

FACTANK

NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

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In 116th Congress, at least 13% of lawmakers are immigrants or the children of immigrants

BY ABIGAIL GEIGER



Members of the 116th Congress who are immigrants or children of immigrants include, from left, Reps. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., and TJ Cox, D-Calif.; Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., and John Thune, R-S.D.; and Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash. (Safvan Allahverdi/Anadolu Agency, Leonard Ortiz/Digital First Media/Orange County Register, Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call, Mark Wilson, and Alex Wong, all but third via Getty Images)

Immigrants and children of immigrants account for at least 13% of all voting members of the newly sworn in 116th Congress. These lawmakers claim heritage in 37 countries – mostly in Europe, Latin America and Asia – and are overwhelmingly Democrats, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of members' biographical information obtained from news articles, congressional offices and other sources.

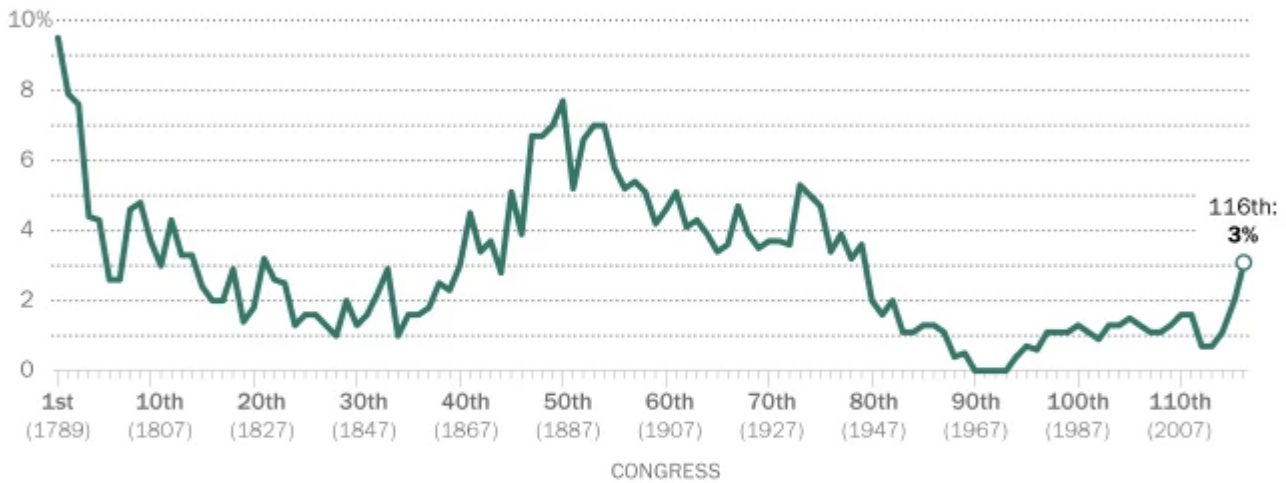
There are 52 immigrants and children of immigrants serving in the House of Representatives and 16 serving in the Senate. Counting both chambers, 57 of the 68 lawmakers who are immigrants or children of immigrants are Democrats. Ten others are Republicans, and one – Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont – is an independent.

November's elections did not substantially change the share of immigrants and children of immigrants in Congress. In the last Congress, **12% of all voting members** fell into this category, a slightly lower share than in the current Congress. While two immigrants and six children of immigrants from the 115th Congress are no longer serving, four of these members' seats were filled by lawmakers who also are immigrants or children of immigrants.

While at least 13% of voting members in Congress are immigrants or children of immigrants, relatively few of these are foreign born: 13 in the House, and just one – Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii – in the Senate. These 14 immigrant lawmakers represent just 3% of all voting members in both chambers, a slight uptick from recent Congresses but substantially below the foreign-born share of Congresses many decades ago. (For example, about 10% of members in the first and much smaller Congress of 1789-91 were foreign born. About a century later, in the 50th Congress of 1887-89, 8% of members were born abroad, according to **a previous analysis**.) The current share of foreign-born lawmakers in Congress is also far below the **foreign-born share** of the United States as a whole, which was 13.5% as of 2016.

Foreign-born share of Congress remains below historical highs

Foreign-born members' share of the House and Senate, by Congress

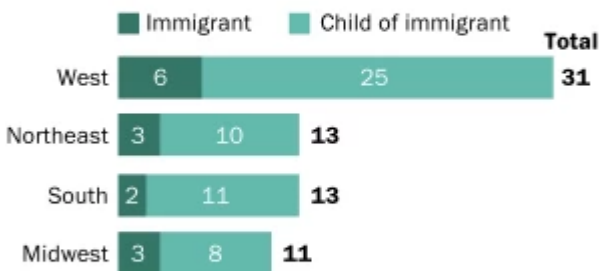


Note: Figures based on voting senators and representatives only. Share based on the total number of senators and representatives who served during the life of a Congress. Data for 115th Congress reflect membership as of Aug. 17, 2018, and do not include 19 members who left office for various reasons since that Congress' inception. Data of 116th Congress as of Jan. 24, 2019.
 Source: Lawson, Murray. 1957. "The Foreign-Born in Congress, 1789-1949: A Statistical Summary." American Political Science Review; and Pew Research Center analysis of the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress and independent sources.

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Nearly half of immigrants, children of immigrants in Congress represent Western states

States represented by each in 116th Congress, by U.S. region



Note: As of Jan. 24, 2019. Regions classified by U.S. Census.
 Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, members' websites.

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Immigrants and children of immigrants represent 24 states, with nearly half representing Western states. California has by far the most: 19 of the state's 55 members are immigrants or children of immigrants. (Five members of Illinois' delegation are immigrants or

children of immigrants, the second-highest total of any state.) Looked at another way, more than a quarter of all members of Congress who are immigrants or children of immigrants represent California.

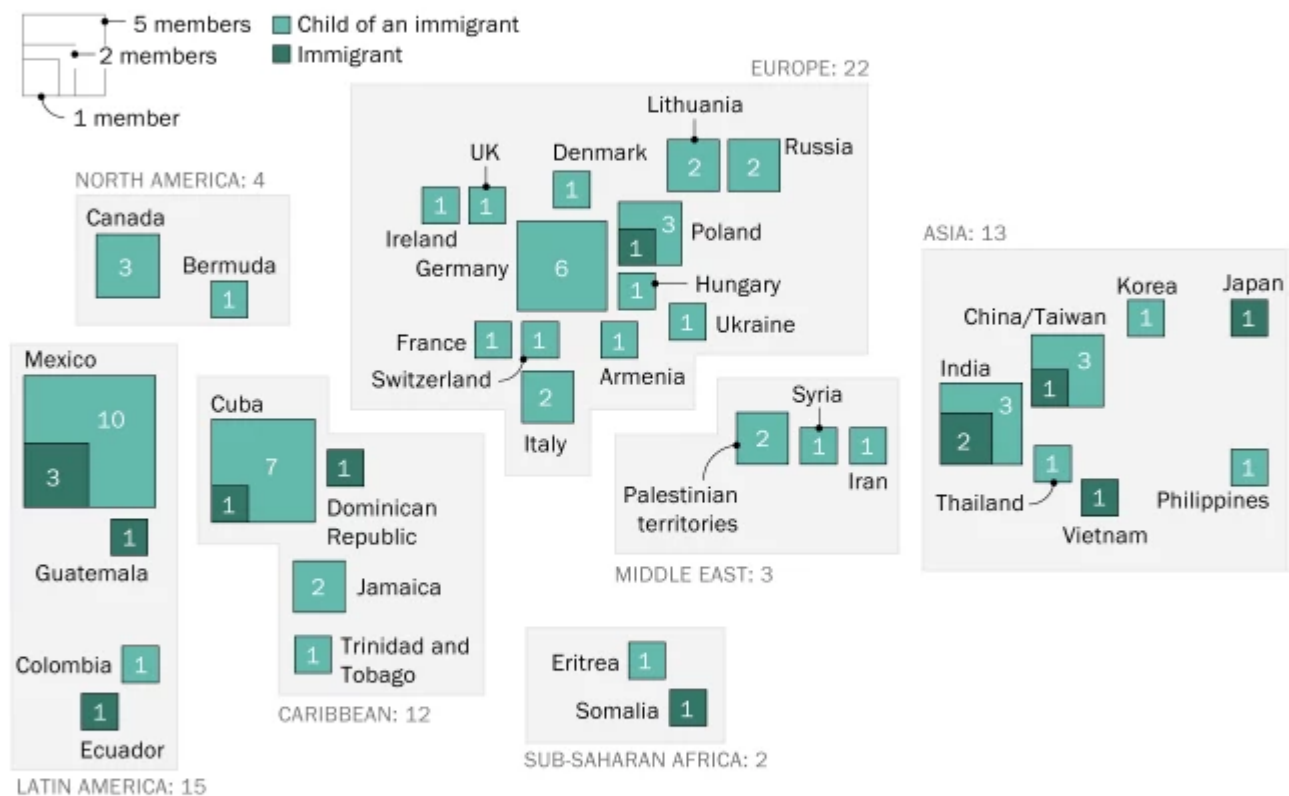
Europe is the most common origin region

Europe is the most common origin region for immigrant lawmakers or those who are children of immigrants: About one-third (32%) have roots in countries there. Roughly one-in-five (22%) immigrants and children of immigrants in Congress hail from countries in Latin America, and most of these – 13 – have immigrant roots in Mexico. Asia follows with 19% and the Caribbean with 18%. Collectively, 74% of immigrants and children of immigrants in Congress have origins in countries in Europe, Latin America or Asia.

Much smaller shares claim heritage in countries in the Middle East, North America and sub-Saharan Africa – each below 10%. (Some lawmakers in this analysis are tallied under more than one country and region. For example, Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., is the child of a Caribbean father and a European mother.)

Most immigrants or children of immigrants in Congress come from Europe, Latin America or Asia

Birthplace or parentage of immigrants and children of immigrants in 116th Congress, by country and world region



Note: As of Jan. 24, 2019. Lawmakers whose parents were born in different countries are counted under each country but only once per region, so country totals may not sum to regional totals. Though included in this analysis, the Palestinian territories are not recognized as an independent state by the U.S. State Department.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, news reports, genealogical records and members' published comments, websites and staff.

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Several lawmakers are immigrants who came to the U.S. with family to evade oppressive regimes or violence in other countries. Newly elected Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and **fled with her family** in 1991 after the country's civil war started. Her family spent four years in a refugee camp in Kenya and later moved to America, where she became a citizen in 2000. Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., was born in communist Poland before **coming to the U.S.** at age 6 with his mother.

Others had parents who fled their native countries. Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., was born to a Polish mother who survived the Holocaust and **came to the U.S. in 1950**. Rep. Joe Neguse, also a Democrat representing Colorado, was born to Eritrean parents **who fled their country** in 1980 when it was embroiled in war with Ethiopia.

Under **the U.S. Constitution**, an immigrant taking office in the House must be a U.S. citizen for seven years or more, age 25 or older and living in the state where he or she is elected. Nine years of citizenship are required to serve in the Senate, and the person must be 30 or older and live in the represented state when elected.

In this analysis, we examined lawmakers' birthplaces and parentage through news stories, obituaries, candidate statements, and congressional and genealogical records, as well as contacting congressional staff. Our count does not include members of Congress who were born outside the U.S. to American parents and gained U.S. citizenship after meeting legal requirements. Our tally also does not include members who were born (or whose parents were born) in U.S. territories, such as Puerto Rico, nor on U.S. military bases out of the country. In addition, one disputed seat in the House – North Carolina's 9th District – is not included in the total number of voting seats.

If you know of an additional legislator not included on our list, send us an email at facttank@pewresearch.org.

Research assistant Virginia Villa contributed to this analysis.

Immigrants, children of immigrants in the 116th U.S. Congress

Name	Immigrant or child of an immigrant	Parent's or member's country of origin	Party	Office	State
Amash, Justin	Child	Mother: Syria; Father: Palestinian terr.	Republican	Representative	MI
Barragán, Nanette	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Bennet, Michael	Child	Mother: Poland	Democrat	Senator	CO
Bera, Ami	Child	Both parents: India	Democrat	Representative	CA
Blumenthal, Richard	Child	Father: Germany	Democrat	Senator	CT
Boyle, Brendan	Child	Father: Ireland	Democrat	Representative	PA
Brown, Anthony	Child	Mother: Switzerland; Father: Cuba	Democrat	Representative	MD
Burgess, Michael	Child	Father: Canada	Republican	Representative	TX
Butterfield, G.K.	Child	Father: Bermuda	Democrat	Representative	NC
Carbajal, Salud	Immigrant	Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Chu, Judy	Child	Mother: China	Democrat	Representative	CA
Clarke, Yvette	Child	Both parents: Jamaica	Democrat	Representative	NY
Correa, Lou	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA

Name	Immigrant or child of an immigrant	Parent's or member's country of origin	Party	Office	State
Cox, TJ	Child	Mother: Philippines; Father: China	Democrat	Representative	CA
Cruz, Ted	Child	Father: Cuba	Republican	Senator	TX
Cuellar, Henry	Child	Father: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	TX
Cárdenas, Tony	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
DeLauro, Rosa	Child	Father: Italy	Democrat	Representative	CT
Diaz-Balart, Mario	Child	Both parents: Cuba	Republican	Representative	FL
Duckworth, Tammy	Child	Mother: Thailand	Democrat	Senator	IL
Durbin, Dick	Child	Mother: Lithuania	Democrat	Senator	IL
Eshoo, Anna	Child	Mother: Armenia; Father: Iran	Democrat	Representative	CA
Espaillet, Adriano	Immigrant	Dominican Republic	Democrat	Representative	NY
Gallego, Ruben	Child	Mother: Colombia; Father: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	AZ
García, Jesús	Immigrant	Mexico	Democrat	Representative	IL
Gomez, Jimmy	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Gonzalez, Anthony	Child	Father: Cuba	Republican	Representative	OH
Grijalva, Raúl	Child	Father: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	AZ
Harris, Andy	Child	Mother: Ukraine; Father: Hungary	Republican	Representative	MD
Harris, Kamala	Child	Mother: India; Father: Jamaica	Democrat	Senator	CA
Heinrich, Martin	Child	Father: Germany	Democrat	Senator	NM
Hirono, Mazie	Immigrant	Japan	Democrat	Senator	HI
Horsford, Steven	Child	Mother: Trinidad	Democrat	Representative	NV
Houlahan, Chrissy	Child	Father: Poland	Democrat	Representative	PA
Hoyer, Steny	Child	Father: Denmark	Democrat	Representative	MD
Jayapal, Pramila	Immigrant	India	Democrat	Representative	WA
Khanna, Ro	Child	Both parents: India	Democrat	Representative	CA
Kilmer, Derek	Child	Mother: Germany	Democrat	Representative	WA
Kim, Andy	Child	Both parents: South Korea	Democrat	Representative	NJ
Krishnamoorthi, Raja	Immigrant	India	Democrat	Representative	IL

Name	Immigrant or child of an immigrant	Parent's or member's country of origin	Party	Office	State
Lieu, Ted	Immigrant	Taiwan	Democrat	Representative	CA
Lowenthal, Alan	Child	Mother: Russia	Democrat	Representative	CA
Malinowski, Tom	Immigrant	Poland	Democrat	Representative	NJ
Menendez, Robert	Child	Both parents: Cuba	Democrat	Senator	NJ
Meng, Grace	Child	Both parents: China/Taiwan	Democrat	Representative	NY
Mooney, Alexander	Child	Mother: Cuba	Republican	Representative	WV
Mucarsel-Powell, Debbie	Immigrant	Ecuador	Democrat	Representative	FL
Murphy, Stephanie	Immigrant	Vietnam	Democrat	Representative	FL
Napolitano, Grace	Child	Mother: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Neguse, Joe	Child	Both Parents: Eritrea	Democrat	Representative	CO
Omar, Ilhan	Immigrant	Somalia	Democrat	Representative	MN
Peters, Gary	Child	Mother: France	Democrat	Senator	MI
Risch, James	Child	Father: Germany	Republican	Senator	ID
Rubio, Marco	Child	Both parents: Cuba	Republican	Senator	FL
Ruiz, Raul	Immigrant	Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Sanders, Bernie	Child	Father: Poland	Independent	Senator	VT
Sarbanes, John	Child	Mother: UK	Democrat	Representative	MD
Schakowsky, Janice	Child	Mother: Russia; Father: Lithuania	Democrat	Representative	IL
Schatz, Brian	Child	Father: Canada	Democrat	Senator	HI
Sires, Albio	Immigrant	Cuba	Democrat	Representative	NJ
Speier, Jackie	Child	Father: Germany	Democrat	Representative	CA
Suozzi, Thomas	Child	Father: Italy	Democrat	Representative	NY
Sánchez, Linda	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Thune, John	Child	Mother: Canada	Republican	Senator	SD
Tlaib, Rashida	Child	Both Parents: Palestinian territories	Democrat	Representative	MI
Torres, Norma	Immigrant	Guatemala	Democrat	Representative	CA
Vargas, Juan	Child	Both parents: Mexico	Democrat	Representative	CA
Wyden, Ron	Child	Both parents: Germany	Democrat	Senator	OR

Note: As of Jan. 23, 2019. Though included in this analysis, the Palestinian territories are not recognized as an independent state by the U.S. State Department.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, news reports, genealogical records and members' published comments, websites and staff.

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