

CHAPTER IV

Issues, Myths and Moods connected with Immigration and Immigrants

OVERPOPULATION

Overpopulation is the ultimate environmental threat everywhere, including in the United States. The U.S. population grows by nearly 3 million people annually, making it the fastest growing industrialized nation in the world. Since 1970 population has increased by about 82 million people (November 2001) and the U.S. has become the third most populous nation in the world, trailing only China and India. About half of that increase has come from new immigrants and their children born in the States. Legal and illegal immigration add about 1.2 million people a year.

In terms of the impact of immigrants in the United States, both their percentage of the population and their number are clearly important. The ability to assimilate and incorporate immigrants is partly dependent on the respective sizes of the native and immigrant populations. Notwithstanding, 28.4 million immigrants (as of March 2000) are likely to have an enormous effect on the socio-economic harmony of life in the United States, regardless of whether this represents 10 percent or 15 percent of the nation's population, especially because immigrants are largely concentrated in only a few states.

According to the first U.S. Census Bureau forecast for the year 2100, population projections for the end of this century range from almost no change to an amazing increase to 1.2 billion, about the same as China has today. The U.S. Census Bureau calculates three series of projections based upon different assumptions of fertility, mortality and immigration rates. The lowest shows a stabilization of the U.S. population and a drop in immigration to less than 200,000 a year, the middle one results in the population more than doubling to 571 million and immigration in the range of 900,000 to one million annually. The highest assumes that immigration will continue to increase, much as it has in recent decades, and reach three million per year by the end of this century.

ENVIRONMENT

More people living in the country means more energy use, more traffic jams, more production of toxic wastes and increased tensions that result from crowded urban environments.

- Nearly 700 species of plants and animals are endangered or threatened from destruction of habitat caused by population growth. About 9,000 species are at risk of extinction and 500 species have already vanished forever.
- Every day in the United States 3.2 billion gallons more water is removed from aquifers than are replaced by natural processes. This is equivalent to half the water that flows through the mouth of the Mississippi River every day.
- U.S. consumption of energy grows every day, despite efforts to conserve. Energy use since 1970 has increased by 93 percent.
- An area equal to the state of Delaware is paved over every year to satisfy growing traffic and pedestrian needs.
- Only 5-10 percent of old growth forests in Oregon, Washington, and California remain. An estimated 90 percent of all old growth forests in the U.S. have been cut down to meet the demand for timber.

WHERE'S THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRATION?

There is always more than one answer to any question on the immigration issue in the States. In this section we portray different views on American Immigration together with the Gallup Poll results.

“Immigrants take jobs away from Americans”

Pros (03/09/01 by S.A Camarota, National Review)

This statement is particularly true for black Americans. The black American workers were displaced by Cuban immigrants in Miami, Koreans in New York and Los Angeles, Mexicans in Texas, and Indochinese in Denver. Immigrants nowadays occupy the jobs previously kept by blacks.

More than 10 million adult native-born American workers lack a high school education and they are in direct competition with unskilled immigrants. The myth that immigrants only take jobs no one else wants persists primarily because middle class Americans view most of these jobs as something they certainly would not want to do.

Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

The myth that immigrants take jobs away from Americans was based on the mistaken assumption that there is only a fixed number of jobs in the economy. Four out of five prominent economists in 1990 said that immigrants had a favorable impact on economic growth. They compose an essential proportion of the U.S. workforce.

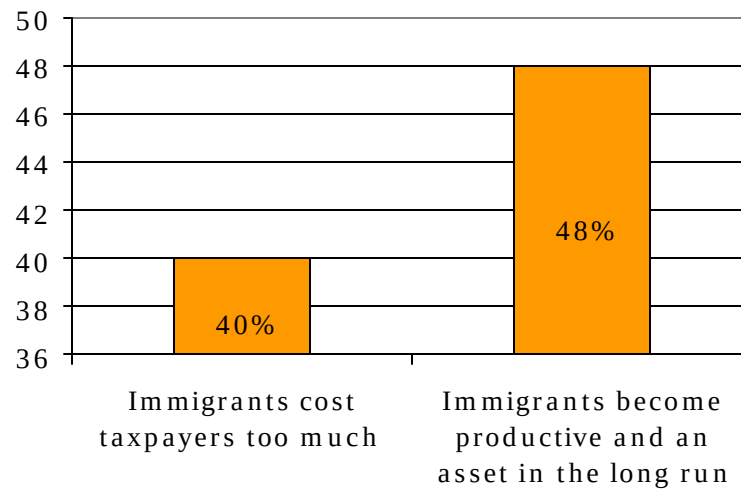
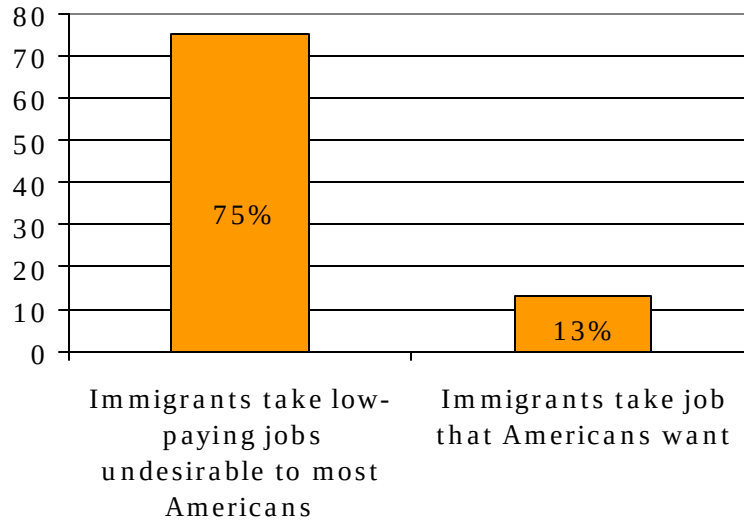
Immigrants create jobs and are more likely to be self-employed and to start new businesses. Roughly 2.2 million Americans were employed by foreign companies doing business in the United States.

Additional Source (USA Today, July 2001)

In 2001 (July) immigrants, both legal and illegal made up 13 percent of the nation's workers, the highest percentage since the 1930s. Most of the nation's 17.7 million immigrant workers toiled at jobs that native-born Americans shunned.

Gallup Poll (September 2000)

RESPONDENTS BELIEVED:



“America is overrun by immigrants”

Pros (Yale University Professor P. Schuck)

The ethnic groups that comprised most of the 1980s immigration flow have grown rapidly. During the decade, the Asian population increased by 107 percent, the Hispanic by 53 percent, and the black by only 13.2 percent.

The immigrant groups, of course, start from a much smaller population base than blacks, but their fertility rates remain higher than those of both Americans in general and black Americans in particular (though the immigrant fertility rates, like those of other groups in the U.S. are likely to decline over time).

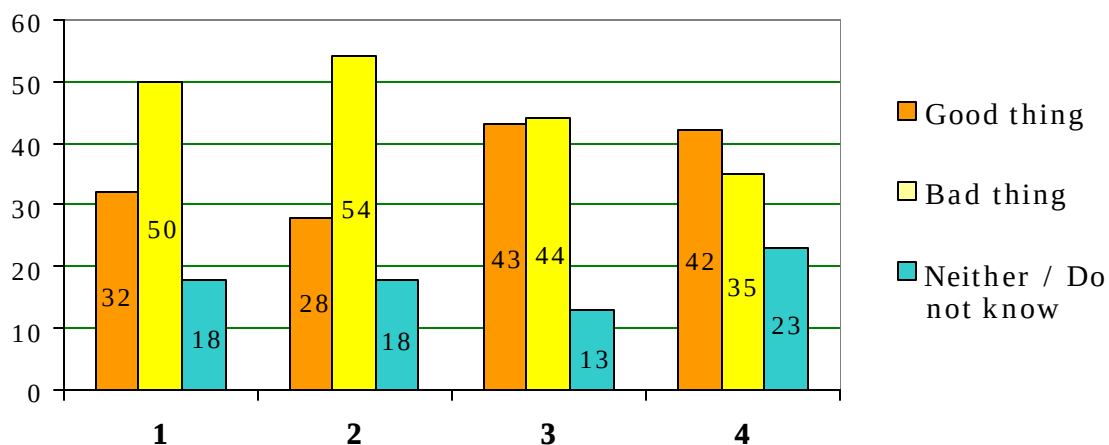
Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

The number of immigrants living in the United States is larger than ever before, but these numbers are relatively small as a percentage of the population. More importantly, the percentage of immigrants in the total population has decreased.

Even though the United States has one of the world’s most generous refugee resettlement programs, less than 1.5 percent of the world’s refugee population finds its way to the United States.

Gallup Poll (April 2001)

THE RISE IN U.S. POPULATION IS:



1 / Total response **2** / White Non-Hispanic **3** / Black **4** / Hispanic

(Respondent totals expressed as percentage)

“Most immigrants are a drain on the U.S. economy”

Pros (Yale University Professor P. Schuck)

The studies indicating that immigrants in fact generate more tax revenues than they consume in benefits are beside the point politically. The levels of government that collect the taxes – mostly federal and state – are different from those that fund the benefits - mostly state and local. Illegal aliens and their children (who are often U.S. citizens) frequently use public hospitals and schools. Competition for cheap housing, both public and private, between immigrant groups and blacks is also intense, as are the demands by different groups for police protection. These public costs and group conflicts have aroused an immigration-related backlash against public benefits in many communities, even those with traditionally liberal policies on this issue.

Additional Sources

1. Rice University economist *Donald Huddle* argues that in 1994, legal and illegal immigration drained \$51 billion more in social welfare and job displacement costs than immigrants paid in taxes.

2. Immigrants with little education are a huge drain on the public budget. According to *the Center for Immigration Studies* estimates, the average Mexican immigrant will use \$55,200 more in public services during his lifetime than he pays in taxes.

Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

A 1994 study of a connection between unemployment and immigration by *Richard Vedder and Lowell Galloway of Ohio University* spanning 100 years (from 1891 to 1991) found that higher rates of foreign-born population historically have corresponded to lower unemployment rates.

Immigrants collectively earn \$240 billion a year, pay \$90 billion a year in taxes, and receive \$5 billion in welfare. New immigrants must prove that they will not be a burden before they are allowed to enter the United States. Compared to the native-born population, immigrants are more likely to be employed, save more of their earnings, and are more likely to start new businesses. Non-refugee immigrants of working age are less prone to welfare than natives.

Additional Sources

1. While the demand for low-skilled workers remains low, the Commerce Department estimates that high-tech industry will need 1.3 million new workers between 1996-2006.

Each year new immigrants arrive with \$40 billion worth of education acquired in their native countries. (*S. Moore, Cato Institute, September 1998*)

2. According to 12 experts' two-year study published by the *National Academy of Science for the U.S. commission on Immigration Reform* in 1997, immigrants added about \$10 billion annually in net economic output due to the increased supply of labor and resulting lower prices.

3. From about 12 percent of legal immigrants admitted to the States for their special abilities only about 5 percent actually bring valuable technical or professional skills. (G. Borjas, *American Enterprise*, December 2000)

4. Deportations, prosecutions and jailing cost American taxpayers at least \$1 billion a year. *Daily Policy Digest* (June 8, 2001)

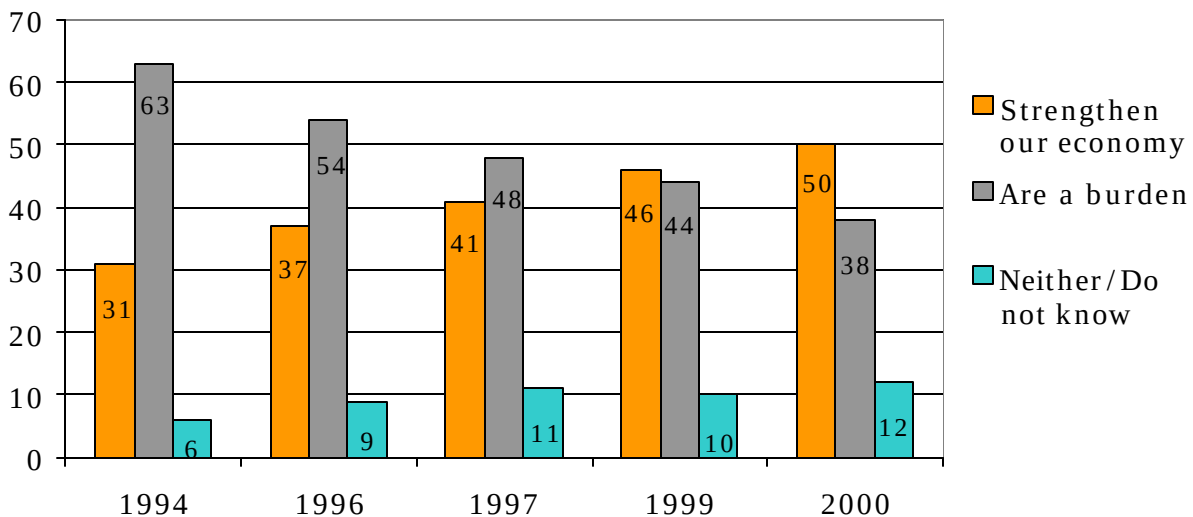
5. Economists *E. Taylor and P. Martin*, both of the University of California-Davis, found that for every 100 farm-jobs added, there are 139 more people living in poverty. (*Investor's Business Daily*, September 1998)

3. After an average of 10 to 15 years in the U.S., non-citizens' earnings had matched and then exceeded those of native-born Americans. Immigrant households with a naturalized citizen paid \$6,580 a year in taxes compared to \$5,080 for an average citizen.

In 1999, immigrants accounted for at least one-third of the scientific and engineering work force of Silicon Valley and occupied senior executive positions in at least one-quarter of its new technology companies. (*Business Week*, July 1999)

Gallup Poll (April 2001)

IMMIGRANTS TODAY:



(Respondent totals expressed as percentage)

“Immigrants are not really interested in becoming part of American society”

Pros

According to government statistics a smaller proportion of immigrants sought citizenship in 1999 than at any time in the last century. Only 35 percent of foreign-born people in the U.S. were naturalized citizens in 1997, compared to 64 percent in 1970.

No more than 30 percent of foreign-born people who had been living in the U.S. longer than two decades were citizens in 1997.

Just over 53 percent of people from Europe and slightly more than 44 percent of those from Asia were naturalized but fewer than 15 percent of Mexicans, who account for nearly 30 percent of the foreign born population, went through the process. (*Washington Post*, October 1999)

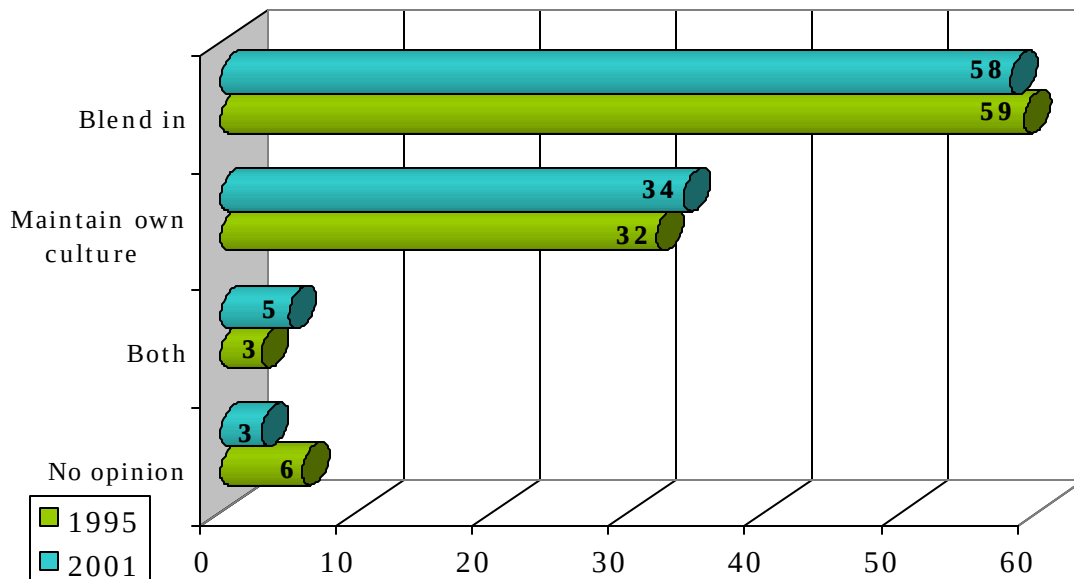
Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

Immigrants are very interested in being part of American society. In fact, the grandparents and parents of immigrant children have expressed some concern that their youngsters are assimilating too quickly. Immigrants want to learn and speak English. Reports from throughout the United States indicate that the demand for classes in English as a second language far outstrips supply. After 15 years in America, 75 percent of Spanish-speaking immigrants speak English on a regular basis.

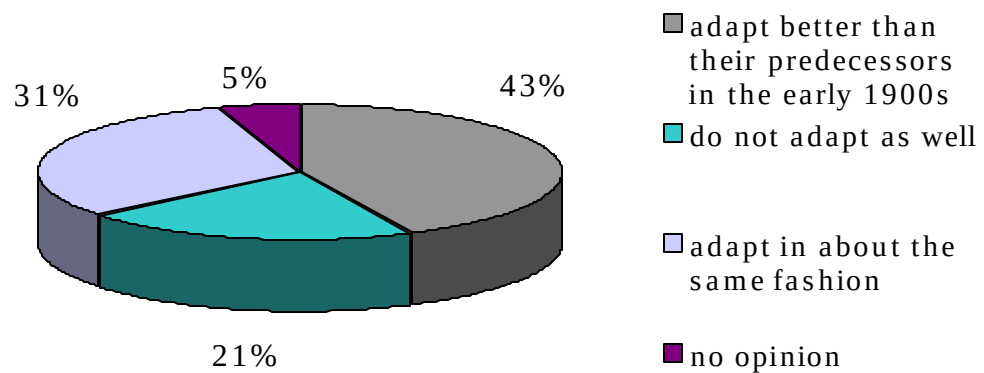
The children of immigrants, although bilingual, prefer English to their native tongue at astounding rates. Immigrants and refugees intermarry outside their group at a rate of one in three. The rate is even higher, one out of two, for their children.

Gallup Poll (June 2001)

PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS WHO SUPPORT ENCOURAGING IMMIGRANTS TO:



HOW DO IMMIGRANTS ADAPT TO THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE?



“Immigrants contribute little to American society”

Pros (Norman Matloff, University of California)

The statement that immigrants as a group pay more in taxes than they receive in services is often misleading. The problem is that studies making such claims only include a few types of services, mainly welfare and sometimes education. They do not include roads, hospitals, police, fire protection and so on.

The nation has a budget deficit as a whole, so the population in general is using more in services than it pays in taxes. For poor people, that imbalance is even worse, and since all sides agree that the immigrants are on average poorer than natives (see for example *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight*, Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel, Urban Institute, 1994), it is clear that immigrants, taken as a group, are exacerbating the United State's fiscal problems.

Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

Immigrants continually have helped shape and mold the fabric of American society. Immigrants, for the most part, are firm believers in family unity. They are more likely than natives to live in families: 76 percent vs. 70 percent. They also tend to have more children: 2.25 vs. 1.93. Immigrants are more likely to be married: 60 percent vs. 55 percent. They recognize the value of knowledge. While many lack a high school education, they are just as likely as natives to hold a college degree. Among those admitted in 1987-1990, 29 percent held a college degree. Immigrants are also twice as likely as natives to hold Ph.D.'s.

More than 70 percent of immigrants are over the age of 18 when they arrive to the United States so their education and upbringing were paid by the citizens of the sending country, not American taxpayers.

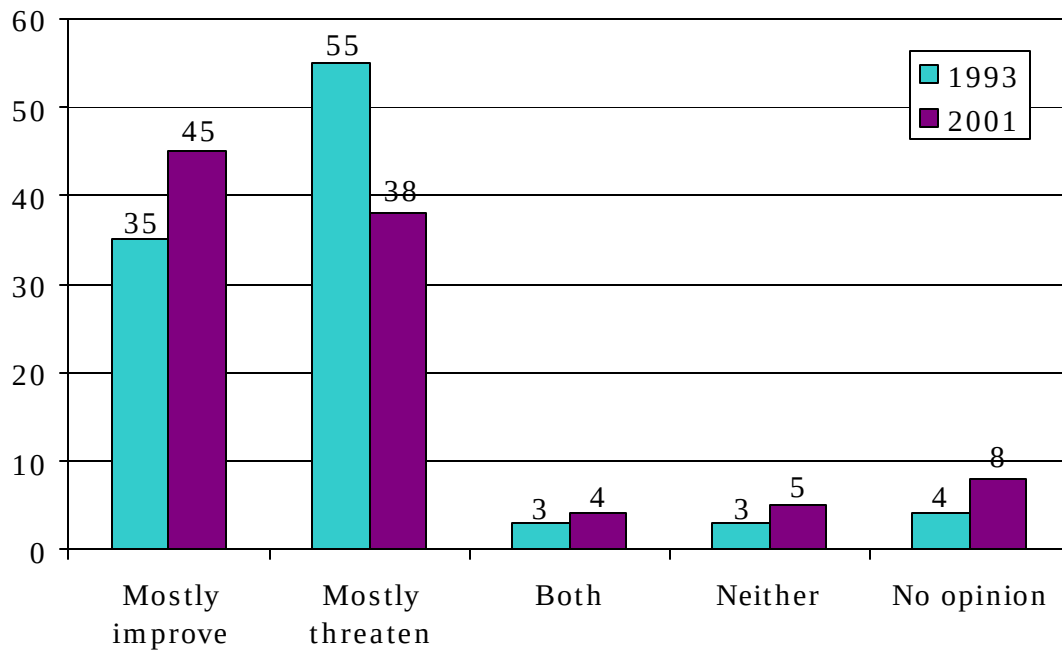
Additional Source

According to the study of S. Levin of the University of Missouri and P. Stephan of Georgia State University hold in 1999, the most accomplished scientists in America were disproportionately foreign-born.

In 1990, 60 percent of the American-based authors of the most cited papers in the physical science were foreign-born as well as 30 percent of the authors of the most cited life science papers.

Gallup Poll (March 2001)

**DO AMERICANS BELIEVE IMMIGRANT DIVERSITY IMPROVES
AMERICAN CULTURE?**



“Illegal immigrants pour over the U.S. borders in unprecedented numbers”

Pros

Mexican President V. Fox has proposed a European-style “open border” between USA and Mexico to allow a free flow of labor. This has encouraged renewed discussion about reestablishing the “Bracero Program”. In 1942-1964, this “temporary wartime effort” brought to the country about five million Mexicans to work on farms and plantations. (*Dallas Morning News*, January 2001)

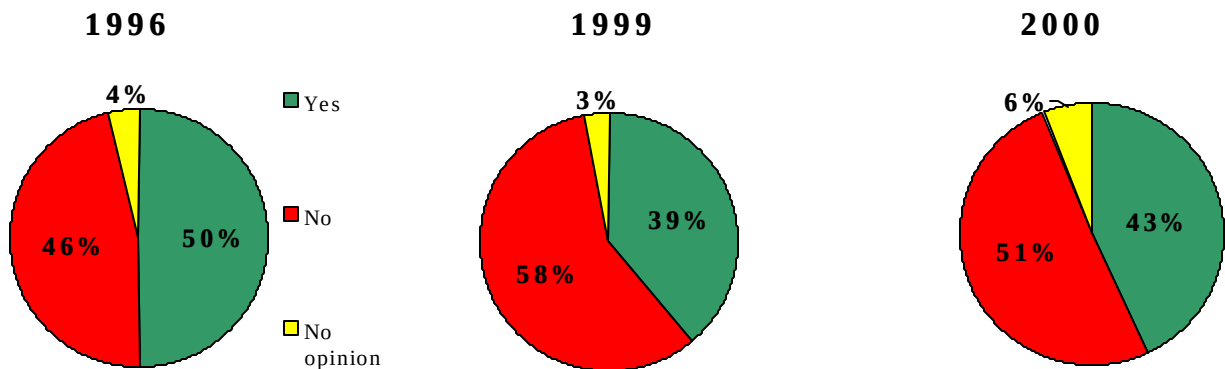
Cons (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

In fact, the vast majority of immigrants have entered the United States legally under the strict standards imposed by the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The Act allows approximately 800,000 people to settle in America every year as permanent residents including about 480,000 who are admitted to reunite with their spouses, children, parents and/or siblings; about 140,000 who are admitted to fill jobs for which the U.S. Department of Labor has determined no American workers; about 110,000 refugees who have proven their claims of political or religious persecution in their homelands; and about 55,000 who are admitted under a “diversity” lottery, begun in 1990, that mainly benefits young European and African immigrants.

Gallup Poll (2000)

WOULD YOU VOTE TO STOP ALL LEGAL IMMIGRATION FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?



ANTI-IMMIGRANT MOODS

With the exception of the Native Americans, everyone living in the U.S. is either an immigrant or a descendent of voluntary or involuntary immigrants.

Yet every wave of immigration has faced fear and hostility, especially during times of economic hardship, political turmoil, or war.

- In 1798, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, giving the President arbitrary powers to exclude or deport foreigners considered dangerous and to prosecute anyone who criticized the government. A new Naturalization Act sought to limit immigrants' electoral clout by extending the waiting period for citizenship to 14 years.
- Disaffected Anglo-Americans founded the Ku Klux Klan, a violent white supremacist group, in the late 19th century.
- During the depression of the 1840s, mobs hostile to immigrant Irish Catholics burned down a convent in Boston and in 1844 rioted in Philadelphia.

A political party known as "Know-Nothings" won six governorships and controlled legislatures in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and California. They enacted numerous laws to harass and penalize immigrants (as well as newly annexed Mexicans), including the first literacy tests for voting, which were designed to disenfranchise the Irish in particular. By 1860, the party had virtually collapsed.

- In 1850s and 1860s, anti-Chinese sentiments began and Chinese were deprived of legal protection.
- In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, one of the nation's first immigration laws, to keep out all people of Chinese origin.
- By the turn of century, the immigrants' countries of origin shifted from Western Europe to Eastern and Southern Europe, leading to a campaign to "Americanize" these new immigrants. This was a response to the perception that these new immigrants were less skilled, less educated, more clannish, and slower to learn English. The campaign sought to change their cultural traits, civic values, and especially their language.
- During the "Red Scare" of the 1920s, thousands of foreign-born people suspected of political radicalism were arrested and brutalized. Many were deported without a hearing.

- Anti-German hysteria peaked during World Wars (1914-18) and (1939-45).
- In 1942, 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent had their homes and other property confiscated, and were interned in camps until the end of World War II. During the same period, many Jews fleeing Nazi Germany were excluded under regulations enacted in the 1920s.
- In the 1950s, a government program targeted Mexicans, exclusively, for deportation.