

# Guest Editor's Introduction

**John I. Carruthers**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or the U.S. government at large.*

This issue of *Cityscape* is dedicated to various issues having to do with the public policy debate about immigration in the United States. The project was initiated in 2007, after a proposal for comprehensive immigration reform was not enacted. At that time, passions of those participating in the debate ran high, and it seemed that more and better information on immigrants and immigration outcomes was needed. Toward that end, the contributors to this *Cityscape* symposium have produced original, scientific research aimed at developing empirical evidence that may be useful to policymakers and other interest groups as the discussion is renewed.

The United States is indisputably a nation of immigrants, some legal and some not. As illustrated in exhibit 1a, since the early 1800s, nearly 75 million people have immigrated to the country and obtained legal, permanent resident status. The same exhibit also shows that two main booms in immigration have occurred: one beginning around 1900 and a second beginning around 1990. The top 10 years for new permanent residents are evenly split between the two eras, but the exhibit shows that the ongoing boom has sustained itself much longer than the earlier one and shows no signs of tapering off. Exhibit 1b shows that, since the early 1900s, about 23 million people have been naturalized; this number has increased greatly since 1990. In 2008, more than a million people were naturalized, a figure matched only in 1996. Exhibit 1c illustrates that, in another echo of the boom in new permanent residents, the number of deportable nonresidents located by the government has also surged in recent years. The government has documented more than 50 million cases since 1925—and an average of 1.3 million cases a year since 1990. Despite the number of people apprehended, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimates that currently some 12 million unauthorized people are living in the United States.

These numbers by themselves are dramatic enough to draw considerable attention, but they leave a trail of questions in their wake, which the authors of the articles in this symposium attempt to answer: Why do some immigrants become citizens while others fail to? How does immigration affect metropolitan economies? Where do immigrants cluster, and why? How do immigrants go about certain aspects of their daily lives, such as commuting?

The first article in this symposium, by Natasha T. Duncan and Brigitte S. Waldorf, addresses how immigrants' success in achieving naturalization is influenced by who people are and where they live. The second article, by Mark D. Partridge, Dan S. Rickman, and Kamar Ali, examines how recent immigration has influenced metropolitan labor market outcomes, including migration flows, wages, labor force participation, and housing costs. The third article, by Seryoung Park and

Geoffrey J.D. Hewings, uses a computable general equilibrium model of the Chicago and United States economies to explore how immigration affects a region's economy. The fourth article, by Casey J. Dawkins, probes immigrants' tendency to fan out of central cities and into suburban areas. The fifth article, by Victoria Basolo and Mai Thi Nguyen, examines the residential location choices of immigrants who receive housing choice vouchers. The sixth article, by Rolf Pendall and Rosanne Hoyem, explores the extent to which immigrants disperse across large, polycentric metropolitan areas (in the United States and two European Union countries). Finally, the seventh article, by Sungyop Kim, evaluates immigrant travel behavior by studying how people commute to work.

Each article has been developed over the past 2 years and was presented midway in a series of specially organized sessions at the 2008 meetings of The North American Regional Science Council in Brooklyn, New York. As a set, the articles shed new and important light on the many and diverse ways in which immigrants seek to assimilate and go about their daily lives. In addition, the articles discuss, explain, and describe the ways immigrants seek to change communities and the ways communities change them. It is the editor's hope that this special issue will highlight the complexity of some of the issues the country currently faces and underscore the need to develop a firm evidence base that can guide the variety of proposed public policy responses. Along the way, it is worth bearing in mind that many Americans began their lives in the United States as immigrants and, thus, although debating the immigration issues may be challenging, the issues are, by their nature, resolvable.

### Exhibit 1

---

#### Immigrant Trends in the United States

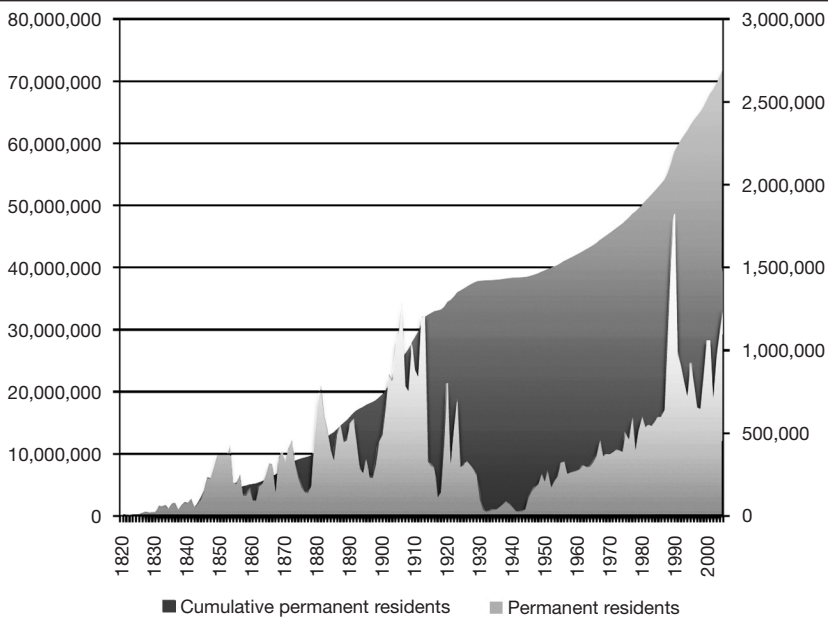
---

### Exhibit 1a

---

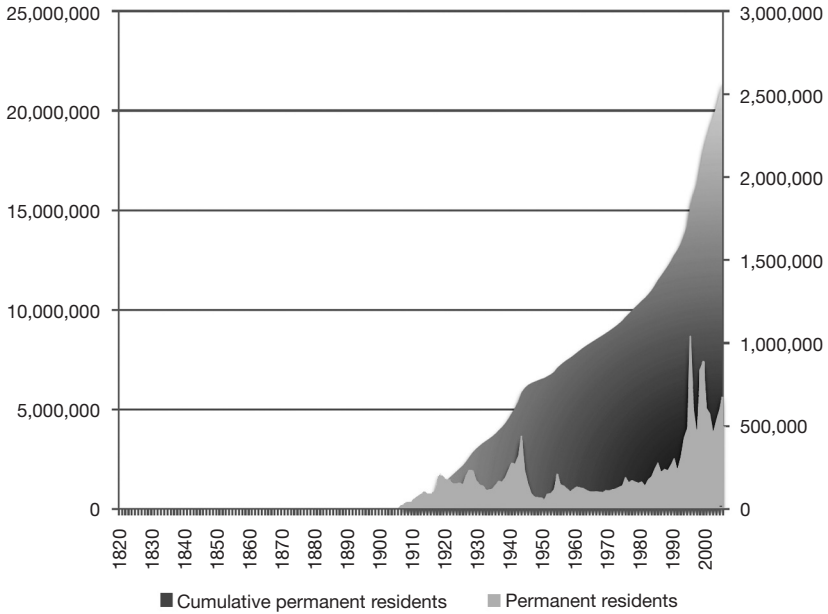
#### New Permanent Residents

---



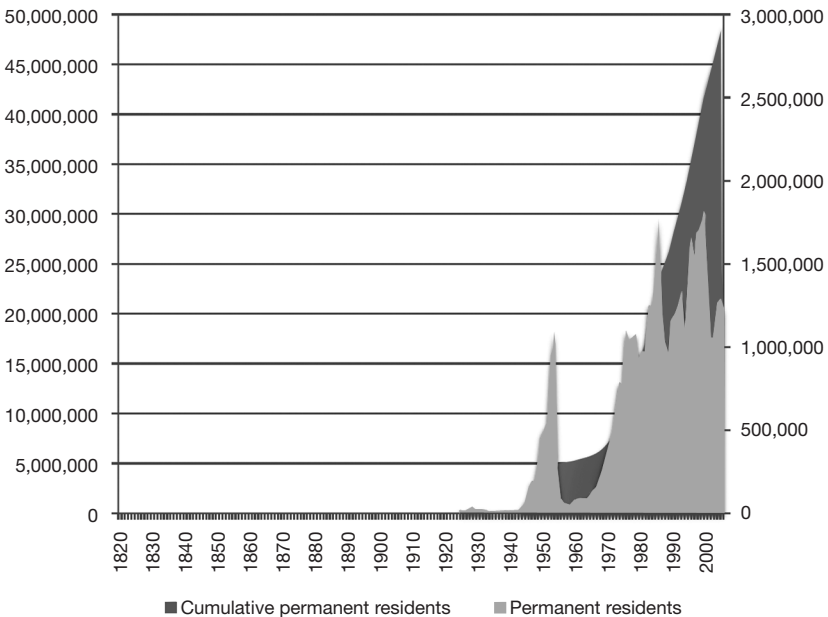
**Exhibit 1b**

**Naturalizations**



**Exhibit 1c**

**Deportable Nonresidents**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics

---