

America's Foreign-Born Population Reaches All-Time High

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The Census Bureau estimated about 32.5 million foreign-born residents in the United States in March 2002. That is 2 percent more than March 2001.

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Nearly 1.2 million people came to the United States between March 2001 and March 2002, compared with 2.4 million the year before, MSNBC.com reported.

Following the Sept. 11 attacks, the government tightened up immigration loopholes.

William Frey of the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank, told MSNBC.com that the closer scrutiny of immigrants, coupled with a slowing economy, may have caused would-be immigrants to stay in their own countries.

Just over half of the foreign-born population is from Latin America, according to the Census Bureau. And about half of those 17 million arrived after 1990.

The bureau noted that just over one-quarter of the foreign-born population had received a bachelor's degree or above. That number was about the same as the native-born population.

The census did not include immigrants in jails, nursing homes or other group quarters, nor did it count illegal immigrants.

A recent Immigration and Naturalization Service report estimated the illegal

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immigrant population to be around 7 million, growing about 350,000 per year during the 1990s.

According to INS, Mexicans accounted for nearly 70 percent of the illegal immigrant population in 2000.

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