

A COMMUNITY PROFILE

Spring 2010

An Updated Demographic Profile of
Immigrants in Travis County

A brief document providing a current update to some of the demographic information examined and analyzed in the Travis County Immigrant Assessment completed in 2006 – 2007.



ABOUT THE IMMIGRANT SERVICES NETWORK OF AUSTIN

Our Mission and Vision

We are a working group of diverse community stakeholders and immigrant service providers operating together to coordinate efforts, increase public awareness and inform policy to better serve the immigrant community. ISNA promotes the success and well-being of immigrants to secure the long-term prosperity of the entire community.

ISNA 2010 Members Include:

American Gateways
Austin Community College
Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition
Austin Police Department, Victim Services
Austin Public Library
Catholic Charities of Central Texas
Caritas of Austin
Dolores Catholic Church
English at Work

Foundation Communities / Community Tax Centers
Immigration Counseling and Outreach Services
The Law Office of Thomas Esparza, Jr.
Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
SafePlace
Saint Helen Catholic Church
Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service
Travis County Sherriff's Office

To Get Involved or for More Information

Visit us on the web at www.isnaustin.org, or contact us at info@isna.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was researched and written by staff at the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department, Research & Planning Division. It was developed in support of the Immigrant Services Network of Austin.

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Introduction

PURPOSE

This report offers a current update to some of the demographic information examined and analyzed in the Travis County Immigrant Assessment completed in 2006-2007. Topics include principle demographics of the current immigrant population in Travis County, such as population growth, country of origin, year of entry, citizenship status, and family characteristics. Also briefly explored are the topics of language and communication, educational attainment, composition of the labor force, and poverty and economic status.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In keeping with the 2006-2007 assessment, the definition of the term *immigrant* that is used in this document is the working definition adapted from the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of *foreign-born*. For the purposes of this document, please refer to the following term descriptions:

- An **immigrant** is anyone who is not a U.S. citizen or a U.S. national by birth, and the term is used synonymously with the term **foreign-born** in this document.
- **Foreign-born** refers to a variety of non-native born individuals, including naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (sponsored individuals, refugees, and asylees), individuals with a temporary visa, and undocumented immigrants.
- The term **native-born** refers to native-born citizens of a country. These individuals are born within the country's territory and/or have been legally recognized as that country's citizen from birth.
- **Non-citizens** include both undocumented immigrants and foreign-born persons who are in the U.S. legally but who are not citizens.
- A **mixed status family** is a family in which at least one parent is a non-citizen and at least one child is a citizen.
- **Nativity** refers to place of birth, whether native-born or foreign-born.
- **Citizenship** status labels a legally recognized member of the United States with its rights, responsibilities, and privileges.
- **Naturalization** is the attainment of citizenship by an individual who was not born a citizen or national of that country.
- **Country of origin** denotes the place of birth for people born outside the United States.
- **Year of entry** indicates the year in which foreign-born individuals came to live in the United States.

Principle Demographics

NUMBERS AND GROWTH IN TRAVIS COUNTY

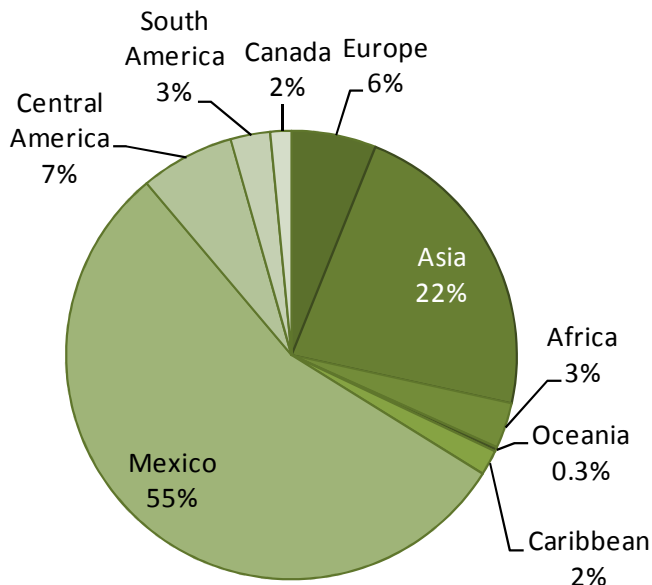
Travis County as a whole has exhibited population growth in recent years. The number of both the native-born and foreign-born individuals living in Travis County has increased; however, the percentage growth of foreign-born individuals illuminates the considerable growth in the immigrant population. **In 2008, 182,743 foreign-born individuals lived in Travis County and made up 18% of the population** (compared to only 8% in 1990 and 15% in 2000).

Growth of Population in Travis County by Nativity, 1990 - 2008			
	1990	2000	2008
Native Born	531,327	689,659	815,800
Foreign Born	45,080	122,621	182,743
Total Population	576,407	812,280	998,543
Percent Foreign Born	8%	15%	18%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010

Sources: U.S. Census, 1990 & 2000; 2008 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Place of Birth for the Foreign Born Population Travis County, 2006 - 2008



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010

Source data: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

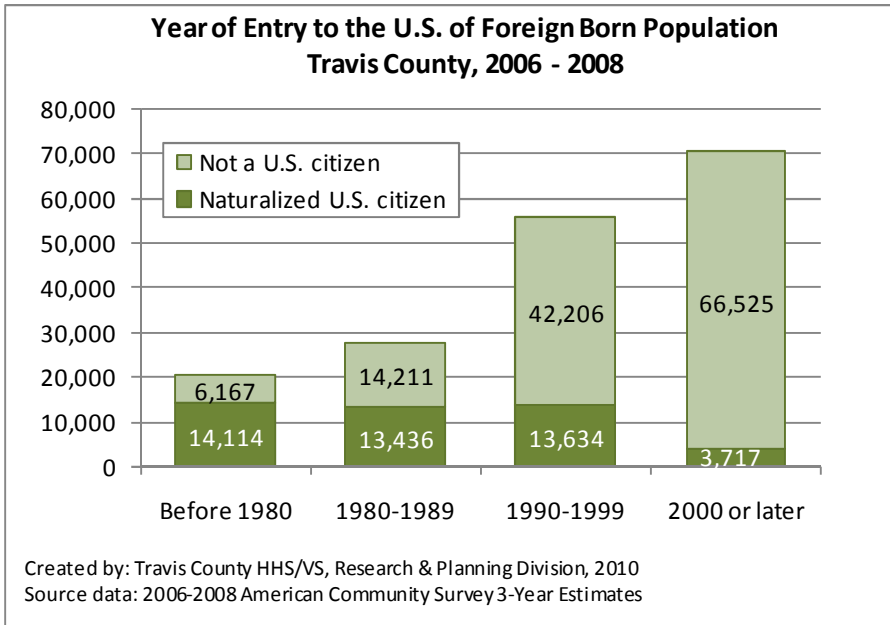
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The immigrant population in Travis County comes from a diverse range of countries and cultures. **Over half were born in Mexico (95,726), the next largest group come from Asian countries (38,871),** followed by those from Central American areas (11,789) and Europe (10,614).

Although immigrants from South America, Africa, the Caribbean, Canada and Oceania regions are small fractions of the foreign-born population, they still add up to 17,010 people and a little over 10% of Travis County's immigrant population.

YEAR OF ENTRY AND LENGTH OF STAY IN THE UNITED STATES

The chart below depicts the decade in which foreign-born individuals currently living in Travis County entered the United States.

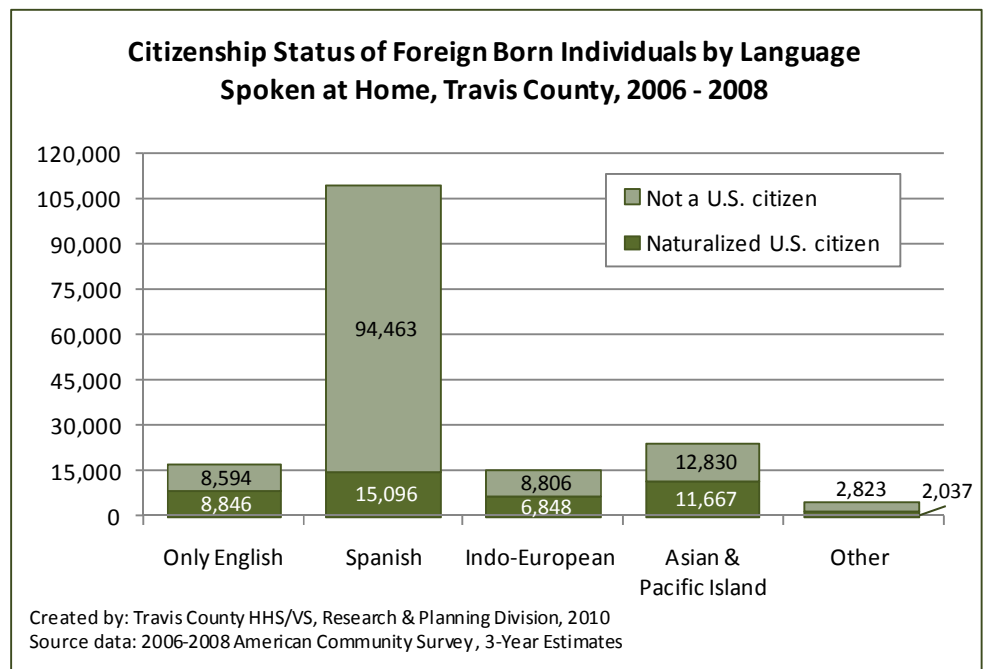


The majority of immigrants living in the county entered the United States after 1990, and approximately 70,200 entered in the recent decade. As the chart shows, the longer Travis County immigrants have lived in the U.S., the more likely they are to become naturalized citizens, while more recently arrived immigrants are more likely to be non-citizens.

CITIZENSHIP STATUS

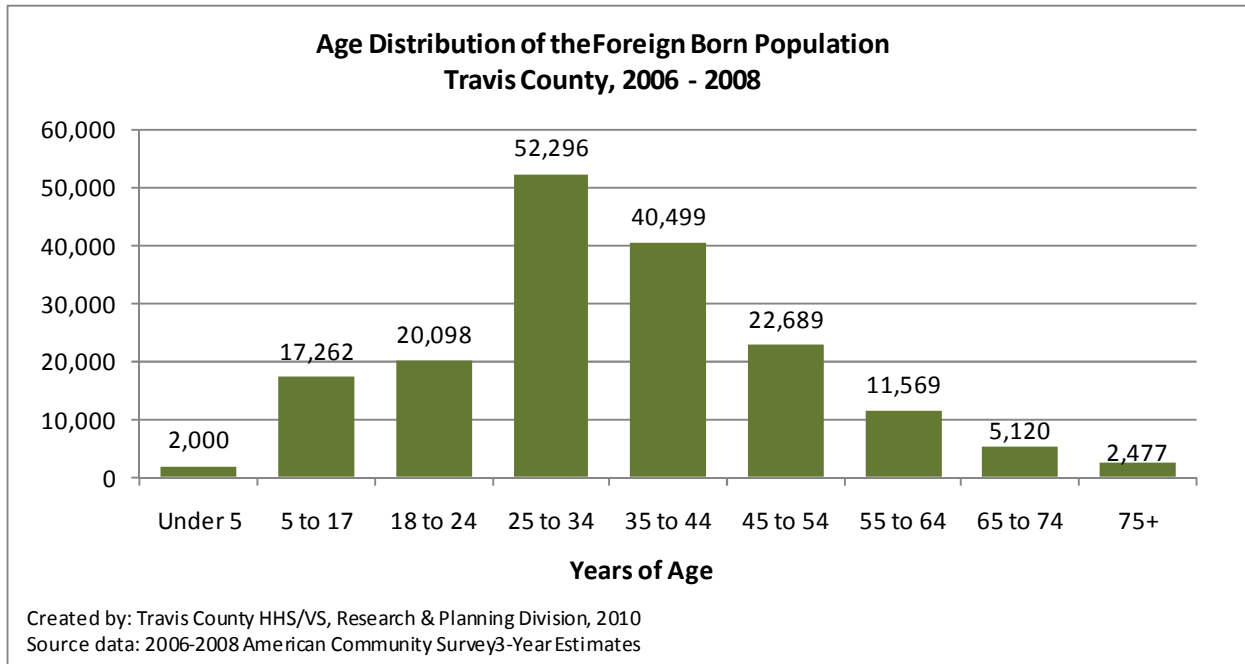
The total population of Travis County in 2008 was 998,543; 182,743 (18%) of those individuals were foreign-born. Of the foreign-born presently living in Travis County, a little over one-quarter (27%) have citizenship status. These individuals are legally recognized members of the United States and eligible to the rights and privileges the status brings as well as held accountable to its responsibilities.

Travis County immigrants speak a variety of languages, which will be explored later in this brief. However, it should be noted here that of those individuals who speak Spanish at home (109,559), 86% do not have U.S. citizenship. The ratio of citizens to non-citizens is not as dramatic in other language groups.



AGE DISTRIBUTION

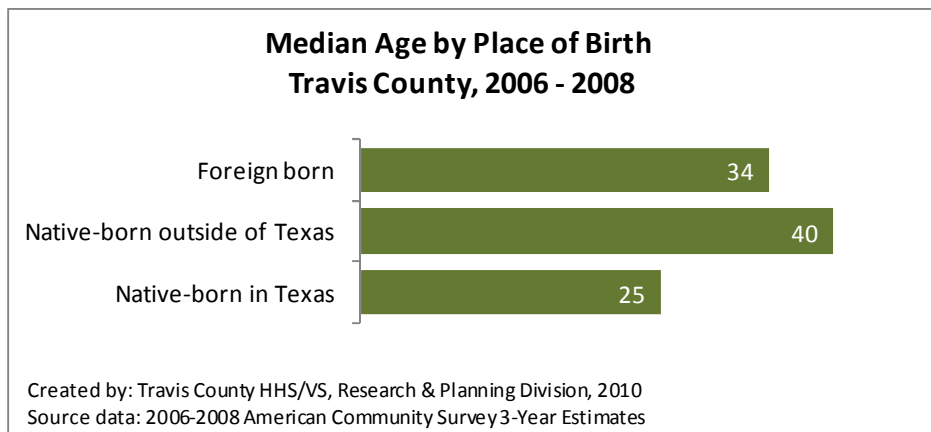
As displayed below, the county's foreign-born population is comprised largely of young adults: the largest group is ages 25 to 34 (43%), followed closely by the 35 to 44 age group (23%). Also, a greater share of the foreign-born population is under age 25 (29,360 individuals) than over age 55 (19,166 individuals).



The native-born population's age distribution differs slightly, in that a larger proportion fall within the 5 to 17 age range (19%, compared to only 10% of the foreign-born—notably, this is the largest age group for the native born population). Also, the native-born population is characterized by a slightly larger share above the retirement age of 65 (6%, compared to 4% of the foreign-born).

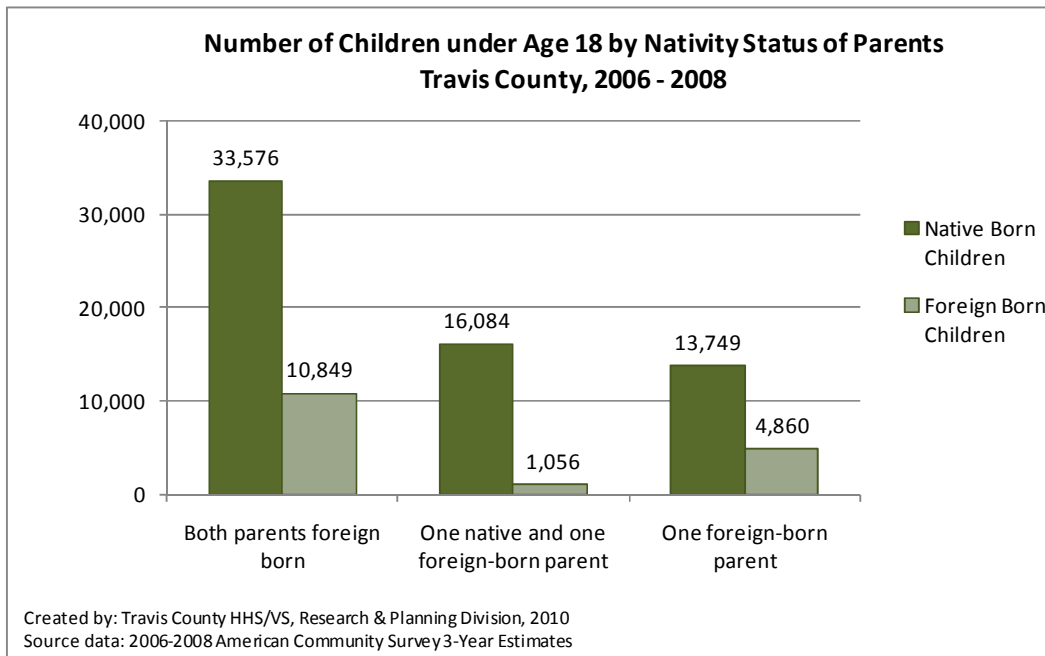
MEDIAN AGE

The median age of the foreign-born in Travis County is 34. This is older than the median age of the county's native-born Texans, but younger than that of other native-born populations currently living in Travis County but not born in the state.

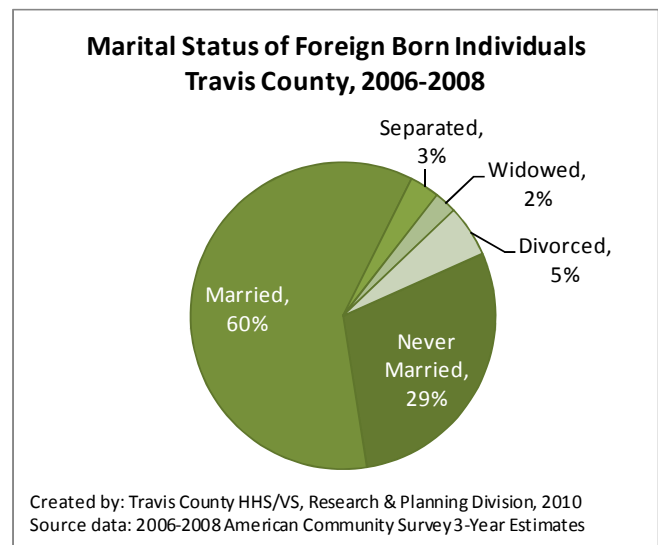


FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

Mixed status families consist of one or more family members who were born in the U.S. and one or more who were foreign-born. Mixed status families can include any combination of legal, naturalized, and/or undocumented individuals. Mixed nativity can add barriers to services, as native-born individuals often inherit barriers that impact their foreign-born family members, especially if those foreign-born family members do not have legal status. The following chart displays the number of native-born and foreign-born children under 18 years of age living in families with one or more foreign-born parent.¹ As displayed in the chart below, **over 63,000 native-born children and over 16,000 foreign-born children in Travis County live in families with at least one foreign-born parent.**



The majority of Travis County immigrants are married (60%, or 95,760 individuals), followed in size by the 29% who have never married (46,655 individuals), while the percentages of foreign-born who are divorced, separated or widowed are relatively low. Comparatively, among the native-born in Travis County, 42% are married, 40% never married, 12% divorced, 2% separated, and 4% widowed. Marital status may be a reflection of cultural values and practices.

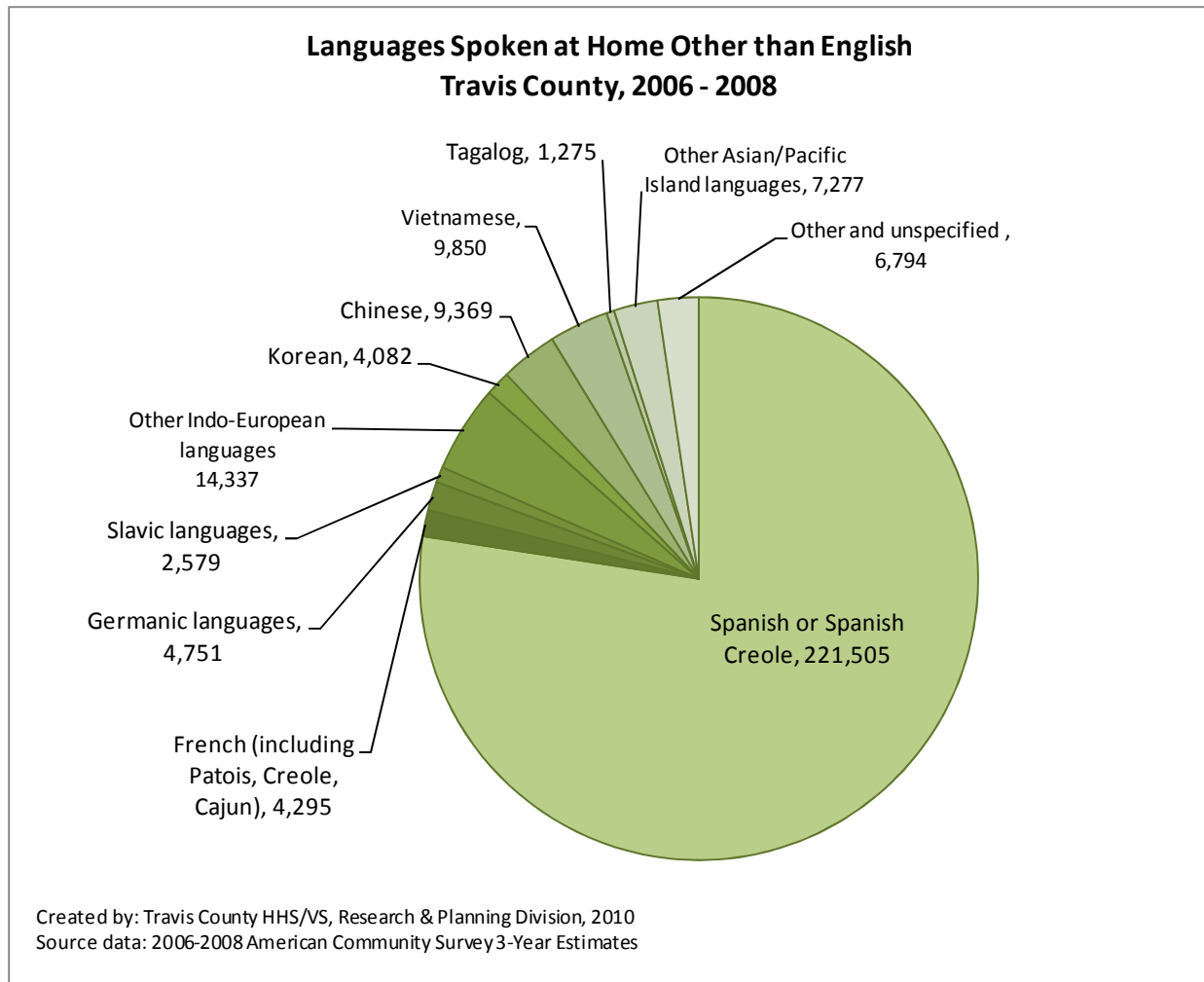


¹ Note that this chart shows only the *nativity status* of children and their parents; both foreign-born children and foreign-born parents represented in this chart may or may not also have *legal status*.

Language & Communication

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

About one-third (32%) of Travis County residents speak a language other than English at home. The chart below illustrates the diversity of languages spoken at home within Travis County.¹



Of those who speak a language other than English at home, the large majority (77%) speak Spanish. The next largest group after Spanish speakers is those who speak Indo-European languages (5%), then Vietnamese (3.4%), closely followed by Chinese (3.3%). The rest of the language groups make up small shares of the total foreign-born population, but add up to 31,053 residents of Travis County.

It is important to distinguish between a primary language spoken at home and English proficiency. The practice of speaking a language other than English at home does not necessarily indicate limited English proficiency; it merely indicates the primary language or the language with which one is most comfortable.

Among Travis County immigrants ages five and older, children and adults differ in the languages they speak at home. Of immigrants ages 5-17, 76% speak Spanish at home, and the next largest group is the 10% who speak only English. The proportions for adult immigrants are a little different: the two largest groups are the 62% who speak Spanish at home, followed by the 15% who speak Asian or Pacific Island languages at home.

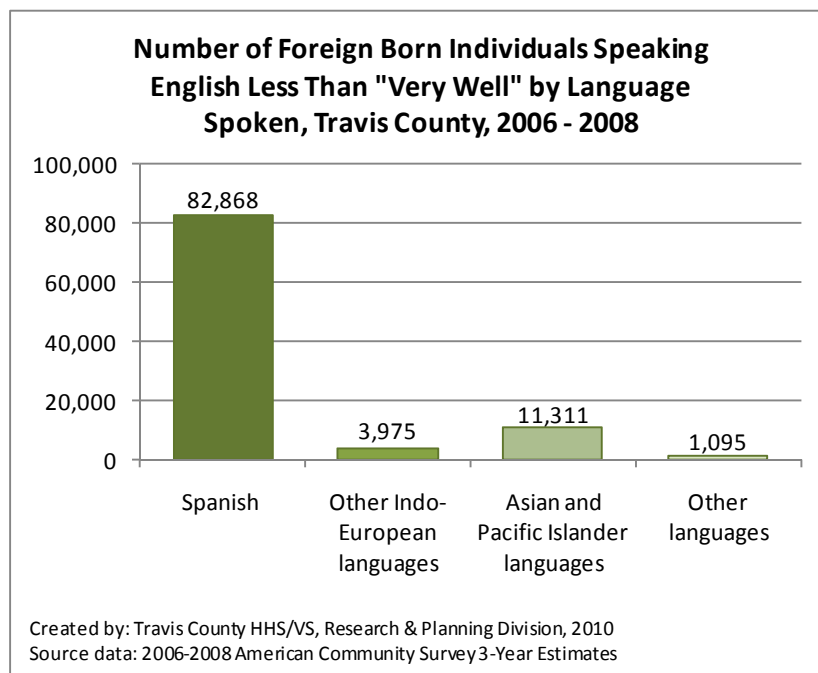
Languages Spoken at Home Other than English by the Foreign Born, Age 5 & Over Travis County, 1990 - 2008						
Age	Spanish	Asian & Pacific Island Languages	Indo-European Languages	Only English	Other Languages	Total
5 to 17 years	76%	7%	4%	10%	3%	100%
18 years and older	62%	15%	10%	10%	3%	100%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010
 Source: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Travis County’s immigrant population exhibits a range of English language proficiency. On the high end, **42% of the county’s immigrant population age 5 and older speaks English “very well,”** and an additional **17% speak English “well.”** On the other end of the spectrum, the remaining 43% speak English “not well” or “not at all.”ⁱⁱ

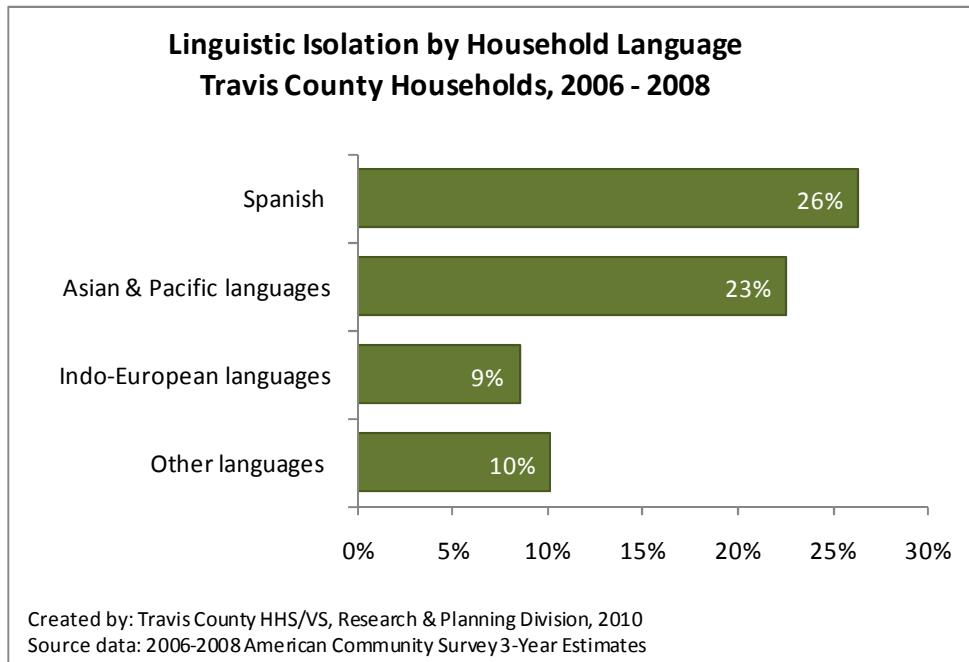
The chart at right illustrates the numbers of foreign-born who speak English less than “very well” by language. **A total of almost 100,000 foreign-born individuals speak English less than “very well”** (the largest group being Spanish speakers). These numbers have implications for service organizations around language barriers that may impact immigrants’ access to services (for example, interpreter services that may be needed). Limited English proficiency can also pose barriers to understanding public safety issues, opportunities for employment, and access to education.



LINGUISTIC ISOLATION

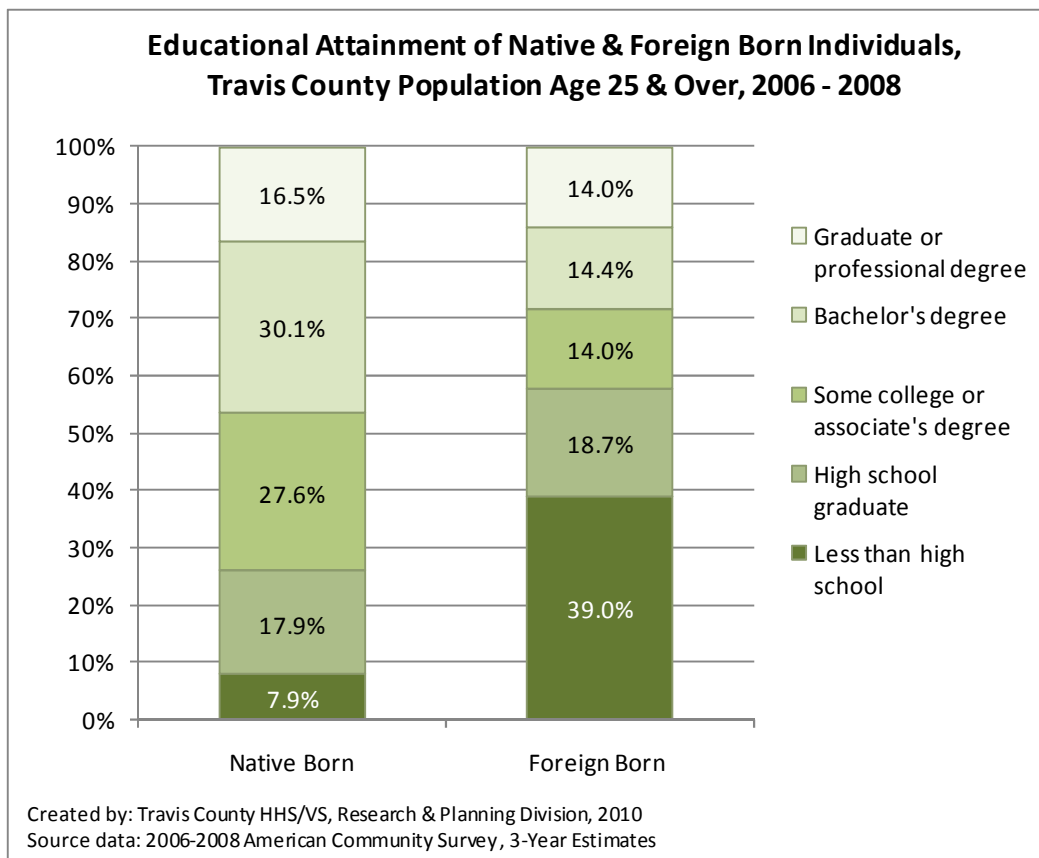
A linguistically isolated household is one in which no household member age 14 or older speaks English “very well.”ⁱⁱⁱ All the barriers faced by those with limited English proficiency are magnified by the household’s inability to communicate with service providers, legal entities, authority figures, and other important contacts within their community.

A total of almost 29,000 Travis County households are linguistically isolated. The chart below shows the share of households that are linguistically isolated by languages spoken. Those speaking Spanish and Asian or Pacific Island languages are most likely to be linguistically isolated (26% and 23% respectively), but Spanish-speaking households comprise the largest group (24,080 households in Travis County, compared to 3,317 households speaking Asian or Pacific Island languages).



Educational Attainment

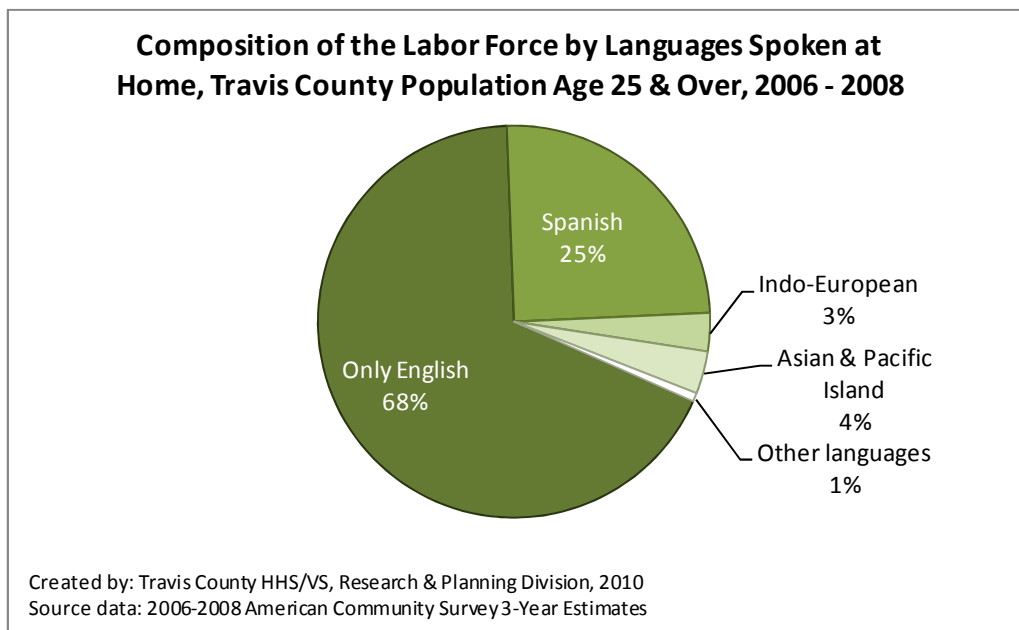
The level of education an individual receives is closely tied to their opportunities for employment and their earning potential. Immigrants on average have lower educational attainment levels^{iv} than the native-born in Travis County. **The 26% of native-born individuals whose education stops at high school level or less stands in contrast to the significant portion (58%) of foreign-born individuals at the same educational attainment level.** This disparity continues at the post-secondary level, where a greater share of native-born individuals than foreign-born individuals have some college, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. At the upper end of the educational spectrum, however, **14% of foreign-born individuals have graduate or professional degrees, which is comparable to the 16% of native-born individuals at that same level of educational attainment.**



Employment

IMMIGRANTS AND THE LABOR FORCE

Immigrants comprise a vital part of our local workforce. The chart below shows the composition of the labor force in Travis County (ages 25 and older) by language spoken at home. **Approximately one-third (150,006) of the local labor force is made up of individuals who speak a language other than English at home.** Spanish speakers alone make up 25% (115,626) of the labor force, but those who speak Indo-European languages (14,771 individuals), Asian or Pacific Island languages (16,279), and other and unspecified languages (3,330) are also present.



As shown in the Principle Demographics section, the majority (66%) of the foreign-born individuals living in Travis County are in the prime working ages of 25 to 54. (For further details on the age distribution, please see page 4.)

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

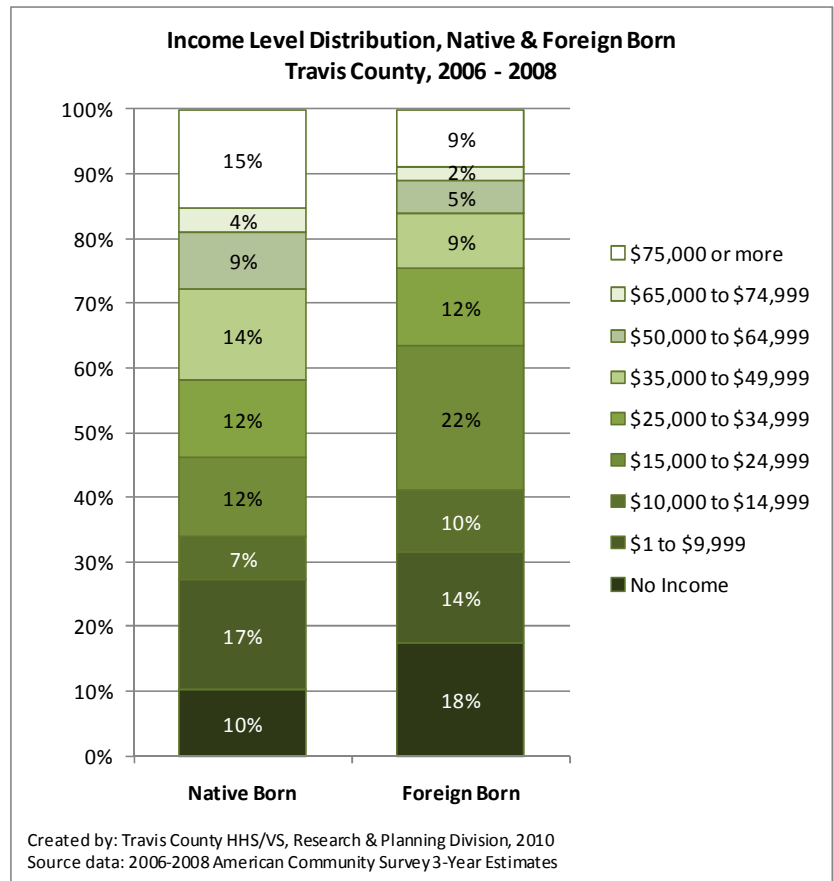
There is often a relationship between means of transportation and employment status. Among the foreign-born age 16 and over in Travis County, the most notable transportation difference is between those with citizenship status and those who are non-citizens. Naturalized citizens are more likely to drive alone to work (76% of naturalized citizens drive alone to work compared to 52% of non-citizens), while non-citizens are more likely to carpool (14% of naturalized citizens carpool to work compared to 29% of non-citizens). Smaller fractions of Travis County's foreign-born use public transportation, walk, or other means of transportation such as taxicabs, motorcycles, bicycles, etc.

Economic Status and Poverty

INCOME LEVEL

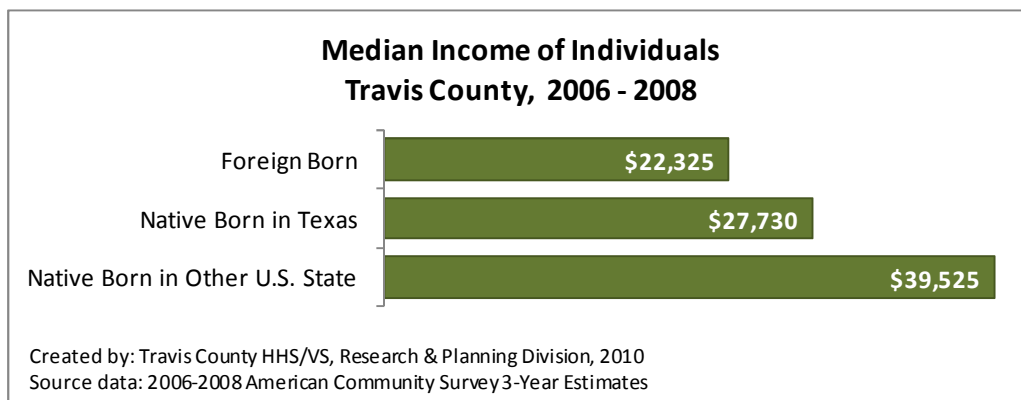
Income level impacts one's ability to meet the basic needs of food, housing, clothing, and utilities, as well as access community resources. Higher income levels provide more security, and may open doors to other opportunities leading to upward mobility.

Compared to that of native-born residents, **the income distribution of Travis County immigrants is more skewed toward the lower income groups.** About two-in-five Travis County immigrants (42%) earn less than \$15,000 per year, compared to 34% of native-born individuals at the same income level. Conversely, only 16% of the foreign-born make \$50,000 or more per year, compared to 28% of native-born individuals.



MEDIAN INCOME

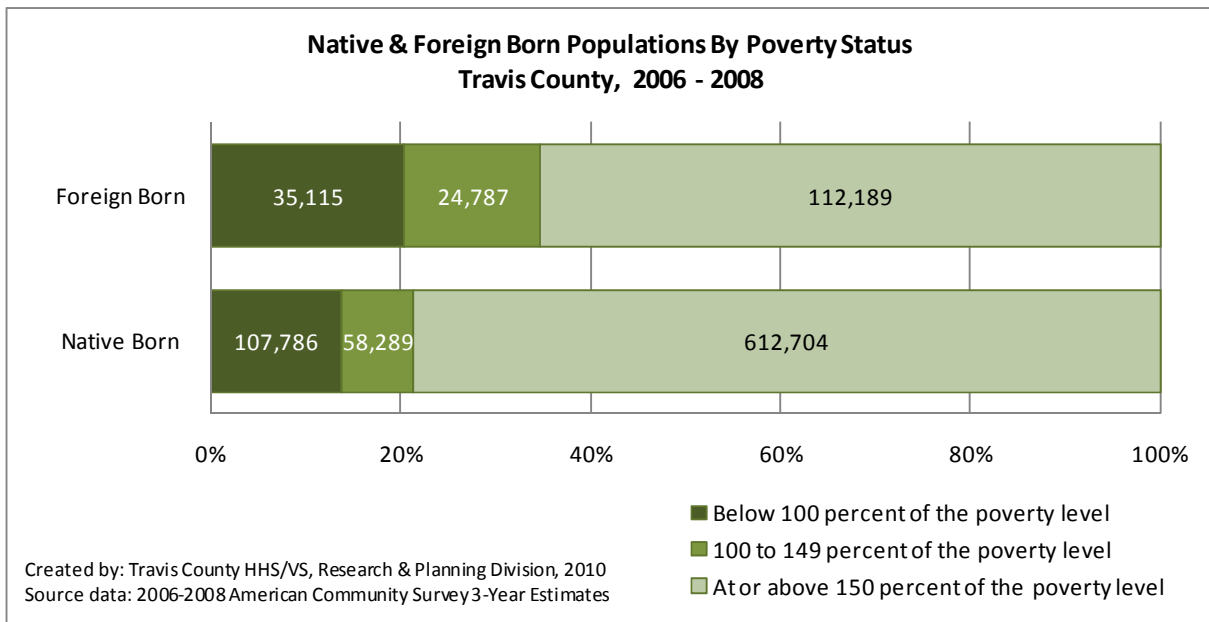
The median income for Travis County immigrants is \$22,325. The chart below compares the median income for the foreign-born to the native-born in Travis County. The median income for foreign-born individuals is less than those of native-born populations, regardless of their state of birth.



POVERTY STATUS

Travis County immigrants have a higher likelihood of living in poverty than do native-born residents. At present, **approximately 1 in 5 immigrants in Travis County lives below the federal poverty level**. An additional 14% of foreign-born residents are at risk of poverty (between 100% and 149% of the federal poverty level). Taken together, **this amounts to approximately 35% of the foreign-born population living in or near poverty**. These rates are higher than those of the native-born, for whom about 14% live below the federal poverty level and an additional 7% are at risk of poverty.^v Also noteworthy is the fact that the great majority (90%) of the foreign-born who live below the poverty level are not U.S. citizens (and as non-citizens, they often do not have access to the federal safety net programs aimed at relieving the effects of poverty).^{vi}

The chart below shows the poverty status in greater detail for the foreign-born and native-born populations in Travis County.



Methodology

The Census Bureau's 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS) 3-Year Estimates is the primary data source for this chart book. Data from the 1990 and 2000 Census and the 2008 ACS 1-Year Estimates are also referenced for specific trend analyses.

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) replaces the long form of the 10-year U.S. Census and collects information on an ongoing basis rather than once every ten years. The survey includes questions about demographic, housing, social and economic characteristics.^{vii} Annual results are produced at the national, state, city, and county levels as well as smaller geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or greater. In 2008, data based on a 3-year sample became available for all areas of 20,000 or more. In 2010, data based on a 5-year sample will become available for all areas (as small as census tracts and block groups).^{viii}

ACS Methodology

Sample: The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted every month on independent samples of housing unit^{ix} addresses (whether vacant or occupied) and persons in group quarters^x facilities, and produces annual or annual average estimates. Each year, approximately 3 million housing unit addresses in the United States are selected, and approximately 2.5% of the expected number of residents in group quarters facilities are included in the ACS.^{xi} Surveys are collected from 1/12 of the sample each month. An address will not be included in the ACS survey more than once in a five-year period.^{xii}

Data collection: The ACS is conducted primarily through self-response. The ACS employs two distinct data collection methodologies: one for individuals residing in housing units and another for those residing in group quarters.

Limitations

Statistical Significance: To test the true significance of a difference in estimates (for example between geographic areas or over time) a statistical test should be conducted. This brief simply reports on the changes observed and does not test for significance. For this reason, the statistics and trends reported should be interpreted with caution.

Sampling error: Because the findings are based on a sample, rather than entire populations, the results would differ slightly if another sample were drawn or if the entire population were surveyed. This reduces the reliability of the results.

Non-response error: If certain individuals do not respond to the survey, the strength of the findings will be weakened. Additionally, those who respond to the survey may possess certain traits that skew the results differently than if everyone in the sample responds (this is known as selection bias). However, while surveys are often voluntary, response to the ACS is required by law (Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141, 193 and 221) and those who refuse or willfully neglect to respond to the survey are subject to a fine of up to \$5,000.^{xiii} Thus the response rate for the ACS is high (the 2008 response rate for Texas was 97.5% for housing units and 97.5% for group quarters).^{xiv}

ⁱ Although there are more than 6,000 languages in the world, the Census Bureau codes all reported languages into approximately 380 categories. At the most aggregated level is a four-group classification (Spanish, Other Indo-European Languages, Asian and Pacific Island Languages, and All Other Languages) which is used throughout this document. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, pp 72-73.)

ⁱⁱ In the American Community Survey, respondents who report speaking a language other than English are asked to indicate their English-speaking ability based on one of the following categories: "Very well," "Well," "Not well," or "Not at all." Ideally, the data on ability to speak English represents a person's perception of their own English-speaking ability. However, because one household member usually completes questionnaires, responses may represent the perception of another household member. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, p. 72.)

ⁱⁱⁱ In the American Community Survey, a linguistically isolated household is one in which all adults have some limitation in communicating English. A household was classified as "linguistically isolated" if: (1) No household member age 14 years and over spoke only English, and (2) No household member age 14 years and over who spoke another language spoke English "Very well." (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, p. 72.)

^{iv} Respondents are classified according to the highest degree or the highest level of school completed. If more than one box was filled, the response was edited to the highest level or degree reported. The instructions further specified that schooling completed in foreign or ungraded school systems should be reported as the equivalent level of schooling in the regular American system. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, pp. 41-42.)

^v For more information on how the Census Bureau determines poverty status, see American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, pages 78-80.

^{vi} For more information on immigrants' access to economic safety net programs, please see the "Economic Safety Net" chapter of the 2006-2007 Travis County Immigrant Assessment, available at:

http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/research_planning/immigrant_assessment.asp

^{vii} A copy of the questionnaire can be found at: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/SQuest/SQuest1.htm>

^{viii} About the ACS: Release Schedule for ACS Data, available at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/DataDiss/RelDates.htm>

^{ix} A housing unit may be a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms or a single room that is occupied (or, if vacant, intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Both occupied and vacant housing units are included in the housing unit inventory. Boats, recreational vehicles (RVs), vans, tents, railroad cars, and the like are included only if they are occupied as someone's current place of residence. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, p. 6-7.) For more information on housing units, see American Community Survey Design and Methodology, Issued April 2009, available at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/dm1.pdf>.

^x In 2006, group quarters were added to the ACS target population of housing units. A group quarters is a place where people live or stay, in a group living arrangement, that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing housing and/or services for the residents. Group quarters include such places as college residence halls, residential treatment centers, skilled nursing facilities, group homes, military barracks, correctional facilities, and workers' dormitories. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2008 Subject Definitions, p. 6-7.) For a full definition of group quarters, see 2008 American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey Group Quarters Definitions, available at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2008_ACS_GQ_Definitions.pdf. See also American Community Survey Design and Methodology, Issued April 2009, available at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/dm1.pdf>.

^{xi} American Community Survey Design and Methodology, Issued April 2009, available at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/dm1.pdf>.

^{xii} Answers to Common Questions Submitted by Constituents, available at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/CT_%20answers.pdf

^{xiii} About the ACS: What is the Survey? available at: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/What/What1.htm>

^{xiv} Response rate information is available on the Census Bureau website's American Factfinder, American Community Survey 2008, Tables B98021 and B98022, available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.