

Coming to America Two Years After September 11, 2001

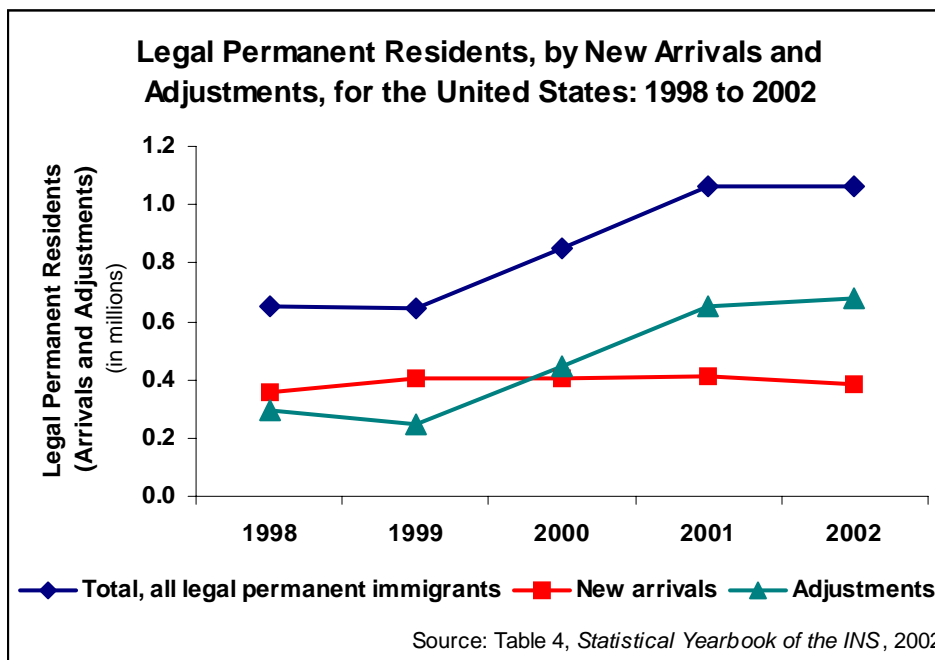
***Permanent Immigration Remains Stable, But Temporary Admissions Decline and Refugee Admissions Drop Drastically***

While the level of overall immigration to the United States has remained remarkably steady since September 11, 2001, the number of temporary visas has dropped by 15 percent and refugee admissions have plummeted, according to analysts at the Migration Policy Institute.

**Permanent Immigration**

“Between 2001 and 2002, the total number of immigrants who obtained permanent resident status fell by less than half of one percent,” said Elizabeth Grieco, MPI’s data manager. Of the 1.1 million people granted permanent status, 384,000 were new arrivals and 679,000 were people already in the United States who adjusted their status from temporary to permanent.

“One reason this decline was so small is that about two-thirds of people granted permanent status were already here.” Grieco said. “In fact, the number of new arrivals has remained relatively stable at about 400,000 annually. It is processing problems with adjustments at the former INS that have led to wide swings in the total number of immigrants who are given permanent status over the past decade.”



Nearly two-thirds of the immigrants who obtained legal permanent residence in 2002 were relatives of United States citizens or permanent residents. Over half came from just ten countries, including Mexico (219,000), India (71,000), China (61,000), the Philippines (51,000), Vietnam (34,000), El Salvador (31,000), Cuba (28,000), Bosnia-Herzegovina (25,000), the Dominican Republic (23,000), and Ukraine (21,000).

“Given the time it presently takes to apply for and obtain permanent resident status, the family ties which drive most of the petitions, and the countries of origin of the applicants, the stability of the permanent numbers post September 11 is not surprising,” said MPI Policy Analyst Deborah Meyers. “In fact, these numbers may remain steady over the next few years as backlogs are cleared out, regardless of additional changes to visa requirements which, for the most part, will affect discretionary travel and travelers from particular countries.”

### **Temporary Admissions**

In contrast, non-immigrant admissions into the United States declined by 15 percent between 2001 and 2002, likely influenced by both the weak economy and the aftermath of September 11, particularly changes in visa policies.

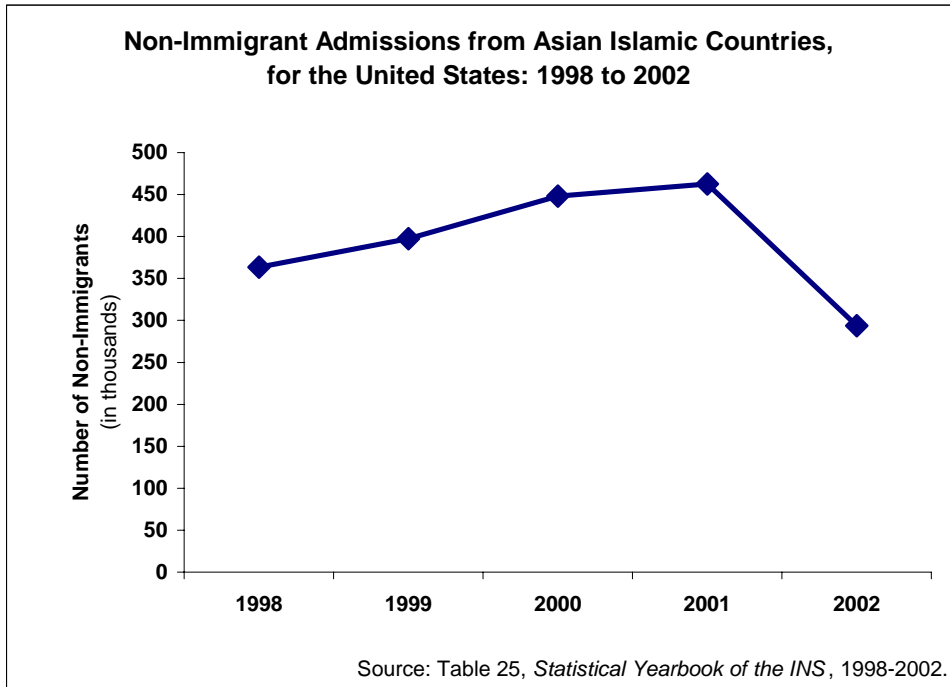
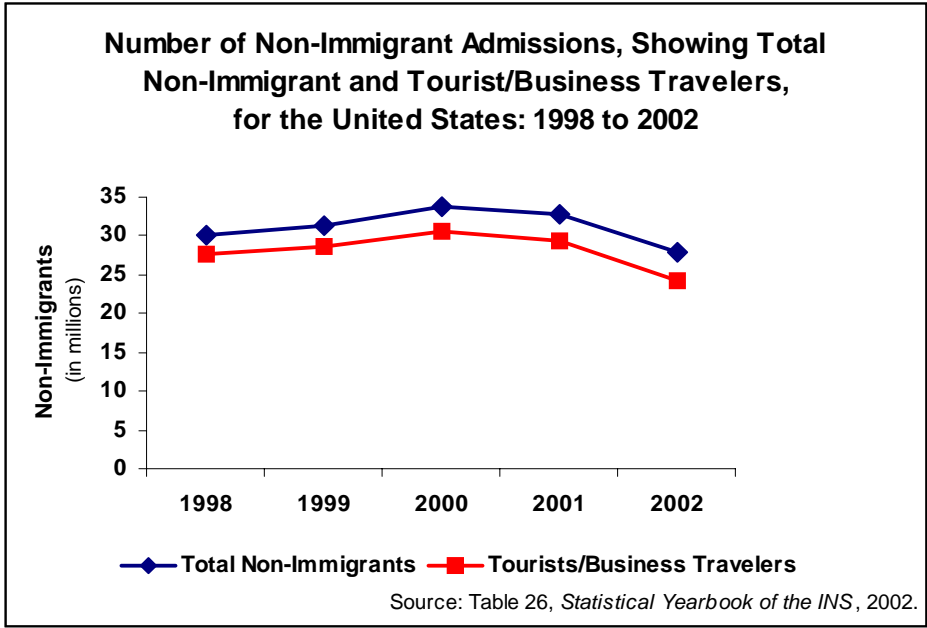
“Non-immigrant admissions have ranged from 21.6 million to 33.7 million over the last decade,” said Grieco, “following the ups and downs of the economy.” In 2002, over 87 percent of the 28 million non-immigrants were tourists and business travelers.

“Compared to permanent immigrants, the travel plans of non-immigrants are flexible and can be influenced by a variety of short-term factors, such as an increase in security screenings and delays in visa processing, as well as other intangibles, such as fears of discrimination or concerns for personal safety,” Grieco said.

The uncertain environment after September 11th likely has influenced the number of non-immigrants coming to the United States from Asian Islamic countries, including Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

“Non-immigrants from Asian Islamic countries accounted for just over one percent of all non-immigrant admissions in 2002,” said Meyers, “but between 2001 and 2002 their numbers dropped by an average of 37 percent. Here is an example of the events of September 11th and their aftermath having a visible impact on migration patterns.”

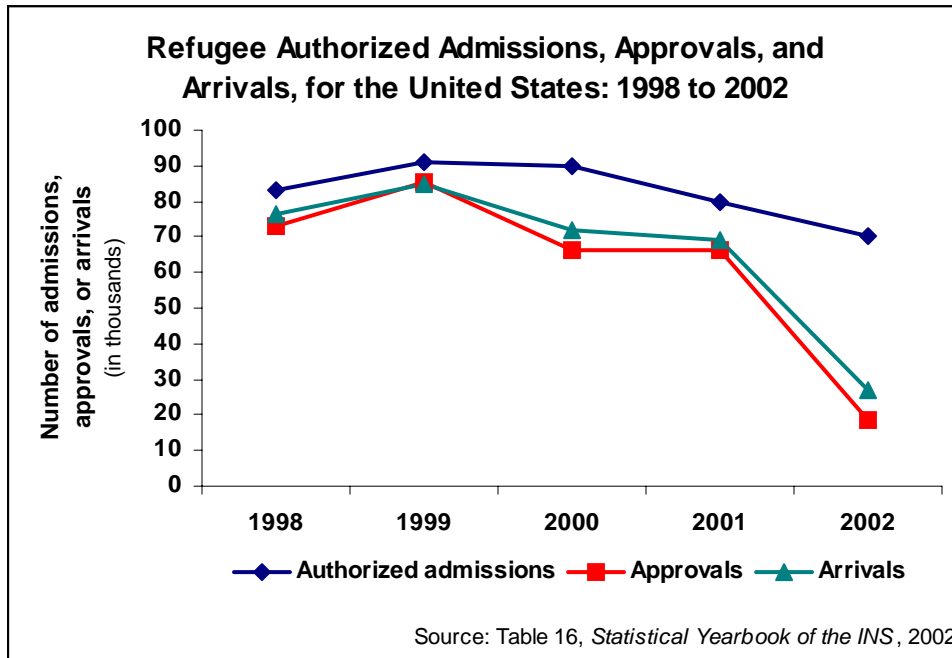
In 2002, 84 percent of all non-immigrants came from ten countries, including the United Kingdom (4.3 million), Mexico (4.2 million), Japan (3.7 million), Germany (1.4 million), France (1.1 million), Korea (804,000), China (706,000), Italy (579,000), Brazil (576,000), and the Netherlands (536,000). Between 2001 and 2002, all of these countries experienced a decline in the number of their nationals admitted to the United States on a temporary basis.



**Refugee Admissions At 25-Year Low**

The largest drop, proportionally, in any category of admission to the US post-September 11 has been in the refugee resettlement program. From 68,426 refugees who arrived in FY 2001 to settle in the United States, the number admitted fell to 27,508 in FY 2002, and is expected to remain at that level, or less, for FY 2003. These figures represent a 25-year low in refugee admissions. In both of these two years, the President, in consultation with Congress, authorized the admission of up to 70,000 refugees.

"The result," says Kathleen Newland, "is that in the last two years alone, close to 85,000 opportunities for refugees to escape from danger and start a new life in the United States have been forfeited."



The sharp drop can be attributed to new security procedures and, to a lesser extent, measures to combat fraud (mainly in connection with the misrepresentation of family relationships among those applying for resettlement), which have slowed the processing of applications. Authorities in the Departments of State and Homeland Security have often restated their commitment to restoring the refugee resettlement program.

Since September 11, the traditional composition of the US immigration stream, divided among family, labor and humanitarian streams, has shifted decisively away from the last of these and toward the first, as the refugee program has atrophied and the state of the economy has discouraged economic migration. The fact that the family component of U.S. immigration is so dominant, however, assures a high degree of stability in immigration to the United States.

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