

Mapping Trends in U.S. Legal Immigration: 1980 to 2003

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The residence of foreign nationals at the time they become legal permanent residents (LPRs) in the United States is concentrated in just six states. (For a definition of the term *legal permanent resident*, see Box 1.) These states include: California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois. Despite this concentration, the LPR flow has become more dispersed. Virginia, Washington, Maryland, North Carolina, and Georgia have accounted for a larger share of the total LPR flow. LPRs settling in these states accounted for almost 6 percent of the total LPR flow in 1980, but over 10 percent of the total flow in 2003. This Office of Immigration Statistics *Working Paper* presents a visual analysis of the state of residence of foreign nationals who became LPRs between calendar years 1980 and 2003.

METHODS

Data for this report were obtained from applications for LPR status, which are maintained in administrative case tracking systems of the Department of Homeland Security. Information on the state of residence comes from the mailing address provided by LPR applicants. For foreign nationals living abroad at the time of application, residence reflects their initial address in the United States. For foreign nationals already living in the United States, residence presumably reflects their address at the time they adjusted to LPR status.

LPR flows by state of residence were tabulated for calendar years 1980 to 1989, 1990 to 1999, and 2000 to 2003. These flows represent the total number of foreign nationals who were granted LPR status during each time period, not the average population of LPRs. The year 1980 was used as the starting point for the tabulations because this was the first full decade in which automated records for LPRs were available. The analysis is based on LPR flow to the fifty states and the District of Columbia. The percent of total LPR flow for each state and the District of Columbia was calculated for each time period.

For the maps, categories showing the LPR percentage flow for each state were initially selected using the Natural Breaks method, also known as Jenks optimization. This procedure creates classes where the differences between categories are maximized while mini-

Box 1.

Defining “Legal Permanent Resident”

A legal permanent resident (LPR) is a foreign national who has been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States. LPRs, more commonly known as “green card” recipients, are permitted to live and work anywhere in the United States, to own property, to attend public schools, to join certain branches of the Armed Forces, and may also apply to become U.S. citizens if they meet certain eligibility requirements.

mizing differences within classes. The maps were then compared and a standard set of proportional categories was selected to facilitate comparisons.

RESULTS

Between 1980 and 1989, more than 6 million foreign nationals became LPRs (see Table 1). Five states were home to almost 69 percent of the total LPR flow during this time period (see Table 2). The state with the highest percentage of new LPRs was California¹. Almost 32 percent of all new LPRs chose to reside in California between 1980 and 1989. This was followed by New York (17 percent), Texas (8.7 percent), Florida (6.4 percent), and Illinois (5.2 percent). States ranked sixth through tenth in the number of new LPRs received 12 percent of the total flow and included New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. When combined, these ten states represented 81 percent of new LPRs. The proportion of new LPRs in the states ranked 11th through 15th represented 6.5 percent of the total. These states included Washington, Michigan, Hawaii, Connecticut, and

¹ The 2.7 million foreign nationals legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 accounted for almost 57 percent of the total LPR flow between 1989 and 1991. Seventy-one percent of all new LPRs in California during this time period were legalized under IRCA. By decade, foreign nationals legalized under IRCA represented 13 percent of the LPR flow between 1980 and 1989 and nearly 20 percent between 1990 and 1999. For California, IRCA accounted for almost 24 percent of the LPR flow during 1980 and 1989 and nearly 33 percent during the 1990s.



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Table 1.

LPR Flow by State of Residence: 1980 to 1989, 1990 to 1999, and 2000 to 2003

(Ranked by 1980 to 1989 data)

State of residence	1980 to 1989		1990 to 1999		2000 to 2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	6,246,921	100.0	9,315,744	100.00	3,667,847	100.0
California	1,993,304	31.9	2,911,595	31.3	969,539	26.4
New York	1,043,317	16.7	1,394,416	15.0	423,865	11.6
Texas	541,889	8.7	823,714	8.8	296,700	8.1
Florida	399,407	6.4	722,765	7.8	341,912	9.3
Illinois	322,475	5.2	453,971	4.9	163,621	4.5
New Jersey	308,266	4.9	460,072	4.9	199,490	5.4
Massachusetts	149,459	2.4	212,094	2.3	105,720	2.9
Virginia	104,946	1.7	178,819	1.9	93,651	2.6
Pennsylvania	103,489	1.7	156,139	1.7	72,717	2.0
Maryland	102,643	1.6	167,537	1.8	82,081	2.2
Washington	102,110	1.6	182,863	2.0	84,571	2.3
Michigan	85,213	1.4	143,370	1.5	73,194	2.0
Hawaii	75,389	1.2	73,634	0.8	22,132	0.6
Connecticut	72,446	1.2	98,377	1.1	42,653	1.2
Arizona	68,759	1.1	133,701	1.4	58,349	1.6
Ohio	64,858	1.0	87,543	0.9	48,431	1.3
Georgia	52,517	0.8	122,302	1.3	65,710	1.8
Minnesota	51,636	0.8	73,763	0.8	41,956	1.1
Colorado	50,706	0.8	79,318	0.9	44,730	1.2
Oregon	42,423	0.7	82,055	0.9	37,861	1.0
Louisiana	37,674	0.6	34,061	0.4	12,202	0.3
Wisconsin	32,862	0.5	43,829	0.5	24,690	0.7
North Carolina	32,780	0.5	72,224	0.8	46,033	1.3
Nevada	30,332	0.5	61,445	0.7	33,054	0.9
New Mexico	29,657	0.5	45,052	0.5	15,079	0.4
Oklahoma	29,378	0.5	33,714	0.4	14,221	0.4
Missouri	28,400	0.5	43,137	0.5	28,596	0.8
District of Columbia	27,301	0.4	35,463	0.4	10,842	0.3
Rhode Island	25,784	0.4	28,117	0.3	11,269	0.3
Indiana	24,826	0.4	38,935	0.4	22,586	0.6
Kansas	23,814	0.4	33,849	0.4	17,080	0.5
Utah	22,175	0.4	34,594	0.4	17,216	0.5
Tennessee	21,877	0.4	34,893	0.4	20,516	0.6
Iowa	17,301	0.3	24,227	0.3	17,281	0.5
Alabama	14,787	0.2	18,698	0.2	8,475	0.2
South Carolina	14,470	0.2	22,779	0.2	10,035	0.3
Kentucky	11,882	0.2	18,756	0.2	15,677	0.4
Arkansas	10,153	0.2	12,762	0.1	8,804	0.2
Nebraska	9,136	0.1	18,547	0.2	12,844	0.4
Alaska	8,680	0.1	11,779	0.1	5,509	0.2
Idaho	8,564	0.1	20,564	0.2	8,269	0.2
New Hampshire	7,919	0.1	12,114	0.1	9,581	0.3
Maine	7,286	0.1	8,484	0.1	4,624	0.1
Mississippi	7,009	0.1	8,933	0.1	4,365	0.1
Delaware	5,540	0.1	11,808	0.1	6,650	0.2
West Virginia	5,529	0.1	5,635	0.1	2,438	0.1
Vermont	3,769	0.1	6,086	0.1	3,393	0.1
Montana	3,739	0.1	4,503	--	1,856	0.1
North Dakota	3,517	0.1	5,126	0.1	2,121	0.1
Wyoming	2,899	--	2,952	--	1,100	--
South Dakota	2,629	--	4,630	--	2,558	0.1

-- Figure rounds to 0.0. Note: Percent column entries may not sum to total due to rounding. Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, administrative data (LPR application)

Arizona. When combined, these 15 states accounted for 88 percent of new LPRs. The map in Figure 1 shows the LPR flow for each state as a percent of the total LPR flow from 1980 to 1989.

Between 1990 and 1999, more than 9 million persons became LPRs. Sixty-eight percent of all new LPRs resided in just five states (see Table 2). The top five states were California (31 percent), New York (15 percent), Texas (8.8 percent), Florida (7.8 percent), and New Jersey (4.9 percent) (see Table 1). Thirteen percent of new LPRs during the 1990s resided in the states ranked sixth through tenth and included Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington, Virginia, and Maryland. When combined, these ten states represented almost 81 percent of all new LPRs. The proportion of new LPRs in the states ranked 11th through 15th represented 7 percent of the total. These states included Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona, Georgia, and Connecticut. The top 15 states represented nearly 88 percent of new LPRs. The map in Figure 2 shows the proportion of the LPR flow for each state as a percent of the total LPR flow from 1990 to 1999.

Between 2000 and 2003, nearly 3.7 million persons became LPRs. Sixty-one percent of all new LPRs during this time period resided in just five states. These states included California (26 percent), New York (12 percent), Florida (9.3 percent), Texas (8.1 percent), and New Jersey (5.4 percent) (see Table 1). States ranked sixth through tenth received 14 percent of the total flow. These states included Illinois, Massachusetts, Virginia, Washington, and Maryland. When combined, these ten states represented 75 percent of all new LPRs. States ranked 11th through 15th accounted for almost 9 percent of new LPRs. These states included Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Arizona, and Ohio. Eighty-four percent of new LPRs resided in these 15 states. The map in Figure 3 shows the proportion of LPR flow for each state as a percent of the total LPR flow from 2000 to 2003.

Table 2.
LPR Flow by Rank: 1980 to 1989, 1990 to 1999, and 2000 to 2003

State ranking	1980 to 1989			1990 to 1999			2000 to 2003		
	States	Number of LPRs	Percent of total LPRs	States	Number of LPRs	Percent of total LPRs	States	Number of LPRs	Percent of total LPRs
1 to 5	CA, NY, TX, FL, IL	4,300,392	68.8	CA, NY, TX, FL, NJ	6,312,562	67.8	CA, NY, FL, TX, NJ	2,231,506	60.8
6 to 10	NJ, MA, VA, PA, MD	768,803	12.3	IL, MA, WA, VA, MD	1,195,284	12.8	IL, MA, VA, WA, MD	529,644	14.4
11 to 15	WA, MI, HI, CT, AZ	403,917	6.5	PA, MI, AZ, GA, CT	653,889	7.0	MI, PA, GA, AZ, OH	318,401	8.7
16 to 20	OH, GA, MN, CO, OR	262,140	4.2	OH, OR, CO, MN, HI	396,313	4.3	NC, CO, CT, MN, OR	213,233	5.8
21 to 51	All other states	511,669	8.2	All other states	757,696	8.1	All other states	375,063	10.2

Note: Percent column entries may not sum to total due to rounding. Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, administrative data (LPR application)

Overall, state trends suggest that although the relative rankings of the top 15 states have not changed dramatically since 1980, the concentration of new LPRs living in these states has begun to change. Generally, leading states of immigration such as California and New York are home to a declining percentage of new LPRs, whereas secondary destination states

are home to a growing proportion of new LPRs.

Next Steps

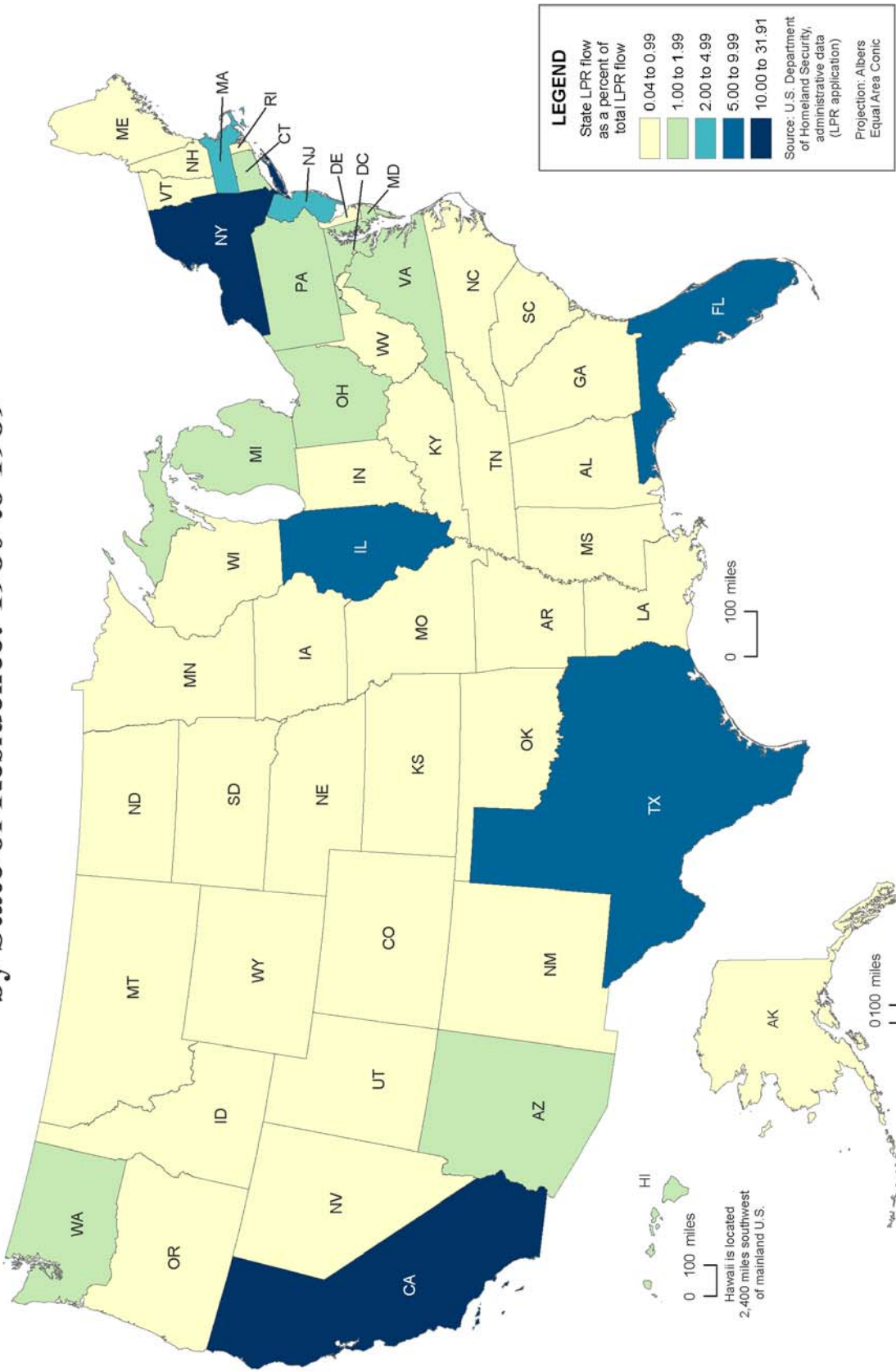
Future analysis will examine trends in LPR flows by metropolitan area as well as country of birth and other immigrant characteristics.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Office of Immigration Statistics Web page at uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics.

**Figure 1: Persons Becoming Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)
by State of Residence: 1980 to 1989**



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Figure 2: Persons Becoming Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) by State of Residence: 1990 to 1999

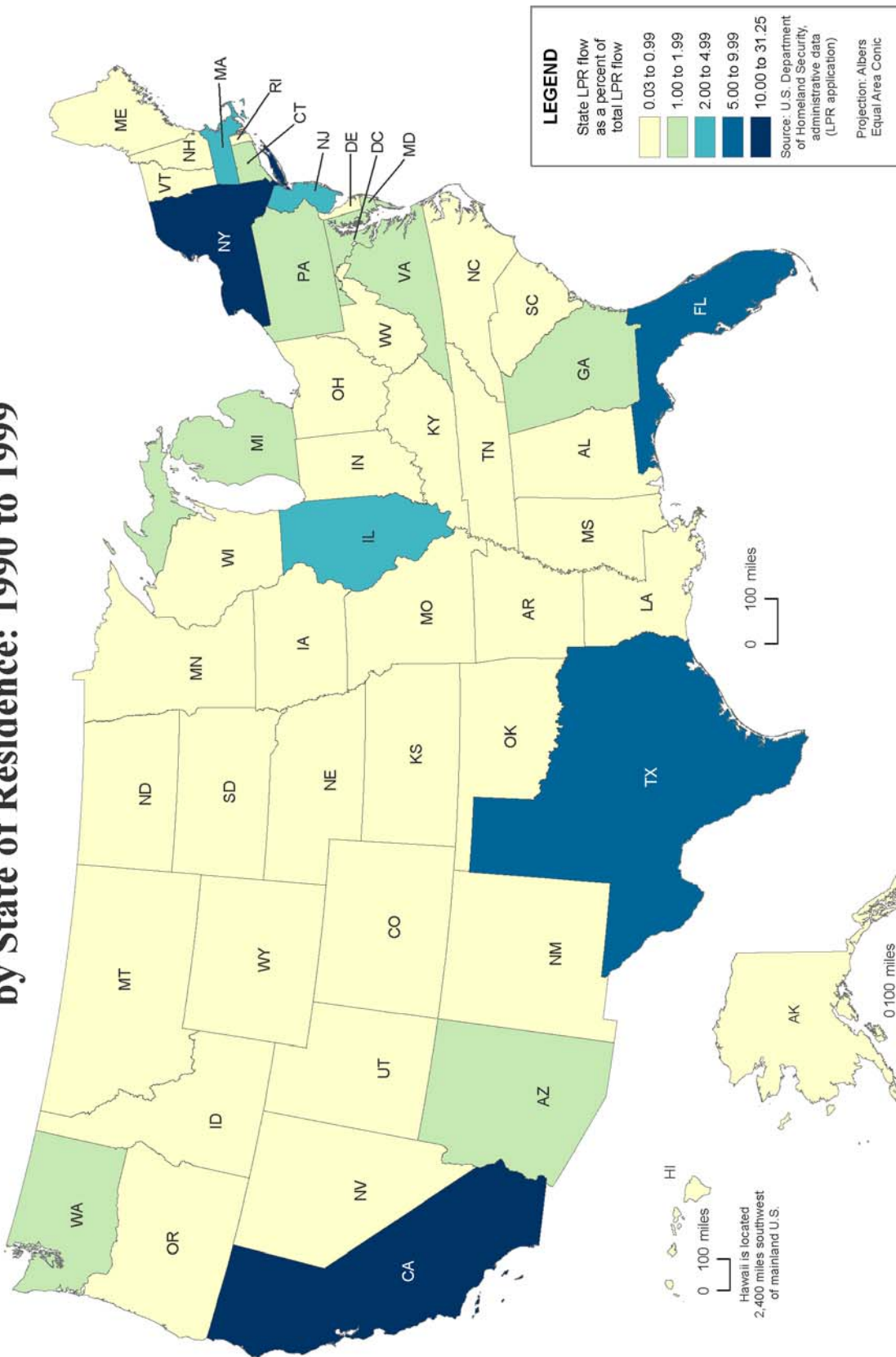
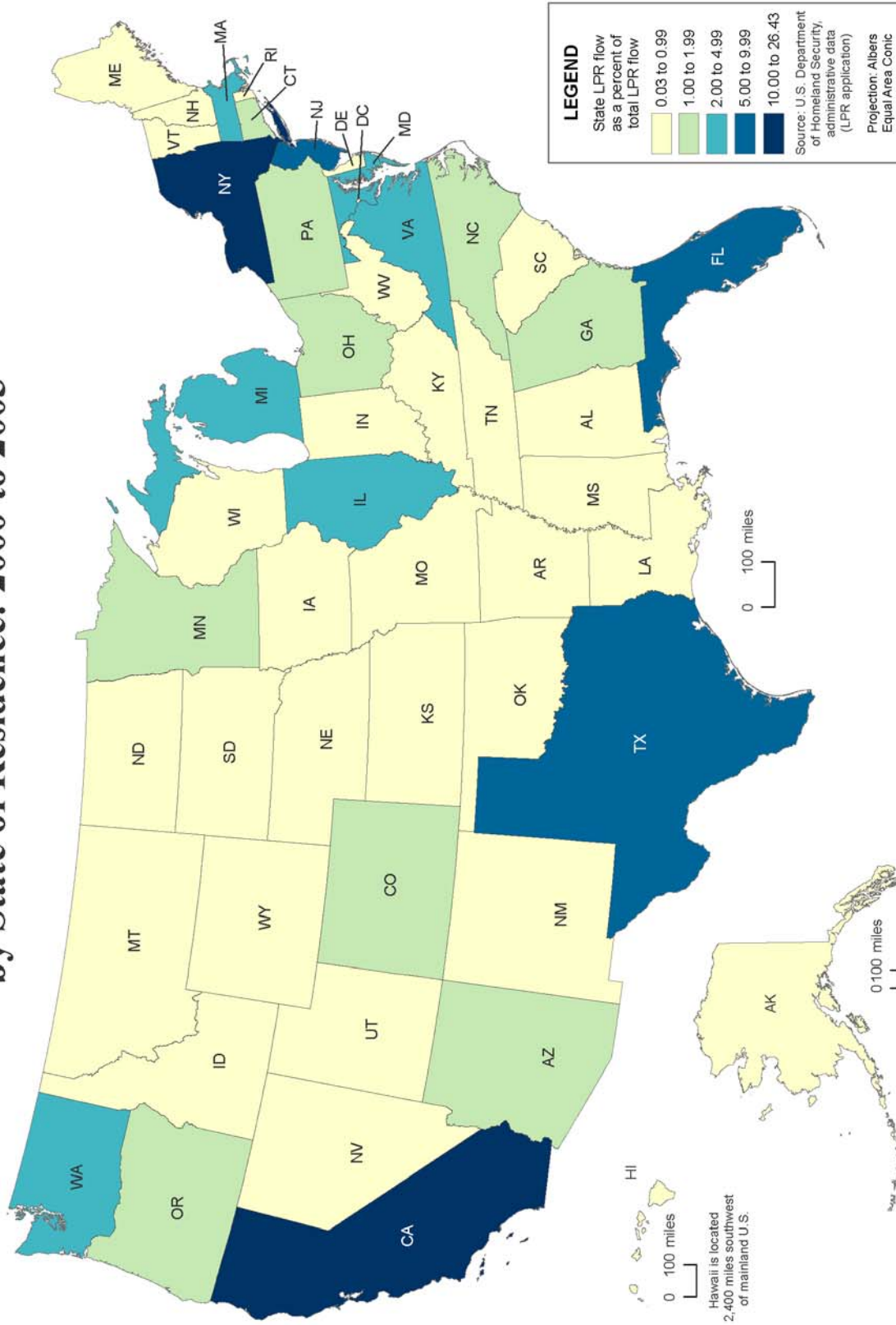


Figure 3: Persons Becoming Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) by State of Residence: 2000 to 2003



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