

US foreign-born population swells to highest in over a century

WASHINGTON: The number of foreign-born people in the United States grew last year to its highest share in over a century, according to Census Bureau data published on Thursday.

The increase took the number of foreign-born residents to 44.5 million in 2017, up 1.8 per cent from a year earlier.

The administration has said it wants to restrict legal immigration, and has stepped up efforts as well to detain and deport immigrants in the country illegally since President Donald Trump took office in January 2017.

But so far, said Randy Capps, a demographer at the Migration Policy Institute, the government hasn't restricted legal immigration much and America's strong job market likely fuelled part of last year's increase in the foreign-born population. "The economy's definitely a factor in this, not just in more people coming but in more people staying," Capps said.

Foreign-born residents made up 13.7 per cent of the US population in 2017, up from 13.5 per cent in 2016, according to the Census Bureau's estimates. That put the proportion of immigrants in the United States last year at the highest since 1910, when they made up 14.7 per cent of the population.

The data also showed that an increasing number of immigrants were Asian or had advanced university degrees, extending a trend that has been in place for over a decade during which immigration from Mexico slowed.