13
Labor Force Participation[4]						
Female Participation	480,939	72	29,949	71	200,885	61
of which, share employed	444,044	92	26,934	90	177,876	89
Male Participation	500,361	87	30,111	85	278,473	86
of which, share employed	464,739	93	27,696	92	253,409	91
Top 5 Occupations[5]						
Cleaning, Building and Household Service	35,334	24	2,420	2	35,166	24
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	11,472	16	706	1	15,409	22
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	47,672	24	2,977	2	38,380	19
Helpers in Construction and Extraction, and Material Handlers	24,654	14	1,695	1	31,479	18
Food Preparation and Service	35,042	19	2,385	1	30,307	16

Notes:

Source: USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) analysis of a pooled sample of the 2010 through 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) microdata accessed from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

1 Latino includes all who identify as Hispanic or Latino; all other categories are Non-Hispanic.
2 For the naturalized and recently naturalized, years of adult eligibility prior to naturalization are reported and data is not available for all respondents. See the methods section for more information.
3 For full-time workers. Full-time workers include those reporting work of at least 50 weeks and usual work hours of at least 35 hours per week during the year prior to the survey.
4 For the civilian noninstitutional population ages 18-64. Labor force participation is defined as being employed or seeking work.
5 Top five occupations in terms of the percentage of all workers in the occupation that are eligible to naturalize. Universe includes the employed civilian noninstitutional population ages 25-64.

USC Dornsife
Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration

➲ Methodology: How the Estimates are Generated

Unless otherwise noted, all estimates and data presented in this paper are based on analysis by the USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) of a pooled sample of the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) microdata accessed from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) (Ruggles, Genadek, Goeken, Grover, & Sobek, 2015). In order to estimate who in the ACS microdata may be eligible to naturalize, we first generated individual assignments of undocumented status.

To do so, we adopted an increasingly common strategy that involves two steps (Capps, Bachmeier, Fix, & Van Hook, 2013; Warren, 2014). The first entails determining who among the non-citizen population is least likely to be unauthorized due to a series of conditions that are strongly associated with documented status—a process called "logical edits" (Warren, 2014). The second involves sorting the remainder into authorized and unauthorized status based on a series of probability estimates applied to reflect the underlying distribution of probabilities. Our particular choices in both steps is explained in more detail in Pastor, Jawetz, and Ocampo (2015).

With individual assignments of undocumented status in place, the remainder are assumed to be documented. Nearly all but not all of these individuals are Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs); for example, students who are in the U.S. are here legally but are not LPRs and we use a conditional edit process to shrink down to the LPRs. To calculate the eligible-to-naturalize LPR population, we followed the general guidelines of citizenship eligibility for LPRs to the extent possible given data available in the IPUMS ACS. Individuals are deemed eligible to naturalize if they meet certain conditions. The basic one is being in the U.S. for more than five years (or three years if married to a U.S. citizen); following the requirements, we also apply a series of other cuts, excluding those who are otherwise eligible but lived abroad or just got married to a U.S. citizen last year (the three-year condition requires three years of marriage).

We account for the fact that the ACS is an ongoing sample (i.e., the survey is conducted every month) and so the last half year of observations needs to be censored in the calculations (Warren & Kerwin, 2015). The reason is that someone who answers in January and reports that they arrived five years before could have arrived in December of that year and so would only have been in-country for a bit over four years. Since we do not know when they answered or arrived in that year, we simply randomize and choose half from those on the "edge" year. With the eligible-to-naturalize individuals identified, identifying their children, family members, and other household members was straightforward and was accomplished using the family and household relationship identifiers in the IPUMS ACS.

In order to bring our estimates of eligible-to-naturalize adults down do the census tract level for the maps included in this brief, we rely upon summary estimates at the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) level—a Census geography of at least 100,000 people— and distribute them across the Census tracts contained in each PUMA using tract-level information from the 2014 5-year ACS summary file. More specifically, we selected tract-level "proxy" variables from the ACS summary file that seemed to best approximate each of the PUMA-level measures we sought to allocate to the tract level, and used their tract-level distributions to make the allocation. We then applied an Iterative Proportional Fitting (IPF) procedure to ensure that our tract-level estimates of the number of eligible-to-naturalize adults by region of origin summed (across regions of origin) to our final tract-level total for eligible-to-naturalize adults and also summed (across tracts in each PUMA) to our initial PUMA-level summary estimates. While this approach to making tract-level estimates may not be very reliable for all regions in the U.S., we feel that it is reliable for large cities and metropolitan areas with sizeable non-citizen foreign-born populations such as L.A. County.

For more details on the methodology followed to generate our aggregate estimates of the eligible-to-naturalize population and the census tract-level estimate we report, see: http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/CSII_Elig_Naturalize_Methodology_Final.pdf.

While most tabulations presented in the paper are fairly straightforward, the way in which we estimated years of eligibility for citizenship for eligible-to-naturalize and naturalized adults deserves a bit more explanation. The initial calculation of years of eligibility for the naturalization-eligible was made by subtracting the reported year of arrival in the U.S. from the survey year, then subtracting five (or three if the respondent reported being married to a U.S. citizen who was living in the same household at the time of the survey); those reporting U.S. military service were considered eligible for the number of years they had lived in the U.S. (survey year minus year of arrival). The same calculation was made for the naturalized, except that we also subtracted the number of years the respondent had been naturalized at the time of the survey (derived by subtracting the reported year of naturalization from the survey year) to get years of eligibility prior to naturalization.

To make for a more consistent comparison of years of eligibility for citizenship between the naturalized and eligible-to-naturalize adult populations, we then made some minor adjustments to this particular variable. First, we restricted the sample of naturalized adults to only those who naturalized *as adults*, since the decision to naturalize for those who did so when they were under 18 years old was made by their parents and not themselves. Second, we excluded (from the sample of naturalized adults) a small number of "return migrants" (those who reported arriving in the U.S. after the year they naturalized) and those who report naturalizing in the same year they arrived in the U.S. since these respondents are likely to have misinterpreted the questionnaire or responded inaccurately. Third, because our initial calculation of years of eligibility resulted in negative values for some *naturalized immigrants*, those values were recoded to zero years of eligibility (since one cannot become a citizen before they are eligible). Such values arose for *naturalized immigrants* because for them, we rely on their reported year of naturalization for our calculations and there are ways to become eligible for naturalization earlier than is accounted for by the simple formula described above.

For example, those who arrived in the U.S. with asylum status could be eligible one year earlier and those who lived with a U.S.-citizen spouse at the time they applied for naturalization (but no longer do) could be eligible two years earlier than accounted for by our formula. The result of this was a disproportionate cluster of observations among the naturalized with zero years of eligibility prior to naturalization, and a probable slight understatement of our estimate of their years of eligibility in general. We therefore subtracted one year from our initial calculation of years of eligibility for the eligible to naturalize in an attempt to make a slight adjustment for the difference and make our comparisons of years of eligibility more comparable.

➲ References

Abascal, M. (2015). Tu Casa, Mi Casa: Naturalization and Belonging among Latino Immigrants. *International Migration Review*, 1–32.

Aguirre, B. E., & Saenz, R. (2002). Testing the Effects of Collectively Expected Durations of Migration: The Naturalization of Mexicans and Cubans. *International Migration Review*, *36*(1), 103–124. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2002.tb00073.x

Ayres Jr., B. D. (1994, November 10). Californians Pass Measure On Aliens; Courts Bar It. *The New York Times*. New York City, NY. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/10/us/1994-elections-states-california-californians-pass-measure-aliens-courts-bar-it.html

Bada, X., Fox, J. A., Donnelly, R., & Selee, A. D. (2010). *Context Matters: Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement in Nine US Cities, Reports on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement* (Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement) (p. 79). Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Retrieved from http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/47f308pd

Battistelli, E. S. (2013). *The Financial Barrier to Citizenship*. National Immigration Law Center. Retrieved from https://www.nilc.org/financialbarriercitizenshiprev.html

Bratsberg, B., Ragan, J. F., & Nasir, Z. M. (2002). The Effect of Naturalization on Wage Growth: A Panel Study of Young Male Immigrants. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *20*(3), 568–597.

Capps, R., Bachmeier, J. D., Fix, M., & Van Hook, J. (2013). *A Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Health Coverage Profile of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States* (MPI Issue Brief No. 5). Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/demographic-socioeconomic-and-health-coverage-profile-unauthorized-immigrants-united-states

Enchautegui, M. E., & Giannarelli, L. (2015). *The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities*. New York, New York: Urban Institute. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000549-The-Economic-Impact-of-Naturalization-on-Immigrants-and-Cities.pdf

Fix, M. (Ed.). (2009). *Immigrants and Welfare: The Impact of Welfare Reform on America's Newcomers*. New York, N.Y.: Russell Sage Foundation.

Gamboa, S. (2015, December 10). New National Campaign Urges Legal Residents to Naturalize, Vote. *NBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/new-national-campaign-urges-legal-residents-naturalize-vote-n477916

Gonzalez-Barrera, A., Lopez Hugo, M., Passel, J. S., & Taylor, P. (2013). *The Path Not Taken: Two-thirds of Legal Mexican Immigrants are not U.S. Citizens*. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/02/Naturalizations_Jan_2013_FINAL.pdf

Haberman, M. (2016, February 5). Donald Trump's Immigration Message May Resound in New Hampshire. *The New York Times*. New York, NY. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/06/us/politics/donald-trumps-immigration-message-may-resound-in-new-hampshire.html

Hipsman, F., & Meissner, D. (2013). *Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon*. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Inst. Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform

Immigration Policy Center. (2010). *The Ones They Leave Behind: Deportation of Lawful Permanent Residents Harms U.S. Citizen Children*. Immigration Policy Center. Retrieved from http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/Childs_Best_Interest_Fact_Sheet_042610.pdf

Jaffe, I. (2015, September 15). From California, A Warning To Republicans On Anti-Immigration Rhetoric. *NPR.org*. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/15/440524281/from-california-a-warning-to-republicans-on-anti-immigration-rhetoric

Johnson, H. P. (1999). *Taking the oath: an analysis of naturalization in California and the United States*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.

Johnson, H. P., Reyes, B. I., Mameesh, L., & Barbour, E. (1999). *Taking the Oath: An Analysis of Naturalization in California and the United States*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.

Krogstad, J., & Passel, J. S. (2015). *5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.* (FACTANK: News in the Numbers). Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/19/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/

Lah, K., & Moya, A. (2016, March 17). Latinos line up to get naturalized and stop Trump. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/16/politics/latino-voters-naturalization-trump/index.html

Latino Victory Project. (2015, December 10). Latino Victory Launches the New American Democracy Campaign. Retrieved January 26, 2016, from http://latinovictory.us/press-release/latino-victory-launches-the-new-american-democracy-campaign/

Logan, J. R., Oh, S., & Darrah, J. (2012). The Political and Community Context of Immigrant Naturalization. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *38*(4), 535–554. http://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.659116

Navarrette Jr., R. (1995, April 30). Is This What Prop. 187 Sought? More Latino Citizens? Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/1995-04-30/opinion/op-60542_1_latino-immigrants

Oakford, P. (2014). *The Latino Electorate by Immigrant Generation: The Rising Influence of Children of Immigrants*. Washington D. C.: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2014/06/12/91446/the-latino-electorate-by-immigrant-generation/

Pantoja, A., & Gershon, S. A. (2006). Political Orientations and Naturalization Among Latino and Latina Immigrants. *Social Science Quarterly*, *87*(5).

Pantoja, A., Ramirez, R., & Segura, G. (2001). Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly*, *54*(4), 729–750.

Passel, J. S. (2007). *Growing Share of Immigrants Choosing Naturalization* (p. 39). Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/74.pdf

Passel, J. S., & Cohn, D. (2009). *A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Pastor, M., Jawetz, T., & Ocampo, L. (2015). *DAPA Matters: The Growing Electorate Directly Affected by Executive Action on Immigration*. Washington D. C.: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2015/11/19/125787/dapa-matters/

Pastor, M., & Sanchez, J. (2012). *Rock the (Naturalized) Vote: The Size and Location of the Recently Naturalized Voting Age Citizen Population*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, University of Southern California. Retrieved from http://csii.usc.edu/RockTheNaturalizedVote.html

Pastor, M., & Scoggins, J. (2012). *Citizen Gain: The Economic Benefits of Naturalization for Immigrants and the Economy*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, University of Southern California. Retrieved from http://csii.usc.edu/CitizenGain.html

Pastor, M., Scoggins, J., Carter, V., Sanchez, J., & Center for American Progress. (2014). *Citizenship Matters: How Children of Immigrants Will Sway the Future of Politics* (p. 29). Washington D.C.: Center for American Progress and the USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Immigration. Retrieved from http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/Citizenship_Matters_CAP_CSII.pdf

Pew Research Center. (2015). *Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065: Views of Imigration's Impact on U.S. Society Mixed*. Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2015/09/2015-09-28_modern-immigration-wave_REPORT.pdf

Portes, A., & Curtis, J. W. (1987). Changing Flags: Naturalization and its Determinants among Mexican Immigrants. *The International Migration Review*, *21*(2), 352–371. http://doi.org/10.2307/2546320

Ruggles, S. J., Genadek, K., Goeken, R., Grover, J., & Sobek, M. (2015). *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Shierholz, H. (2010). *The Effects of Citizenship on Family Income and Poverty* (p. 12). Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Singer, A. (2004). Welfare Reform and Immigrants: A Policy Review. In *Immigrants, Welfare Reform, and the Poverty of Policy* (pp. 21–34). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Sumption, M., & Flamm, S. (2012). *The Economic Value of Citizenship for Immigrants in the United States*. The Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/citizenship-premium.pdf

Taylor, P., Gonzalez-Barrera, A., Passel, J. S., & Lopez, M. H. (2012). *An Awakened Giant: The Hispanic Electorate Is Likely to Double by 2030*. Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/11/hispanic_vote_likely_to_double_by_2030_11-14-12.pdf

The Center for Popular Democracy, USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, & The National Partnership for New Americans. (2014). *Citizenship: A Wise Investment for Cities*. The Cities for Citizenship Initiative. Retrieved from http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/C4C-Report_Citizenship-A-Wise-Investment.pdf

Warren, R. (2014). Democratizing Data about Unauthorized Residents in the United States: Estimates and Public-Use Data, 2010 to 2013. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, *2*(4), 305–328. http://doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v2i4.38

Yang, P. Q. (1994). Explaining Immigrant Naturalization. *International Migration Review*, *28*(3), 449–477.

➲ Image Credits

Cover image – https://flic.kr/p/mWxmL, by Elvert Barnes, Creative Commons Attribution Attribution 2.0

Page 4 - https://flic.kr/p/2nvRZY, by the City Project, Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike 2.0

Page 5 - https://flic.kr/p/f2QSRz, by One America, Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial 2.0

Page 6 - https://flic.kr/p/pGeeeC, by Advancing Justice Conference, Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike 2.0

Page 22 - https://flic.kr/p/ePgZDc, by One America, Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial 2.0

➲ Acknowledgements

USC
Dornsife
Center for the Study of
Immigrant Integration

Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII)
University of Southern California
950 W. Jefferson Blvd., JEF 102
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1291

http://dornsife.usc.edu/CSII
Email: csii@usc.edu
Phone: 213.740.3643

Facebook: facebook.com/csii.usc   Twitter: @CSII_USC   Instagram: USC_PERE_CSII