

Aug.27-Sept.2: The Golden Door;

A Census Surprise: A Lot of Americans Turn Out to Be Immigrants

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Body

They may not all be tired. Or poor. But, as the **Census** Bureau indicated last week, they keep coming.

In a report that stunned some demographers, the bureau said that foreign-born residents -- **immigrants**, refugees and undocumented aliens -- made up 8.8 per cent of the population, a post-World War II record. Researchers said the increase is explained partly by declining birth rates among native-born **Americans**, and mainly by increased immigration.

Demographers say that the proportion of foreign born is nowhere near the 14.7 per cent figure reached in 1910. Still, it is double what it was in 1970 and has accelerated in the last four years.

The **Census** Bureau report comes as immigration -- legal and illegal -- is becoming a central political issue. Candidates for the Republican Presidential nomination like Gov. Pete Wilson of California and Pat Buchanan have made curbing it a pivotal part of their campaigns and a number of proposals in Congress are aimed at halting the flow from abroad.

Said Dan Stein, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, an anti-immigration group: "This bodes an accelerating public debate about the role of immigration at this point in our history." STEVEN A. HOLMES

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