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# **New Immigrants and Refugees in Illinois: A Profile of 1990-1995 Arrivals**



A Latino Institute Report

by Rob Paral, Research Director and  
V. Alexandra Corten, Research Associate

This report is made possible with generous support from:  
Illinois Department of Human Services  
Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute  
The Ford Foundation  
United Way/Crusade of Mercy of Chicago

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The Latino Institute is a member agency of the United Way/Crusade of Mercy.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the first analysis of the characteristics of legal immigrants and refugees arriving in Illinois since 1990, with the main goals of facilitating program planning and implementation by social service providers and informing the ongoing public debate on the nature and impact of immigration. Highlights of the findings include the following:

- ✓ Approximately 184,000 legal immigrants and refugees came to Illinois in the period between the 1990 census (April 1, 1990) and September 30, 1995. This represents an average annual number of 33,531 arrivals.
- ✓ More than 175 countries around the world were the sources of the new legal immigrants and refugees, led by Poland (40,413 persons), Mexico (32,801) and India (17,372).
- ✓ A substantial portion -- 41.6 percent -- of the new immigrants and refugees immigrated directly to the suburbs of metropolitan Chicago. More than one in five (23.3 percent) immigrated to suburban Cook County, while 9.2 percent immigrated to DuPage County.
- ✓ In the suburbs, the Des Plaines, Cicero and Skokie areas received the largest numbers of immigrants and refugees.
- ✓ 97,792 legal immigrants and refugees arrived in the city of Chicago, with 72.0 percent intending to reside on the North Side of the city. Zip code 60625 on the North Side received the largest number of new immigrants and refugees.
- ✓ Some 22.1 percent of the new immigrants and refugees hold Professional Specialty occupations such as engineer, physician and university professor. Another 20.1 percent hold Operator, Fabricator and Laborer jobs such as machine operator, welder and taxicab driver.
- ✓ Of the 184,418 total arrivals, approximately 91.3 percent were legal immigrants and 8.7 percent were refugees.

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This report has been prepared by Rob Paral, Research Director, and V. Alexandra Corten, Research Associate. Michael Norkewicz, Senior Research Associate, processed the INS microdata forming the basis of this report. Other staff members contributing to the report include Karen Girolami Barrett, Director of Communications, Antonio Delgado, Senior Advocate, and Sylvia Puente, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy. Helpful comments were provided by Ngoan Le, Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Pamela Seubert, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, and Ed Silverman, IDHS. **Detailed appendix tables to accompany this report are available from the Latino Institute at: 14 E. Jackson Blvd., suite 1220, Chicago, IL 60604**

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose of this Report

Legal immigration and the admission of refugees have important demographic, fiscal and other effects upon the state of Illinois. The impact of immigration and refugee admissions is the source of substantial debate nationally and in this state.

Annually, about 35,000 people in Illinois become legal permanent residents. The legally residing, noncitizen population in Illinois ranks sixth in the nation, at 457,000 in 1996.<sup>1</sup> These persons, representing approximately 10 percent of the Illinois population, provide approximately 11 percent of major taxes collected in Illinois.<sup>2</sup>

Some immigrants and refugees have needs for social services, such as assistance with the naturalization process, by which a legal permanent resident acquires U.S. citizenship. To naturalize, most individuals must pass a test of English language skills, U.S. history and civics. Providers of social and educational services give classes to large numbers of immigrants and refugees preparing for their naturalization exams.

Previous Latino Institute reports have analyzed the foreign-born population in

Illinois counted in the 1990 census.<sup>3</sup> The present report is the first to provide information on the characteristics of immigrants and refugees arriving since the census date of April 1, 1990. By presenting this information, we seek to fulfill two main goals. First, we attempt to facilitate the program planning and service delivery of organizations assisting immigrants and refugees by providing new data on these populations. Second, we attempt to inform the ongoing public debate about the nature and impact of immigration by providing hard data based on actual records compiled by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

### B. Data Source

The data in this report are derived from INS records on each immigrant and refugee arriving in Illinois since the 1990 census date (April 1, 1990) and the end of the federal fiscal year 1995 (September 30, 1995).<sup>4</sup> These records, which are made available to the public in electronic format, describe the country of origin of the new immigrants and refugees, the zip code where they intend to reside upon arrival, and their occupation, age and sex, among other characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Latino Institute and Northern Illinois University 1995 *Indicators for Understanding: A Profile of Metro Chicago's Immigrant Community* Chicago: Latino Institute.

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<sup>2</sup>See U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1997 memorandum "State Population Estimates: Legal Permanent Residents and Aliens Eligible to Apply for Naturalization."

<sup>3</sup>See Passel and Clark 1996 *Taxes Paid by Illinois Immigrants* Chicago: Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and Latino Institute.

<sup>4</sup>This study includes only those persons who received legal permanent residence, refugee or asylee status since the 1990 census. Excluded are those immigrants who lived here prior to April 1, 1990 but acquired legal permanent residence, refugee or asylee status after that date.

### **C. Groups Included**

Immigrants legally arriving to Illinois may be broadly grouped into two categories: regular **legal immigrants** and **humanitarian entrants**, the latter consisting of refugees and asylees.

In this report, legal immigrants are at times further divided into two categories. Persons receiving immigrant visas abroad are labeled **new arrivals**. Those residing in the United States with a non-immigrant status (undocumented, tourist, business, etc.) who adjust their status to legal permanent resident are labeled **adjustments by nonrefugees** or **adjustees**.

**Refugees** are those who have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of nationality or habitual residence. **Asylees** have also been persecuted or face a well-founded fear of persecution, except that asylum applicants have reached the United States or a port of entry while potential refugees are not physically present in the United States at the time of their adjudication. Normally, refugees and asylees receive permanent resident status after one year in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> The vast majority of humanitarian entrants in Illinois are refugees; in the remainder of this report **we use the term "refugees" to include both refugees and asylees**.

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<sup>5</sup>Although refugees eventually become legal permanent residents, and some may refer to them simply as immigrants, they are not counted twice in the data found in this report. In other words, if a refugee arrived in 1990 and became a legal permanent resident in 1991, he or she is not reported as a 1991 legal immigrant.

### **D. A Note on the Total Legally Residing Population**

The 184,418 new immigrants and refugees that came to Illinois in the 1990-1995 period are a component of a larger population consisting of all legally residing, foreign-born persons. In all, we estimate this population in Illinois to be 1,058,466 as of April 1, 1998. This includes an estimated 477,953 noncitizen legal residents<sup>6</sup> and an estimated 580,513 naturalized persons.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The INS estimates that 457,000 noncitizen, legal permanent residents resided in Illinois in April 1996 (see U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1997 memorandum "State Population Estimates: Legal Permanent Residents and Aliens Eligible to Apply for Naturalization"). To update this number, we add an estimate of two years of legal immigration and refugee arrivals, based on the average annual arrivals in the 1994-1996 period (39,605). We then subtract an estimate of two years of naturalization, based on the average annual naturalization in the 1994-1996 period (29,129). The resulting figure is 477,953.

<sup>7</sup>To estimate the naturalized population in April 1998, we begin with the 1990 census estimate of 423,665 naturalized persons in Illinois. We increase this number by 156,848 persons, which is the average annual number of naturalizations in Illinois in the 1990-1996 period (19,606) times eight. This gives an estimate of 580,513. These estimates of citizen and noncitizen immigrants do not account for the minor effects of mortality, emigration and interstate migration.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

### A. A Statewide Portrait

#### 1. Top Countries of Birth

More than 175 countries were sources of immigrants and refugees arriving in Illinois in the 1990-1995 period, including familiar countries of immigrant origin such as Poland and Mexico but also less commonly known ones such as Mongolia (three arrivals), the Turks and Caicos Islands (five), and Malawi (six). Of the top 25 countries sending new immigrants to Illinois, Poland leads with 40,413; Mexico follows with 32,801 and India is third, with 17,372 (Table 1).

Among the top 25 source nations in Table 1, seven are found in Asia, six are in Europe (excluding the former U.S.S.R.) and six are in Latin America. Only six countries, however, have average annual arrivals exceeding 1,000.

While Germany was the 4<sup>th</sup> largest source of immigrants counted in the 1990 census, that nation ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> among 1990-1995 arrivals. Conversely, while Vietnam ranked 19<sup>th</sup> among countries in the 1990 census, that nation is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest source of 1990-1995 immigrants.

The 1990-1995 arrivals represent a shift in source nations over previous years. Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Italy and Lithuania were among the top 25 sources of foreign-born persons counted in the 1990 census. These countries do not appear among the top 25 sources of 1990-1995 arrivals, however; in their place are Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Jordan and Peru.

**Table 1:  
Top 25 Countries of Birth for New  
Immigrants to Illinois: 1990-1995**

Country	Total	Percent of Total
All Countries	184,418	100.0%
Poland	40,413	21.9
Mexico	32,801	17.8
India	17,372	9.4
Philippines	13,506	7.3
U.S.S.R. (former)	11,198	6.1
China, Peo. Rep.*	6,680	3.6
Korea	4,451	2.4
Vietnam	4,329	2.3
Pakistan	4,174	2.3
Ireland	3,110	1.7
Yugoslavia (former)	2,626	1.4
United Kingdom	2,621	1.4
Jordan	2,608	1.4
Guatemala	2,564	1.4
Romania	2,413	1.3
Iraq	2,288	1.2
Canada	2,019	1.1
Taiwan	1,432	0.8
Ecuador	1,403	0.8
Jamaica	1,291	0.7
Colombia	1,289	0.7
Germany	1,266	0.7
Japan	1,012	0.5
Peru	953	0.5
El Salvador	903	0.5
Other Countries	19,696	10.7

Universe: New Arrivals and Adjustees in Illinois with date of action in April 1990 or later.

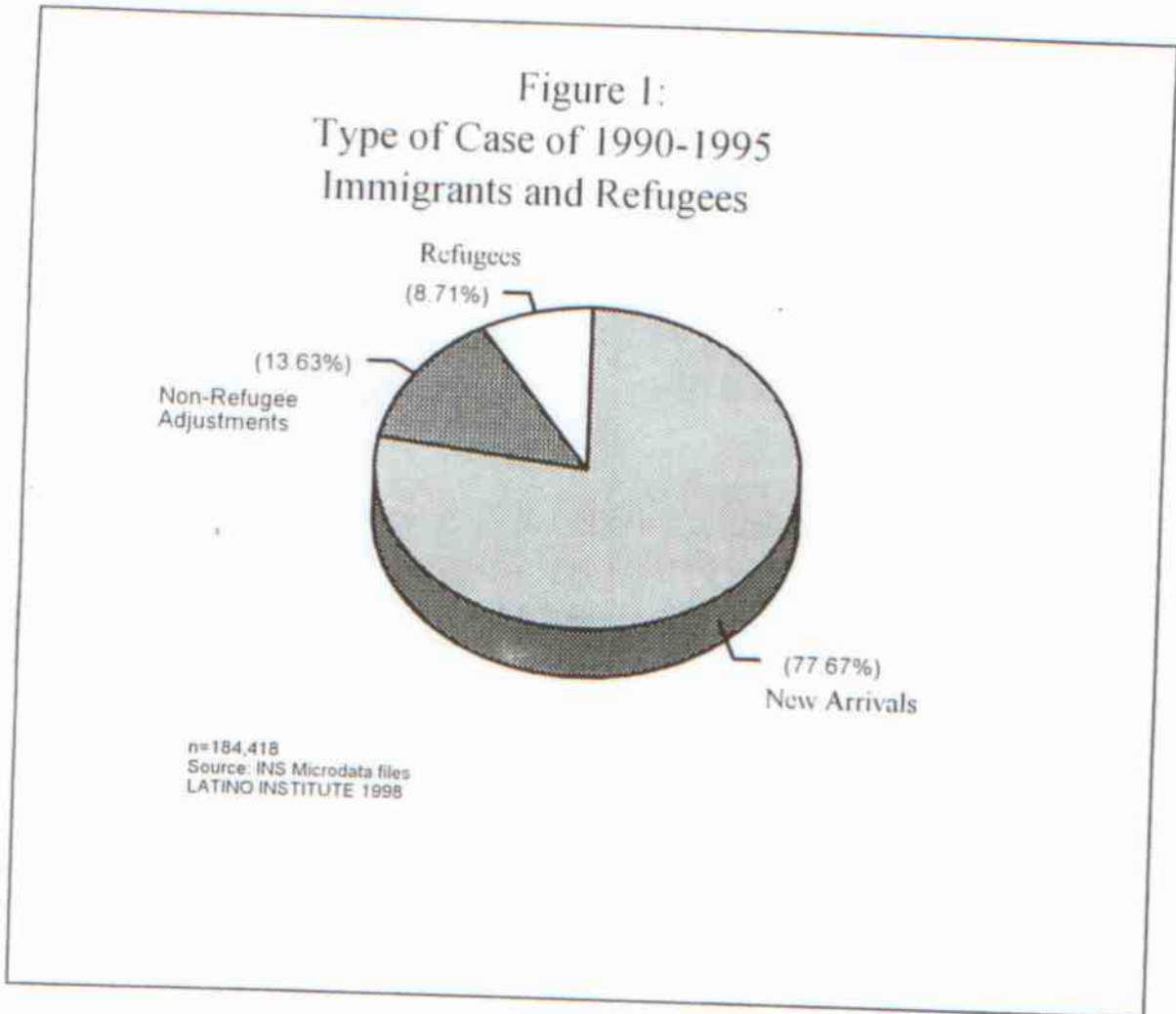
Source: INS Public Use Microdata

\*includes Hong Kong

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## 2. New Arrivals, Nonrefugee Adjustments, and Refugee Adjustments

More than three-quarters (77.7 percent) of all 1990-1995 immigrants were new arrivals (Figure 1). Some 13.6 percent were non-refugees adjusting their status while 8.7 percent were refugees.



Immigrants and refugees may also be categorized according to the section of law under which they are granted residence. Most non-refugee immigrants are granted legal permanent residence based on familial relationship to their sponsor, but some may receive legal residence based on employment skills.

In all, more than 200 distinct classes of admission apply to recent legal immigrants and refugees in Illinois, with no one category accounting for even ten percent of all individuals. The use of a particular visa category varies widely by country and to some extent by sex. While a country-by-



**Table 2:  
Top Ten Classes of Admission by Sex: New Immigrants to Illinois 1990-1995**

Female		Male	
Class of Admission	Number	Class of Admission	Number
Total	98,779	Total	85,632
RE6	7,411	RE6	7,398
IR5	6,656	AA1	5,350
CR1	6,105	IR5	4,198
AA1	4,349	F43	4,079
FX1	3,951	CR1	3,999
F43	3,653	LB2	3,877
CR6	3,620	FX2	3,563
LB1	3,581	AA3	3,112
IR1	3,384	F41	2,804
LB2	3,351	IR2	2,761

**Key:**

- AA1= New arrival native of certain adversely affected foreign states, arriving in or after FY 1992
- AA3= New arrival child of a native of certain adversely affected foreign states, arriving in or after FY 1992
- CR1= New arrival spouse of a U.S. citizen--conditional
- CR6= Adjustee spouse of a U.S. citizen--conditional
- F41= New arrival brother or sister of a U.S. citizen, arriving in or after FY 1992
- F43= New arrival child of an alien who is the brother or sister of a U.S. citizen, arriving in or after FY 1992
- FX1= New arrival spouse of a lawful permanent resident alien, arriving in or after FY 1992
- FX2= New arrival child (under 21) of a legal permanent resident, arriving in or after 1992
- IR1= New arrival spouse of a U.S. citizen, arriving in or after FY 1961
- IR2= New arrival child of a U.S. citizen, arriving in or after FY 1961
- IR5= New arrival parent of a U.S. citizen, arriving in or after FY 1961
- LB1= New arrival spouse of alien granted legalization
- LB2= New arrival child of alien granted legalization
- RE6= Adjustee refugee arriving in or after FY 1981

Universe: New Arrivals and Adjustees in Illinois with date of action in April 1990 or later.

Note: For any given immigration preference category of family relations, classes represented here are not all-inclusive. For example, IR5 Parent

does not include all parents of US citizens. Table excludes seven persons for whom data was not available.

Source: INS Public Use Microdata; LATINO INSTITUTE 1998

country analysis of the classes of admission is beyond the scope of this report, certain patterns may be observed in a comparison of males and females.

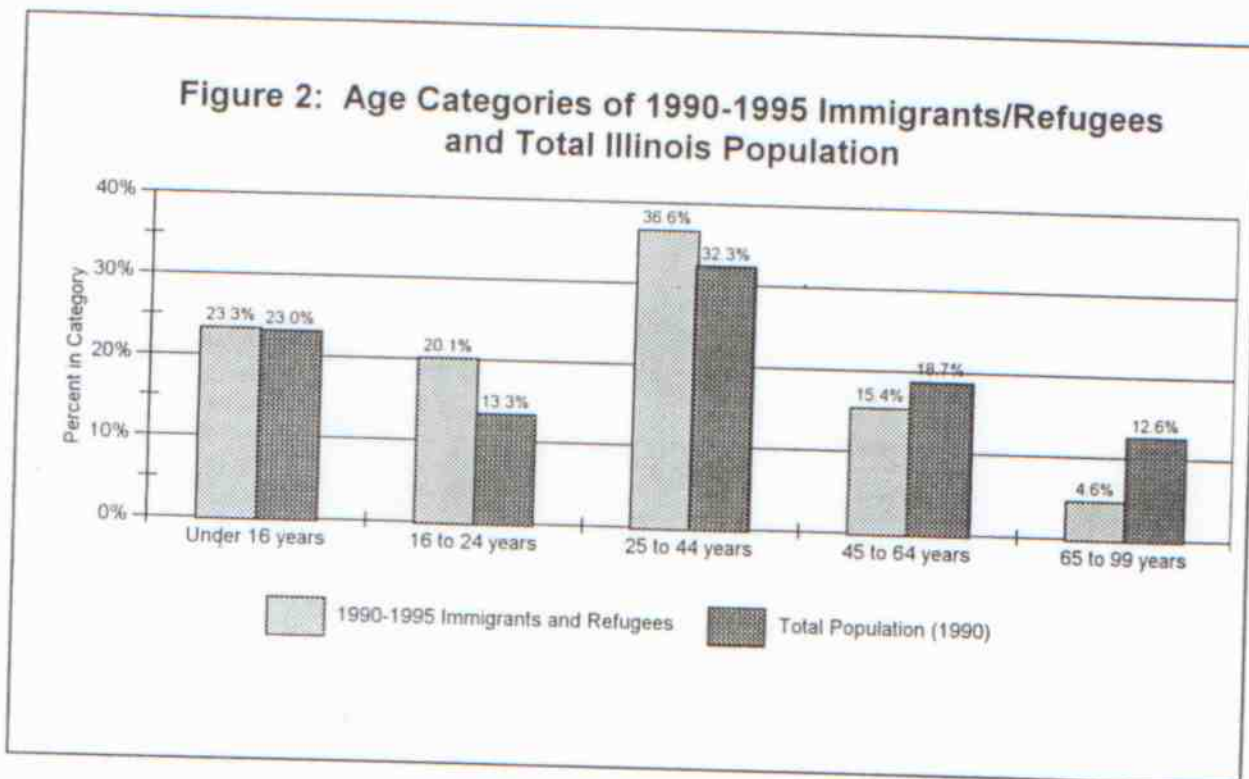
For both males and females "adjustment of refugee" is the most frequent class of admission (Table 2). Five of the top ten admission classes for females are for spouses of U.S. residents. In contrast, for males, only one of the top ten admission classes is for a spouse of a U.S. resident.

Among males, five of the top ten classes of admission are for children of U.S. residents. Only two of the top ten classes used by females are for children of U.S. residents.

### 3. Age of New Immigrants and Refugees

The 1990-1995 immigrants and refugees tend to be younger than the general population in Illinois

(Figure Two). About 43.5 percent of immigrants and refugees coming to Illinois were under 25 years of age at the time of their arrival, compared with 36.4 percent of the total population in 1990. While 31.3 percent of the total population was 45 years of age or older at the time of the last census, only 19.9 percent of the immigrants and refugees in this study were at least 45 years old.



#### 4. Occupations of New Immigrants and Refugees

The INS data analyzed for this report include the occupations of immigrants and refugees. For those qualifying for immigration based on their job skills, occupation describes the work they expected to perform in the United States. For all others, occupation refers to the employment held in their country of last residence or in the United States.

For the 1990-1995 Illinois immigrants and refugees, the Professional Specialty<sup>8</sup> occupational category (including engineer, physician, college professor and lawyer, among others) is the largest, representing 22.1 percent of all those with a reported occupation (Table 3).

<sup>8</sup>Occupational categories used in this report correspond to official Census Bureau categories.

**Table 3: Occupation of Recent Immigrants/Refugees and Total Illinois Population**

Occupational Category	1990-1995 Immigrants and Refugees		1990 Total Illinois Population	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
All occupations	69,757	100.0%	5,417,967	100.0%
Executive, administrative & managerial	5,159	7.4%	685,254	12.6%
Professional specialty	15,436	22.1%	750,359	13.8%
Technician	4,465	6.4%	187,312	3.5%
Sales	2,602	3.7%	644,083	11.9%
Administrative support	5,028	7.2%	961,894	17.8%
Service	9,557	13.7%	684,660	12.6%
Farm, forestry & fishing	4,257	6.1%	96,328	1.8%
Precision production, craft & repair	9,229	13.2%	579,171	10.7%
Operator, fabricator & laborer	14,024	20.1%	828,906	15.3%

Note: Occupation data not reported for two cases.

Note: Percentage columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Universe: For 1990-1995 immigrants and refugees: Legal immigrants, refugees aged 16+ years, with reported occupation, admitted to Illinois with date of action in April 1990 or later; for total population: 1990 Census.

Source: INS Public Use Microdata

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About 20.1 percent of the immigrants and refugees have Operator, Fabricator and Laborer occupations (examples of which include machine operator, welder, truck and taxicab driver and freight handler). Some 13.7 percent of the immigrants and refugees hold Service positions (such as food preparer, hairdresser, maid and janitor), and about 13.2 percent hold Precision Production, Craft and Repair occupations (such as construction worker, machinist, tailor, baker and mechanic).

As a group, the immigrants and refugees in this study are much more likely than the total Illinois population to be in certain occupational categories, particularly: Professional Specialty; Technician; Farming, Forestry and Fishing; and Operator, Fabricator and Laborer. The total population, meanwhile, is much more likely than the immigrants and refugees to be in the categories of Executive, Administrative and Managerial, Sales, and Administrative Support. This contrast between recent immigrants and the general population is also found nationally.<sup>9</sup> (Section II.C.(2) of this report highlights some differences in occupational patterns between country groups.)

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Portes and Rumbaut 1996 *Immigrant America: A Portrait* Berkeley: University of California Press, and Fix and Passel 1994 *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

**B. Spatial Distribution**

**I. Metropolitan Chicago Regions**

The zip code of the intended place of residence of immigrants and refugees is included in the INS data analyzed for this report.<sup>10</sup> For metropolitan Chicago, home to 94.4 percent of all the 1990-1995 arrivals, we group these zip codes into regions to make it easier to observe patterns of residency (Table 4).

Approximately 53.0 percent (97,792) of the 1990-1995 immigrants and refugees in this study reported their intended place of residence to be within the city of Chicago (Table 4). Another 41.4 percent (76,362) reported suburban metropolitan Chicago to be their intended residence, while 5.6 percent (10,264) intended to reside in the downstate area.

Of those immigrants and refugees coming to Chicago proper, most intended to reside on the North Side of the city. About 72.0 percent of the Chicago-bound individuals had residences located generally north of Madison Street.<sup>11</sup> (Madison Street is the divider between the North and South Sides of Chicago.) The remaining 28.0 percent reported residences generally south of Madison Street.

Of the 76,362 immigrants and refugees reporting their intended residence to be in the suburban area, 22.2 percent had residences in DuPage County, 18.8 percent in the Northwest Cook suburbs, and 14.5 percent in the North Cook suburbs. The pattern that emerges from these data finds recent immigrants and refugees outside Chicago to be more likely to reside in the northwest, northern and western suburban regions rather than the southern or southwestern suburban areas.

**Table 4: Immigrants by Region:  
Illinois Immigrants 1990-1995**

Region	Number	Percent of Total
Total Illinois	184,418	100.0%
Chicago North	70,394	38.2%
Chicago South	27,301	14.8%
Northwest Cook	14,346	7.8%
North Cook	11,059	6.0%
West Cook	9,764	5.3%
Southwest Cook	5,298	2.9%
South Cook	2,455	1.3%
DuPage	16,985	9.2%
Lake	7,921	4.3%
Kane	4,081	2.2%
Will	2,403	1.3%
Other Metro Chicago*	2,147	1.2%
Outside Metro Chicago	10,264	5.6%

\*Includes McHenry, DeKalb, Kendall, and Grundy counties, plus 97 cases in Chicago and 218 cases in suburbs where zip code locations could not be determined.  
Universe: New Arrivals and Adjustees in Illinois with date of action in April 1990 or later.  
Source: INS Public Use Microdata  
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<sup>10</sup>Zip codes are the only indicator in the INS records that permit an analysis of the geographic distribution of the new immigrants and refugees

<sup>11</sup>Zip code boundaries do not precisely follow Madison Street. In assigning Chicago zip codes to the North or South Side we have attempted to follow Madison Street as closely as possible.

