

Glossary of Terms

This section provides a brief explanation of major immigration and immigrant integration terms utilized in this report and in the field. The terms are organized in alphabetical order for easy reference.

TERMS	1.5 generation	Language access
	Acculturation	Lawful Permanent Resident
	Alien	LEP
	Americanization	Melting Pot
	Assimilation	Migrant
	Asylee	Nativism
	Bicultural	Newcomer
	Bilingual	Newcomer program
	Citizen	Non-Immigrant
	ELL	Receiving country
	English Plus	Refugee
	English-Only	Second generation
	ESL	Segmented assimilation
	First generation	Sending country
	Foreign-born	Social capital
	Gateway	Transnational
	Globalization	Undocumented immigrant
	Guestworker	Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)
	Human capital	Workforce development
	Immigrant	
	Inclusion	
	Incorporation	
	Integration	

GLOSSARY

1.5 generation. Children born abroad but brought to the receiving society before adolescence; sometimes treated as “second generation” in sociological studies because these immigrants’ language proficiency, educational levels, and other characteristics resemble those of the second generation.

Acculturation. Process through which immigrants are expected to learn the cultural patterns of the country of immigration, e.g., its language, cultural values, and practices. Some observers criticize the concept for assuming that the receiving society is culturally homogenous and that immigrants must relinquish their own ethnic group culture to integrate successfully.

Alien. Any person not a citizen or national of the United States.

Americanization. A movement of often forced adoption of U.S. cultural practices and the English language that flourished in the United States during and immediately after World War I; equated assimilation with acculturation in the Anglo-conformity mode. Contrast with “melting pot.”

Assimilation. Incorporating immigrants and refugees into the receiving society through an often multi-generational process of adaptation. The initial formulation of assimilation posited that both immigrants and host society adapt to each other, but the term has come to be associated with immigrants’ relinquishing their linguistic and cultural characteristics in order to become part of the economic and social structure of mainstream society.

Asylee. Person admitted to the United States because they are unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin. Asylees apply when already in the United States or at a point of entry. They may apply for permanent resident status one year after being granted asylee status. In this report, the more general term “immigrant” is used to encompass asylees unless the term “asylee” is more appropriate to a particular context.

Bicultural. Identifying with the cultures of two different language groups. To be bicultural is not necessarily the same as being bilingual.

Bilingual education. An educational program in which two languages are used to provide content matter instruction.

Bilingual. The ability to use two languages; bilingual persons may have varying proficiency across the four language dimensions (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). People may become bilingual either by acquiring two languages at the same time in childhood or by learning a second language sometime after acquiring their first language.

Citizen. Person who owes allegiance to a nation state and is entitled to its protection and to exercise rights of membership, such as voting. Under U.S. law, citizens include persons born in the United States or its territories, certain persons born abroad to a U.S. citizen, and non-citizens who become citizens through naturalization.

ELL. English language learners (ELLs) are children whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English; sometimes referred to as English learners (EL). Also see limited English proficient (LEP).

English plus. A movement based on the belief that all U.S. residents should have the opportunity to become proficient in English plus one or more other languages.

English only. An umbrella term that is used to refer to different federal and state legislative initiatives and various national, state, and local organizations, all of which involve the effort to make English the official language of the United States. The initiatives and organizations vary in the degree to which they promote the suppression of non-English languages.

ESL. English as a second language (ESL) is an educational approach to teach non-English speakers in the use of the English language. For primary and secondary students, ESL instruction is based on a special curriculum that typically involves little or no use of the native language, focuses on language (as opposed to content), and is usually taught during specific school periods. For the rest of the school day, students may be placed in mainstream classrooms, an immersion program, or a bilingual education program.

First generation. Immigrants who are born outside of the receiving country (e.g., who are foreign-born). See also “1.5 generation” (immigrants born abroad but brought to the United States while still children).

Foreign-born. The Census considers anyone not born a U.S. citizen to be foreign-born. The foreign-born include immigrants who have become citizens (through naturalization) or who have any of the variety of immigration statuses (e.g., legal permanent resident, refugees/asylees, temporary legal residents, or undocumented).

Gateway. The place of immigrants’ first settlement. Historically, immigrants settled in major port cities, such as New York, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco; these major settlement areas are referred to as “traditional gateways” or “historic gateways.” In the 1990s, immigrants dispersed to new settlement areas such as North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada, and Utah; such states are often referred to as “new gateways” or “new immigrant destinations.”

Globalization. Increased global interdependence among peoples and countries, globalization is characterized by increased international trade, investment, and migration as well as greater technological and cultural interchange. The first era of globalization occurred in the nineteenth century with rapid increases in international flows of goods, capital, and labor. After retrenchment during World War I and the Great Depression, the second era

of globalization is considered to have begun with the rise of trade and other elements of international exchange after World War II.

Guestworker. A person legally admitted to work for a temporary period of time, usually to fill labor shortages and without options to remain legally. U.S. immigration law contains several numerically limited non-immigrant temporary worker categories, including agricultural workers, nurses, and persons of extraordinary ability or achievement in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics.

Human capital. A person’s knowledge and abilities, such as educational level, literacy, and work experience; human capital is correlated with socio-economic position and mobility.

Immigrant. A person who leaves his or her country to settle permanently in another country. In U.S. immigration law, immigrant refers to all aliens in the United States who have not been admitted under one of the law’s non-immigrant categories. In this report, “immigrant” is the general term used to describe persons born abroad who have come to settle in the United States, regardless of their immigration status or whether they have become U.S. citizens.

Inclusion. Process by which immigrants become participants in particular sub-sectors of society, such as education, labor market, or political representation. Emphasizes active and conscious efforts by both public agencies and employers as well as immigrants themselves; meant to contrast with exclusion or social exclusion.

Incorporation. Used by some social scientists seeking a neutral term to refer to the process by which immigrants become part of a society, in an attempt to avoid normative implication sometimes associated with terms such as “assimilation.”

Integration. A dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities. Emphasis on the two-way process of change by both immigrants and members of receiving society contrasts with alternative use of term “integration” to signify one-way process of adaptation by immigrants to fit in with a dominant culture.

Language access. Signifies efforts by public agencies and the private sector to make their programs, services, and products more accessible to persons who are not proficient in English, through use of translated materials, bilingual personnel, interpreters, and other means. Federal agencies and recipients of federal funds are obligated to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful language access to their programs and activities to persons who are limited English Proficient, or risk violating the prohibition against national origin discrimination under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and other laws.

Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR). An alien who has been legally admitted to reside and work permanently in the United States; the LPR visa is often called a “green card” (even though the cards are no longer green).

Limited English Proficient (LEP). A term used to describe people who are not fluent in English. Definitions of this term are not always consistent across different contexts. The Census, government agencies, and many experts define LEP individuals to include anyone over the age of five who speaks English less than “very well”. LEP is also the term used by the federal government and most states and local school districts to identify those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms. In the K-12 school context, English language learner (ELL) or English learner (EL) is used increasingly in place of LEP.

Melting Pot. Metaphor for concept that traits of immigrants of different backgrounds and ethnicities converge with those of the native-born to forge a new, unified American identity. The term was popularized by Israel Zangwill, an English author and Jewish leader, whose 1908 play *The Melting Pot* featured a Russian Jewish immigrant who survived a pogrom and looked forward to a life in America free of ethnic divisions and hatred. Melting pot is sometimes contrasted with the cultural mosaic or “salad bowl” concept, where each “ingredient” retains its distinction while contributing to a successful final product.

Migrant. In the broadest sense, a person who leaves his or her country of origin to seek residence in another country. Often used in the United States to refer to migrant farmworkers and their families, who follow the seasonal harvest of crops for employment in agriculture.

Nativism. Nativism is a hostile reaction to immigrants, associated in American history with fears that new immigrants would inject political and cultural values at odds with the American way of life.

Newcomer program. In the public education system, a program that addresses the specific needs of recent immigrant students, most often at the middle and high school level, especially those with limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries. Major goals of newcomer programs are to acquire beginning English language skills along with core academic skills and to acculturate to the U.S. school system.

Newcomer. An immigrant in the initial years after arrival; in this publication often used interchangeably with immigrant.

Non-immigrant. Under U.S. immigration law, a foreign citizen legally admitted to the United States for a specified purpose and a temporary period; includes both legal temporary residents (e.g., diplomats, foreign students, tourists, and temporary workers) and visitors (e.g., tourists and business visitors).

Receiving country. A country in which immigrants settle. Alternate terms include “receiving community,” “host society,” or “host community.”

Refugee. A person admitted to the United States because s/he is unable or unwilling to return to the country of nationality due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin. Refugees apply for admission at a facility overseas and may apply for permanent resident status one year after being granted admission. In this report, the more general term “immigrant” is used to encompass refugees unless the term “refugee” is more appropriate to a particular context.

Second generation. In the Census, the second generation consists of native-born children of foreign-born parents. In some sociological research, second generation may also include foreign-born children brought to the U.S. before adolescence (the 1.5 generation).

Segmented assimilation. Concept developed by sociologists Alejandro Portes, Rubén Rumbaut, and Min Zhou in the 1990s to explain the varying patterns of assimilation experienced by members of different ethnic groups. Focuses on the second generation, and posits that while many immigrants will find different paths to mainstream success, others will find their pathways blocked by segmented labor markets and racial discrimination and experience negative assimilation.

Sending country. A country whose citizens emigrate, either permanently or temporarily; in classical migration theory, typically used to refer to countries whose natives migrate abroad in search of employment.

Social capital. The ability to gain access to resources by virtue of membership in social networks and other social structures.

Transnational. Persons, commercial, or non-profit enterprises, or other developments with ties to more than one country. Increasingly, “transnational” is used to refer to relationships between and among individuals and other entities, while “international” is used to refer to relationships between and among nation states.

Undocumented immigrant. A person residing in the United States without legal immigration status; includes both persons who entered without inspection and those who entered with a legal visa that is no longer valid. Also referred to as unauthorized or illegal immigrants.

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL). VESL programs focus on teaching English skills that are used in the workplace or in a particular occupation or vocational area. Many VESL programs also combine language education with instruction in job-specific skills.

Workforce development. A range of programs and approaches used to prepare people for jobs; workforce development programs may provide job training, higher education, English language training, and other skills. At the federal level, workforce development programs are spread across a number of departments, including the Department of Labor (Workforce Investment Act, or WIA, and other job training programs), the Department of Health and Human Services (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF, among others), and the Department of Education (Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Program and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Program, among others).

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