

Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the **1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act**. This act repealed the quota system based on national origins that had been in place since 1921. This was the most significant change to immigration policy in decades. Instead of quotas, immigration policy was now based on a preference for reuniting families and bringing highly skilled workers to the United States. This was a change because in the past, many immigrants were less skilled and less educated than the average American worker. In the modern period, many immigrants would be doctors, scientists, and high-tech workers.

Because Europe was recovering from the war, fewer Europeans were deciding to move to America. But people from the rest of world were eager to move here. Asians and Latin Americans, in particular, were significant groups in the new wave of immigration. Within five years after the act was signed, for example, Asian immigration had doubled.

What is the most important fact from this time period? Why did you choose that?

What is 1 question you have about immigration in this time period?

1965-1980

Vietnamese Immigration and the Refugee Act

During the 1960s and 1970s, America was involved in a war in Vietnam. Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia, on the Indochina peninsula. From the 1950s into the 1970s there was a great deal of conflict in the area. After the war, Vietnamese refugees started coming to the United States. During the 1970s, about 120,000 Vietnamese came, and hundreds of thousands more continued to arrive during the next two decades.

In 1980, the government passed the **Refugee Act**, a law that was meant specifically to help refugees who needed to come to the country. **Refugees come because they fear persecution due to their race, religion, political beliefs, or other reasons.** The United States and other countries signed treaties, or legal agreements, that said they should help refugees. The Refugee Act protected this type of immigrant's right to come to America.

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1980s

Latin American Immigration

During the 1980s, waves of immigrants arrived from Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Hundreds of thousands of people came just from Cuba, fleeing the oppressive dictatorship of Fidel Castro. This was a significant new wave of immigrants: During the 1980s, 8 million immigrants came from Latin America, a number nearly equal to the total figure of European immigrants who came to the United States from 1900 to 1910, when European immigration was at a high point. The new immigrants changed the makeup of America: By 1990, Latinos in the United States were about 11.2 percent of the total population.

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1990-Today

A Multicultural America

Since 1990, immigration has been increasing. It is at its highest point in America's history. In both the 1990s and 2000s, around 10 million new immigrants came to the United States. The previous record was from 1900 to 1910, when around 8 million immigrants arrived.

In 2000, the foreign-born population of the United States was 28.4 million people. Also in that year, California became the first state in which no one ethnic group made up a majority.

Today, more than 80 percent of immigrants in the United States are Latin American or Asian. By comparison, as recently as the 1950s, two-thirds of all immigrants to the United States came from Europe or Canada. The main countries of origin for immigrants today are Mexico, the Philippines, China, Cuba, and India. About 1 in 10 residents of the United States is foreign-born. Today, the United States is a truly multicultural society.

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