

Higher rates of immigrant assimilation may shape policy reforms, study finds

5 April 2013

As the debate over comprehensive immigration reform unfolds in Washington, a new report reveals dramatic changes in immigrant assimilation as a result of the so-called Great Recession. The report, "Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in Post-Recession America," was authored by Sanford School of Public Policy Professor Jacob Vigdor for the Manhattan Institute.

Surveys and utilizes an assimilation index comprised of economic, cultural and civic indicators. It is the fourth report in a series on immigrant assimilation.

The full report can be read on the [Manhattan Institute website](#).

Opposition to immigration reform has focused on newly arrived, unassimilated and often [undocumented immigrants](#) from Mexico and other Central American countries. Vigdor's analysis of demographic trends raises the possibility that the era of rapid immigration from Mexico is over.

Provided by Duke University

The [immigrant population](#) has shifted dramatically since the recession, the report states. Migration rates from Mexico have been very slow for the past five years, while rates from other parts of the world – notably Asia – have quickened. In 2007, [Mexican immigrants](#) exceeded the number of [Asian immigrants](#) by 1.5 million. By 2011, the totals were roughly equal.

[Metro areas](#) with the largest increases in immigrant assimilation tend to be those most affected by the housing bust. The evaporation of easy mortgage credit and construction-related jobs likely reversed the flow of new immigrants to these areas, Vigdor concluded.

Partly as a result of the slowdown in new immigrants, the overall measure of assimilation is higher. Immigrants are more assimilated, on average, than at any point since the 1980s.

Statistics also show that in the five years since the recession the foreign-born population has crossed a major milestone – the 40-million mark – for the first time in American history.

The report draws on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 and 2011 American Community

APA citation: Higher rates of immigrant assimilation may shape policy reforms, study finds (2013, April 5) retrieved 18 November 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-04-higher-immigrant-assimilation-policy-reforms.html>

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