**Chapter 4 Immigration**

**4-1** Summarize the general patterns of immigration to the United States.

* **4-2** Characterize how immigration was controlled in the nineteenth century.
* **4-3** Describe how restrictionist sentiment increased in the twentieth century.
* **4-4** Identify the concerns about immigration policy today.
* **4-5** Discuss the scope of and issues related to illegal immigration.
* **4-6** Outline the process of naturalization.
* **4-7** Understand the special role of women in immigration.
* **4-8** Illustrate the relationship of globalization with respect to immigrants.
* **4-9** Interpret how immigration is related to the environment.
* **4-10** Restate the United States’ policies toward refugees.

Dr. Alfredo Quĩnones-Hinojosa (on the right)

The story of Alfredo the immigrant is not typical, but then every immigrant who comes to the United States has a unique story. Alfredo Quĩnones-Hinojosa came to the United States as an illegal immigrant in 1987 at the age of nineteen. Caught the first time, he succeeded the second time on the same day. (The majority of immigrants apprehended at the border have been caught previously.) One of six children, Alfredo had frequently come across the border from his native Mexico to work as a farmhand pulling weeds in the fields to help support his five younger brothers and sisters. Eventually, he settled with relatives in Stockton, California. He tried other jobs: sweeping floors, shoeing horses, and soldering metal. He learned English and eventually applied and was accepted to the local San Joaquin Delta College.

His next big step was when he accepted an offer to study at the University of California at Berkeley. Alfredo dreamed of becoming a doctor, and nothing was going to stop him.

After graduating from Berkeley, Alfredo was accepted to Harvard Medical School, where he graduated with honors, but he also became a citizen along the way.

While Quĩnones-Hinojosa, and later his parents, had entered the United States as an undocumented worker, under an amnesty provision passed under President Reagan, he was able to secure a green card legally allowing him to work and continue his education. In 1997, he became a U.S. citizen.

Today, married with three children, he heads the Brain Tumor Surgery Program at Johns Hopkins Medical Center and is actively engaged in research as to the causes of brain cancer. It has not been easy. His hands now perform brain surgery, but they bear the scars of farmwork. He endured prejudice: People strongly suggested he change his name to something easier to pronounce. While reluctant to speak out in the immigration debate, he recognizes that many people today want to exclude from the United States people exactly like he was fewer than 30 years ago (Cave [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib233); Gupta [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib554); Ramos [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1098); Quĩnones-Hinojosa with Rivas [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1094)).

The world is now a global network. The core and periphery countries, described in world systems theory (see [**page 19**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/pg19) in [**Chapter 1**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch01)), link not only commercial goods but also families and workers across political borders. Social forces that cause people to emigrate are complex. The most important have been economic, such as the case of Alfredo Quĩnones-Hinojosa: financial failure in the old country and expectations of higher incomes and standards of living in the new land. Other factors include dislike of new political regimes in their native lands, being victims of racial or religious bigotry, and a desire to reunite families. All these factors push people from their homelands and pull them to other nations such as the United States. Immigration into the United States, in particular, has been facilitated by cheap ocean transportation and by other countries’ removal of restrictions on emigration.

Scholars of immigration often point to *push* and *pull factors*. For example, economic difficulties, religious or ethnic persecution, and political unrest may push individuals from their homelands. Immigration to a particular nation, the pull factors, may be a result of perceptions of a better life ahead or a desire to join a community of their fellow nationals already established abroad.

A potent factor contributing to immigration anywhere in the world is chain immigration. [**Chain immigration**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss26) refers to an immigrant who sponsors several other immigrants who, on their arrival, may sponsor still more. Laws that favor people desiring to enter a given country who already have relatives there or someone who can vouch for them financially may facilitate this sponsorship. But probably the most important aspect of chain immigration is that immigrants anticipate knowing someone who can help them adjust to their new surroundings and find a new job, place to live, and even the kinds of foods that are familiar to them. Later in this chapter, we revisit the social impact of worldwide immigration.

**Patterns of Immigration to the United States**

**4-1** Summarize the general patterns of immigration to the United States.

Immigration to the United States has three unmistakable patterns: (1) the number of immigrants has fluctuated dramatically over time largely because of government policy changes; (2) settlement has not been uniform across the country but centered in certain regions and cities; and (3) the immigrants’ countries of origin have changed over time. First, we look at the historical picture of immigrant numbers.

Vast numbers of immigrants have come to the United States. [**Figure 4.1**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04fig1) indicates the high but fluctuating number of immigrants who arrived during every decade from the 1820s through the beginning of the twenty-first century. The United States received the largest number of legal immigrants during the first decade of the 1900s; that number likely will be surpassed in the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, the country was much smaller in the period from 1900 through 1910, so the numerical impact was even greater then.

Immigrants to this country have not always received a friendly reception. Open bloodshed, restrictive laws, and the eventual return of almost one-third of immigrants and their children to their home countries attest to some Americans’ uneasy feelings toward strangers who want to settle here. Generally surveys show immigration viewed negatively but with some ambivalence. Opinion polls in the United States beginning in 1965 through 2013 have never shown more than 23 percent of the public in favor of more immigration, and usually about 35 to 40 percent want less, but the trend over the last decade has been slowly moving to welcoming *more* immigrants. Nationally border enforcement remains a concern, but support for deporting illegal immigrants already here has declined (Jones and Saad [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib667); Muste [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib920)).

**FIGURE 4.1 Legal Immigration to the United States, 1820–2020**

*Source*: Office of Immigration Statistics [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib983) and author’s estimates for projection out to 2020.

Before considering the sweep of past immigration policies, let us consider today’s immigrant population. About 13 percent of the nation’s people are foreign-born—a level not reached since the 1920s. As recently as 1979, this proportion was just 4.7 percent. By global comparisons, the foreign-born population in the United States is large but not unusual. Whereas most industrial countries have a foreign population of around 5 percent, Canada’s foreign population is 19 percent and Australia’s is 25 percent.

As noted earlier, immigrants have not settled evenly across the nation. As shown in the map in [**Figure 4.2**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04fig2), six states—California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois—account for two-thirds of the nation’s total foreign-born population but less than 40 percent of the nation’s total population.

Cities in these states are the destinations of the foreign-born population. Almost half (43.3 percent) live in the central city of a metropolitan area, compared with about one-quarter (27 percent) of the nation’s population. More than one-third of residents in the cities of Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, and New York are now foreign-born.

The source countries of immigrants have changed. First, settlers came from Europe, then Latin America, and, now, increasingly, Asia. The majority of today’s 38.5 million foreign-born people are from Latin America rather than Europe, as was the case through the 1950s. Primarily, they are from Central America and, more specifically, Mexico. By contrast, Europeans, who dominated the early settlement of the United States, now account for fewer than one in seven of the foreign-born today. The changing patterns of immigration have continued into the twenty-first century. Beginning in 2010, the annual immigration from Asia exceeded the level of annual immigration from Latin America for the first time (Grieco et al. [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib544); Pew Social and Demographic Trends [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1047); Semple [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1189)).

**FIGURE 4.2 Foreign-Born Population in the United States**

**Early Immigration**

**4-2** Characterize how immigration was controlled in the nineteenth century.

Settlers, the first immigrants to the Western Hemisphere, soon followed the European explorers of North America. The Spanish founded St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, and the English founded Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Protestants from England emerged from the colonial period as the dominant force numerically, politically, and socially. The English accounted for 60 percent of the 3 million White Americans in 1790. Although exact statistics are lacking for the early years of the United States, the English were soon outnumbered by other nationalities as the numbers of Scotch-Irish and Germans, in particular, swelled. However, the English colonists maintained their dominant position, as [**Chapter 5**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch05) examines.

Throughout American history, immigration policy has been politically controversial. The policies of the English king, George III, were criticized in the U.S. Declaration of Independence for obstructing immigration to the colonies. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the American republic itself was criticized for enacting immigration restrictions. In the beginning, however, the country encouraged immigration. Legislation initially fixed the residence requirement for naturalization at five years, although briefly, under the Alien Act of 1798, it was 14 years, and so-called dangerous people could be expelled. Despite this brief harshness, immigration was unregulated through most of the 1800s, and naturalization was easily available. Until 1870, naturalization was limited to “free white persons” (Calavita [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib209)).

Although some people hold the mistaken belief that concern about immigration is something new, some people also assume that immigrants to the United States rarely reconsider their decision to come to a new country. Analysis of available records, beginning in the early 1900s, suggests that about 35 percent of all immigrants to the United States eventually emigrated back to their home country. The proportion varies, with the figures for some countries being much higher, but the overall pattern is clear: About one in three immigrants to this nation eventually choose to return home (Wyman [**1993**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1415)).

The relative absence of federal legislation from 1790 to 1881 does not mean that all new arrivals were welcomed. [**Xenophobia**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss194) (the fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners) led naturally to [**nativism**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss122) (beliefs and policies favoring native-born citizens over immigrants). Although the term *nativism* has largely been used to describe nineteenth-century sentiments, anti-immigration views and organized movements have continued into the twenty-first century. Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington ([**1993**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib622), [**1996**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib623)) articulated the continuing immigration as a “clash of civilizations” that could be remedied only by significantly reducing legal immigration, not to mention closing the border to illegal arrivals. His view, which enjoys support, is that the fundamental world conflicts of the new century are cultural in nature rather than ideological or even economic (Citrin et al. [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib261); Schaefer [**2008b**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1166)).

The most dramatic outbreak of nativism in the nineteenth century was aimed at the Chinese. If any doubt remained by the mid-1800s that the United States could harmoniously accommodate all and was some sort of melting pot, debate on the Chinese Exclusion Act negatively ended that doubt.

**The Anti-Chinese Movement**

Before 1851, official records show that only 46 Chinese had immigrated to the United States. Over the next 30 years, more than 200,000 came to this country, lured by the discovery of gold and the opening of job opportunities in the West. Overcrowding, drought, and warfare in China also encouraged them to take a chance in the United States. Another important factor was improved oceanic transportation; it was cheaper to travel from Hong Kong to San Francisco than from Chicago to San Francisco. The frontier communities of the West, particularly in California, looked on the Chinese as a valuable resource to fill manual jobs. As early as 1854, so many Chinese wanted to emigrate that ships had difficulty handling the volume.

Chinese workers, such as these pictured in 1844, played a major role in building railroads in the West.

In the 1860s, railroad work provided the greatest demand for Chinese labor until the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads were joined at Promontory Summit, Utah, in 1869. The Union Pacific relied primarily on Irish laborers, but 90 percent of the Central Pacific’s labor force was Chinese because Whites generally refused to do the backbreaking work over the Western terrain. Despite the contribution of the Chinese, White workers physically prevented them from attending the driving of the golden spike to mark the joining of the two railroads.

With the dangerous railroad work largely completed, people began to rethink the wisdom of encouraging Chinese to immigrate to do the work no one else would do. Reflecting their xenophobia, White settlers found the Chinese immigrants, their customs, and religion difficult to understand. Indeed, few people tried to understand these immigrants from Asia. Although they had had no firsthand contact with Chinese Americans, Easterners and legislators soon jumped on the anti-Chinese bandwagon as they read sensationalized accounts of the lifestyle of the new arrivals.

Even before the Chinese immigrated, stereotypes of them and their customs were prevalent. American traders returning from China, European diplomats, and Protestant missionaries consistently emphasized the exotic and sinister aspects of life in China. [**Sinophobes**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss166), people who fear anything associated with China, appealed to the racist theory developed during the slavery controversy that non-Europeans were subhuman. Americans also were becoming more conscious of biological inheritance and disease, so it was not hard to conjure up fears of alien genes and germs. The only real challenge the anti-Chinese movement faced was convincing people that the negative consequences of unrestricted Chinese immigration outweighed any possible economic gain. Earlier, racial prejudice was subordinated to industrial dependence on Chinese labor for the work that Whites shunned, but acceptance of the Chinese was short-lived. The fear of the “yellow peril” overwhelmed any desire to know more about Asian peoples and their customs (Takaki [**1998**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1255)).

Employers were glad to pay the Chinese low wages, but non-Chinese laborers began directing their resentment against the Chinese rather than against their compatriots’ willingness to exploit the Chinese. Only a generation earlier, the same concerns were felt about the Irish, but with the Chinese, the hostility reached new heights because of another factor.

Although many arguments were voiced, racial fears motivated the anti-Chinese movement. Race was the critical issue. The labor market fears were largely unfounded, and most advocates of restrictions at that time knew that. There was no possibility of the Chinese immigrating in numbers that would match those of Europeans at that time, so it is difficult to find any explanation other than racism for their fears (Winant [**1994**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib995)).

From the sociological perspective of conflict theory, we can explain how the Chinese immigrants were welcomed only when their labor was necessary to fuel growth in the United States. When that labor was no longer necessary, the welcome mat for the immigrants was withdrawn. Furthermore, as conflict theorists point out, restrictions were not applied evenly: Americans focused on a specific nationality (the Chinese) to reduce the number of foreign workers in the nation. Because decision making at that time rested in the hands of the descendants of European immigrants, the steps taken were most likely to be directed against the least powerful: immigrants from China who, unlike Europeans seeking entry, had few allies among legislators and other policymakers.

In 1882, Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, which outlawed Chinese immigration for ten years. It also explicitly denied naturalization rights to the Chinese in the United States; that is, they were not allowed to become citizens. There was little debate in Congress, and discussion concentrated on how to best handle suspending Chinese immigration. No allowance was made for spouses and children to be reunited with their husbands and fathers in the United States. Only brief visits of Chinese government officials, teachers, tourists, and merchants were exempted.

The rest of the nineteenth century saw the remaining loopholes allowing Chinese immigration closed. Beginning in 1884, Chinese laborers could not enter the United States from any foreign place, a ban that also lasted ten years. Two years later, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated, with a poem by Emma Lazarus inscribed on its base. To the Chinese, the poem welcoming the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses must have seemed a hollow mockery.

**Speaking Out: Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**

A century ago, the Chinese came here in search of a better life; but they faced harsh conditions, particularly in the Halls of Congress. Congress passed numerous laws to restrict Chinese Americans, starting from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, to stop the Chinese from immigrating, from becoming naturalized citizens, and from ever having the right to vote.

*Judy Chu*

These were the only such laws to target a specific ethnic group. The Chinese were the only residents that had to carry papers on them at all times. They were often harassed and detained. If they couldn’t produce the proper documents, authorities threw them into prison or out of the country, regardless of their citizenship status. Political cartoons and hateful banners . . . were hung in towns and cities and printed in papers. At that time of this hateful law, the Chinese were called racial slurs, were spat upon in the streets, and even brutally murdered.

Only after China became an ally of the United States in World War II was this law repealed in 1943, 60 years after its passage. Congress has never formally acknowledged it as incompatible with America’s founding principles.

That is why, as the first Chinese American woman elected to Congress, and whose grandfather was a victim of this law, I stand on the very floor where the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and announce that I have introduced a resolution calling for a formal acknowledgment and expression of regret for the Chinese exclusion laws.

When the exclusion laws were first introduced, there was a great deal of debate in Congress over their merits. The U.S. had just abolished slavery. The 14th and 15th Amendments had recently been ratified. Slavery had been defeated, and freedom seemed more certain. The national atmosphere led many in Congress to stand up against the discriminatory anti-Chinese laws. But over the years, those standing for justice almost all disappeared. By the time 1882 came around, Members of Congress were fighting over who deserved the most credit for getting the most discriminatory laws passed and standing against the “Mongolian horde.”.…

But there were a brave few, a small minority who fought hard against prejudice and principles of freedom. One such man was Senator George Frisbie Hoar, whose statue now stands proudly in the Capitol. He stood up to all of the Chinese exclusion laws and voted against each. He said in 1904 when the laws were made permanent, “I cannot agree with the principle that this legislation or any legislation on the subject rests. All races, all colors, all nationalities contain persons entitled to be recognized everywhere as equals of other men. I am bound to record my protest, if I stand alone.”

And stand alone he did. The final vote against the Chinese in the Senate was 76–1. What Senator Hoar stood up for is what I am asking Congress to stand up for today: that all people, no matter the color of their skin, or the nation of origin, are the equals of every other man or woman.

America came to be what it is today through immigrants who came from all corners of the world. Chinese immigrants were amongst them. They sought a place to live that was founded upon liberty and equality. They came in search of the American Dream—that if you worked hard, you could build a good life. It is why my grandfather came to the United States.

But when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, the truths that this Nation holds as self-evident—that all are endowed with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—were discounted by the very ones elected to uphold them.

And so for a generation of our ancestors, like my grandfather, who were told for six decades by the U.S. government that the land of the free wasn’t open to them, it is long past time that Congress officially and formally acknowledges these ugly laws that targeted Chinese immigrants, and express sincere regret for these actions.

With my resolution, Congress will acknowledge the injustice of the Chinese Exclusion Act, express regret for the lives it destroyed, and make sure that the prejudice that stained our Nation is never repeated again. And it will demonstrate that today is a different day and that today we stand side by side for a stronger America.

Chu, 2011.

In 1892, Congress extended the Exclusion Act for another ten years and added that Chinese laborers had to obtain certificates of residence within a year or face deportation. After the turn of the century, the Exclusion Act was extended again. With immigration restrictions, like many other laws, the ill effects last generations. Judy Chu, born of Chinese immigrants, was first elected to Congress in 2009 from suburban Los Angeles. A psychology professor and school board member before going to Washington, she was keenly aware of the toll that one of the most restrictive immigration laws ever passed in the United States had on Chinese Americans. In “Speaking Out,” we hear the Congresswoman’s case for a resolution apologizing for the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In 2012, Congress passed the resolution unanimously. This marked only the fourth official apology in the last 25 years—the other three were slavery, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and mistreatment of native Hawaiians and the overthrow of their rule of the islands (Chu [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib258), Nahm [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib926)).

**Restrictionist Sentiment Increases**

**4-3** Describe how restrictionist sentiment increased in the twentieth century.

As Congress closed the door to Chinese immigration, the debate on restricting immigration turned in new directions. Prodded by growing anti-Japanese feelings, the United States entered into the so-called gentlemen’s agreement, which was completed in 1908. Japan agreed to halt further immigration to the United States, and the United States agreed to end discrimination against the Japanese who had already arrived. The immigration ended, but anti-Japanese feelings continued. Americans were growing uneasy that the “new immigrants” would overwhelm the culture established by the “old immigrants.” The earlier immigrants, if not Anglo-Saxon, were from similar groups such as the Scandinavians, the Swiss, and the French Huguenots. These people were more experienced in democratic political practices and had a greater affinity with the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, more and more immigrants were neither English speaking nor Protestant and came from dramatically different cultures.

**The National Origin System**

Beginning in 1921, a series of measures was enacted that marked a new era in American immigration policy. Whatever the legal language, the measures were drawn up to block the growing immigration from southern Europe (from Italy and Greece, for example) and also to block all Asian immigrants by establishing a zero quota for them.

**Ellis Island**

Although it was not opened until 1892, New York Harbor’s Ellis Island—the country’s first federal immigration facility—quickly became the symbol of all migrant streams to the United States. By the time it closed in late 1954, it had processed 17 million immigrants. Today, their descendants number over 100 million Americans.

To understand the effect of the national origin system on immigration, it is necessary to clarify the quota system. Quotas were deliberately weighted to favor immigration from northern Europe. Because of the ethnic composition of the country in 1920, the quotas placed severe restrictions on immigration from the rest of Europe and other parts of the world. Immigration from the Western Hemisphere (i.e., Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean) continued unrestricted. The quota for each nation was set at 3 percent of the number of people descended from each nationality recorded in the 1920 census. Once the statistical manipulations were completed, almost 70 percent of the quota for the Eastern Hemisphere went to just three countries: Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany.

The absurdities of the system soon became obvious, but it was nevertheless continued. British immigration had fallen sharply, so most of its quota of 65,000 went unfilled. However, the openings could not be transferred, even though countries such as Italy, with a quota of only 6,000, had 200,000 people who wanted to enter. However one rationalizes the purpose behind the act, the result was obvious: Any English person, regardless of skill and whether related to anyone already here, could enter the country more easily than, say, a Greek doctor whose children were American citizens. The quota for Greece was 305, with the backlog of people wanting to come reaching 100,000.

By the end of the 1920s, annual immigration had dropped to one-fourth of its pre–World War I level. The worldwide economic depression of the 1930s decreased immigration still further. A brief upsurge in immigration just before World War II reflected the flight of Europeans from the oppression of expanding Nazi Germany. The war virtually ended transatlantic immigration. The era of the great European migration to the United States had been legislated out of existence.

**The Immigration and Nationality Act**

The national origin system was abandoned with the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (also called the Hart-Cellar Act), signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the foot of the Statue of Liberty. The primary goals of the act were to reunite families and to protect the American labor market. The act also initiated restrictions on immigration from Latin America. After the act, immigration increased by one-third, but the act’s influence was primarily on the composition rather than the size of immigration. The sources of immigrants now included Italy, Greece, Portugal, Mexico, the Philippines, the West Indies, and South America.

The lasting effect is apparent when we compare the changing sources of immigration over the last 190 years, as shown in [**Figure 4.3**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04fig3). The most recent period shows that Asian and Latin American immigrants combined to account for 78 percent of the people who were permitted entry. This contrasts sharply with early immigration, which was dominated by arrivals from Europe.

The nature of immigration laws is exceedingly complex and is subjected to frequent, often minor, adjustments. From 2000 to 2010, between 840,000 and 1,270,000 people were legally admitted each year. For 2010, people were admitted for the following reasons:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ■  | Relatives of citizens | 57% |
| ■  | Relatives of legal residents | 9% |
| ■  | Employment based | 14% |
| ■  | Refugees/people seeking political asylum | 13% |
| ■  | Diversity (lottery among applications from nations historically sending few immigrants) | 5% |
| ■  | Other | 2% |

Overall, two-thirds of immigrants come to join their families, one-seventh because of skills needed in the United States, and another one-seventh because of special refugee status. However, it would be a mistake for thinking family reunions are easy to accomplish.

**FIGURE 4.3 Legal Immigrants Admitted to the United States by Region of Last Residence, 1820–2012**

Because there are limits on how many people can enter legally each year for any one country, backlogs exist for such nations as China, India, Mexico, and Philippines. So, for example, as of 2013, there was a *13-year* backlog for adult children from the Philippines to join their American citizen parents. Similarly, there was a *17-year* backlog for the Mexican brothers and sisters of American citizens to join their siblings (Martin and Yankay [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib725); Preston [**2013b**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1088)).

**Contemporary Social Concerns**

**4-4** Identify the concerns about immigration policy today.

Although our current immigration policies are less restrictive than other nations’, they are the subjects of great debate. [**Table 4.1**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04tab1) summarizes the benefits and concerns regarding immigration to the United States. We now consider five continuing criticisms relating to our immigration policy: the brain drain, population growth, mixed status, English language acquisition, economic impact, and illegal immigration. All five, but particularly illegal immigration, have provoked heated debates on the national level and continuing efforts to resolve them with new policies.

**TABLE 4.1 Immigration Benefits and Concerns**

| **Potential Benefits**  | **Areas of Concern**  |
| --- | --- |
| Provide needed skills | Drain needed resources from home country |
| Contribute to taxes | Send money home |
| May come with substantial capital to start business | Less-skilled immigrants compete with already disadvantaged residents |
| Maintain growth of consumer market | Population growth |
| Diversify the population (intangible gain) | Language differences |
| Maintain ties with countries throughout the world | May complicate foreign policy by lobbying the government |
|   | Illegal immigration |

**The Brain Drain**

How often have you identified your science or mathematics teacher or your physician as someone who was not born in the United States? This nation has clearly benefited from attracting human resources from throughout the world, but this phenomenon has had its price for the nations of origin.

[**Brain drain**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss25) is the immigration to the United States of skilled workers, professionals, and technicians who are desperately needed by their home countries. In the mid-twentieth century, many scientists and other professionals from industrial nations, principally Germany and Great Britain, came to the United States. More recently, however, the brain drain has pulled emigrants from developing nations, including India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and several African nations. They are eligible for H-1B visas that qualify them for permanent work permits.

Currently 65,000 foreigners with at a least a bachelor’s degree and a specialized skill receive the H-1B visa. Another 20,000 such visas go to foreign nationals with advanced degrees from U.S. universities. In these cases, a person comes to the United States on a student visa, secures a degree, say in engineering, and then may apply for the H-1B.

More than one out of four physicians (27 percent) in the United States is foreign-born and plays a critical role in serving areas with too few doctors. Thousands of doctors have sought to enter the United States, pulled by the economic opportunity. Persons born in India, the Philippines, and China account for the largest groups of foreign-born physicians. The pay differential is so great that, beginning in 2004, when foreign physicians were no longer favored with entry to the United States, physicians in the Philippines retrained as nurses so that they could immigrate to the United States where, employed as nurses, they would make four times what they would as doctors in the Philippines. By 2010, one-third of the foreign born workers employed as registered nurses were born in the Philippines (McCabe [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib873); *New York Times* [**2005**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib738)).

Many foreign students say they plan to return home. Fortunately for the United States, many do not and make their talents available in the United States. One study showed that the majority of foreign students receiving their doctorates in the sciences and engineering remain here four years later. Critics note, however, that this foreign supply means that the United States overlooks its own minority scholars. Currently, for every African American and Latino doctorate a foreign citizen receives this degree in the United States. More encouragement must be given to African Americans and Latinos to enter high-tech career paths.

Conflict theorists see the current brain drain as yet another symptom of the unequal distribution of world resources. In their view, it is ironic that the United States gives foreign aid to improve the technical resources of African and Asian countries while maintaining an immigration policy that encourages professionals in such nations to migrate to our shores. These very countries have unacceptable public health conditions and need native scientists, educators, technicians, and other professionals. In addition, by relying on foreign talent, the United States is not encouraging native members of subordinate groups to enter these desirable fields of employment (National Center for Education Statistics [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib192): Table 307; Pearson [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1034); Wessel [**2001**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1358); West [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1359)).

**Population Growth**

The United States, like a few other industrial nations, continues to accept large numbers of permanent immigrants and refugees. Although such immigration has increased since the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the nation’s birth rate has decreased. Consequently, the contribution of immigration to population growth has become more significant. As citizen “baby boomers” age, the country has increasingly depended on the economically younger population fueled by immigrants (Meyers [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib899)).

Immigration, legal and illegal, is projected to account for nearly 50 percent of the nation’s growth from 2005 to 2050 with the children and grandchildren of immigrants accounting for another 35 percent. To some observers, the United States is already over-populated. Environmentalists have weighed in on the immigration issue, questioning immigration’s possible negative impact on the nation’s natural resources. We consider that aspect of the immigration debate later in this chapter. Thus far, the majority of environmentalists have indicated a desire to keep a neutral position rather than enter the politically charged immigration debate (Kotkin [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib731); Livingston and Cohn [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib797)).

The patterns of uneven settlement by immigrants in the United States are expected to continue, so future immigrants’ impact on population growth will be felt much more in certain areas, for example, California and New York rather than Wyoming or West Virginia. Although immigration and population growth may be viewed as national concerns, their impact is localized in certain areas, such as Southern California and large urban centers nationwide (Camarota and Jensenius [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib212); Passel and Cohn [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1025)).

**Mixed-Status Families**

Little is simple when it comes to immigration. This is particularly true regarding the challenge of the estimated 9 million people living in mixed status families. [**Mixed status**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss116) refers to families in which one or more members are citizens and one or more are non-citizens. This especially becomes problematic when the noncitizens are illegal or undocumented immigrants.

The problem of mixed status emerges on two levels. On the macro level, when policy debates are made about issues that seem clear to many people—such as whether illegal immigrants should be allowed to attend state colleges or whether illegal immigrants should be immediately deported—the complicating factor of mixed-status families quickly emerges. On the micro level, the daily toll on members of mixed-status households is difficult. Often, the legal resident or even the U.S. citizen in a household finds daily life limited for fear of revealing the undocumented status of a parent or brother or even a son.

About three-quarters of illegal immigrants’ children were born in the United States and thus are citizens. This means that perhaps half of all adult illegal immigrants have a citizen in their immediate family. This proportion has grown in recent years. Therefore, some of the issues facing illegal immigrants, whom we discuss later, also affect the citizens in the families because they avoid bringing attention to themselves for fear of revealing the illegal status of their mother or father. Immigration issues aside, one can only begin to imagine the additional pressure this places upon families beyond the usual ones of balancing work and home, school, and children moving through adolescent to adulthood (Gonzales [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib524); mixed-status; Gonzalez [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib525); Passel and Cohn [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1025); Pew Hispanic Center [**2011b**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1056)).

**Language Barriers**

For many people in the United States, the most visible aspects of immigration are non-English speakers, businesses with foreign-language storefronts, and even familiar stores assuring potential customers that their employees speak Spanish or Polish or Chinese or another foreign language. Non-English speakers cluster in certain states, but bilingualism attracts nationwide passions. The release in 2006 of “Nuestro Himno,” the Spanish-language version of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” led to a strong reaction, with 69 percent of people saying it was appropriate to be sung only in English. Yet at least one congressman who decried the Spanish version sang the anthem himself in English with incorrect lyrics (Carroll [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib226); Koch [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib722)).

About 21 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home, as shown in [**Figure 4.4**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04fig4). Indeed, 39 different languages are spoken at home by at least 90,000 residents. Spanish accounts for 62 percent of the foreign language speakers at home. As of 2011, about half of the 61 million people speaking a foreign language at home abroad spoke English less than “very well.” Since 1980, the largest growth has been in speakers of Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, and Persian. The largest decreases have all been in European-based languages such as Italian, Greek, German, Yiddish, and Polish (Ryan [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1139)).

By comparison, of 291 million people over 5 years of age, 231 million only speak English at home, 38 million Spanish, and about 22 million some other language.

*Source*: Data for 2011 in Ryan [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1139):3.

The myth of Anglo superiority has rested in part on language differences. (The term *Anglo* in the following text means all non-Hispanics but primarily Whites.) First, the criteria for economic and social achievement usually include proficiency in English. By such standards, Spanish-speaking pupils are judged less able to compete until they learn English. Second, many Anglos believe that Spanish is not an asset occupationally. Only recently, as government agencies belatedly began serving Latino people and as businesses recognized the growing Latino consumer market, have Anglos recognized that knowing Spanish is not only useful but also necessary to carry out certain tasks.

Until the last 40 years, a conscious effort was made to devalue Spanish and other languages and to discourage the use of foreign languages in schools. In the case of Spanish, this practice was built on a pattern of segregating Hispanic schoolchildren from Anglos. In the recent past in the Southwest, Mexican Americans were assigned to Mexican schools to keep Anglo schools all-White. These Mexican schools, created through de jure school segregation resulting from residential segregation, were substantially underfunded compared with the Anglo public schools. Legal action against such schools dates back to 1945, but it was not until 1970 that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*, that segregation of Mexican Americans was unconstitutional. Appeals delayed implementation of that decision, and not until September 1975 was the de jure plan forcibly overturned in Corpus Christi, Texas (Commission on Civil Rights [**1976**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib277)).

Is it essential that English be the sole language of instruction in schools in the United States? [**Bilingualism**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss18) is the use of two or more languages in places of work or educational facilities and accords each language equal legitimacy. Thus, a program of [**bilingual education**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss17) may instruct children in their native language (such as Spanish) while gradually introducing them to the language of the dominant society (English). If such a program also is bicultural, it will teach children about the culture of both linguistic groups. Bilingual education allows students to learn academic material in their own language while they learn a second language. Proponents believe that, ideally, bilingual education programs should also allow English-speaking pupils to be bilingual, but generally they are directed only at making non-English speakers proficient in more than one language.

Do bilingual programs help children learn English? It is difficult to reach firm conclusions on the effectiveness of the bilingual programs in general because they vary so widely in their approach to non-English-speaking children. The programs differ in the length of the transition to English and how long they allow students to remain in bilingual classrooms. A major study analyzed more than three decades of research, combining 17 different studies, and found that bilingual education programs produce higher levels of student achievement in reading. The most successful are paired bilingual programs—those offering ongoing instruction in a native language and English at different times of the day (Slavin and Cheung [**2003**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1210); Soltero [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1220)).

Attacks on bilingualism in voting and education have taken several forms and have even broadened to question the appropriateness of U.S. residents using any language other than English. Federal policy has become more restrictive. Local schools have been given more authority to determine appropriate methods of instruction; they also have been forced to provide more of their own funding for bilingual education. Adding to the difficulty is that increasingly school districts outside the central city in suburbs and rural agricultural areas face the challenge of serving non-English-speaking schoolchildren.

In the United States, as of 2013, 30 states have made English their official language. Repeated efforts have been made to introduce a constitutional amendment declaring English as the nation’s official language. Even such an action would not completely outlaw bilingual or multilingual government services. It would, however, require that such services be called for specifically as in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which requires voting information to be available in multiple languages (U.S. English [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib3)).

**The Economic Impact**

There is much public and scholarly debate about the economic effects of immigration, both legal and illegal. Varied, conflicting conclusions have resulted from research ranging from case studies of Korean immigrants’ dominance among New York City greengrocers to mobility studies charting the progress of all immigrants and their children. The confusion results in part from the different methods of analysis. For example, the studies do not always include political refugees, who generally are less prepared than other refugees to become assimilated. Sometimes, the research focuses only on economic effects, such as whether people are employed or are on welfare; in other cases, it also considers cultural factors such as knowledge of English.

Perhaps the most significant factor in determining the economic impact of immigration is whether a study examines the national impact of immigration or only its effects on a local area. Overall, we can conclude from the research that immigrants adapt well and are an asset to the local economy. In some areas, heavy immigration may drain a community’s resources. However, it can also revitalize a local economy. Marginally employed workers, most of whom are either themselves immigrants or African Americans, often experience a negative impact by new arrivals. With or without immigration, competition for low-paying jobs in the United States is high, and those who gain the most from this competition are the employers and the consumers who want to keep prices down (Steinberg [**2005**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1237); Zimmerman [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1429)).

**Research Focus: The Hispanic Dairyland**

Dairyland Wisconsin invokes images of rolling hills and pastures, black and white Holstein cows, and roadside shops selling cheese. But now an indispensable part of this portrayal is the important role played by Latino workers.

Just since the beginning of the twenty-first century, immigrant workers, almost entirely Hispanic and largely Mexican, have become the majority of laborers on large dairy farms and overall at least 40 percent of all hired dairy employees on the more than 14,000 dairy farms in Wisconsin. Latinos working in agriculture is not new—nationally they accounted in 2012 for 24 percent of all employed persons in animal and crop production—but their rapid presence in dairy farming is a recent twenty-first century phenomenon. Dairy farmers turned to immigrant workers when they found it difficult to locate U.S.-born workers who were “reliable,” to use their often-expressed criteria. Dairy farms have also grown larger, requiring additional milking shifts and more workhands.

As one typical dairy farmer with 150 cows said in 2009,

* *So as our last two children entered high school, and I realized that soon I would have no family labor to rely on, we moved our farm to all hired labor. I have not been able to hire an American citizen since 1997. I have tried! The way I see it, if we didn’t have Hispanics to rely on for a work force, I don’t believe I could continue farming*. (Harrison, Lloyd, and O’Kane [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib572):2–3)

The important role that Latinos now play on dairy farms is not limited to the Midwest but is repeated in places like California, Texas, New York state, and Vermont, which also used to depend on local workers.

The use of immigrant labor on dairy farms is an example of [**occupational segregation**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss128). This refers to the concentration of one particular group of people to a particular job. In this case we see occupational segregation with respect to Latinos, largely male, to the more manual labor on these farms. They are not involved in caring for the herd, distribution of the product, or equipment maintenance managing, much less owning the farm. They are limited to the “milking parlors” or the large barns where cows are milked. The Latinos work as “milkers” typically hooking the cows to hoses, “pushers” getting the cows in and out of the salon, or “cleaners” scraping manure from the parlors. Cows are milked two to three times a day, every day, so the labor demand is continuous.

The low-level jobs are now often even described as “Mexican” work, regardless of the nationality of the laborer, even though little more than a decade or two ago it was all done by family or local workers. So associated are Latinos with this hard labor that farm operators now speak of the U.S.-born workers as being too weak to do the immigrant labor. Hispanic laborers are so well-regarded for working the long hours at tough work that when a worker seems reluctant to do it, they are derisively referred to as now being “Americanized” in a reference to the local people unwilling to do labor in the milk parlors. Occupation segregation is growing so well-defined that now Latinos are seen as suited for the job and unsatisfactory for any more skilled and higher paying work on the farm. For the workers, their “success” as milkers has led to chain migration to the area through family and friendship networks as more and more workers are needed.

Pay is about $9 an hour as of 2013 with few non-wage benefits, and jobs are year-round, but this often means working at split intervals in the same day totalling 55–60 hours a week. Even though they may work for several years on the same farm, there is little interest in training the workers to do more highly skilled labor. The farm owners recognize that many of these workers may be illegal and do not wish to “invest” in their future. From the workers’ standpoint, they rarely complain, fearing that their illegal status or that of their friends and family members, even if they themselves are legal, may be disclosed. Given that they labor in rural areas doing work that no one else wants to do, there is little incentive to investigate their legal status and dairy farms are rarely investigated.

Dairy farms represent a very small aspect of Latino life in the United States but for dairy farmers, Latinos are all important. Therefore, through agriculture lobbying organizations, farm operators and owners are well heard on any immigration bill that may jeopardize their continuing to access their “reliable,” if illegal, workforce.

*Sources*: Department of Agriculture [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib343); Campion [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib214), Dorschner [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib384); Harrison and Lloyd [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib570); Jordan [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib673); Kohli [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib725).

There is no one portrait, or even a dozen portraits, of the typical situation that describes the economic role of immigrants in the United States. Similarly, there are many explanations for whey unauthorized immigration persists. In the Research Focus, we show that labor on dairy a farm has been dominated by Latino workers, many of them undocumented.

The impact of immigration on African Americans deserves special attention. Given that African Americans are a large minority and many continue to be in the underclass, many people, including some Blacks themselves, perceive immigrants as advancing at the expense of the African American community. There is evidence that in the very lowest paid jobs—for example, workers in chicken-processing plants—wages have dropped with the availability of unskilled immigrants to perform them, and Blacks have left these jobs for good. Many of these African Americans do not necessarily move to better or even equivalent jobs. This pattern is repeated in other relatively low-paying, undesirable employment sectors, so Blacks are not alone in being impacted; but given other job opportunities, the impact is longer lasting (Borjas, Grogger, and Hanson [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib142); Holzer [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib605)).

About 70 percent of illegal immigrant workers pay taxes of one type or another. Many of them do not file to receive entitled refunds or benefits. For example, in 2005, the Social Security Administration identified thousands of unauthorized workers contributing about $7 billion to the fund but that could not be credited properly. Supporters of immigration reform point to increased tax revenue and even more net financial benefits to all local governments if illegal immigrants move toward legal residency (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib49); Lipman [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib794); Porter [**2005**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1077)).

Social science studies generally contradict many of the negative stereotypes about the economic impact of immigration. A variety of recent studies found that immigrants are a net economic gain for the population in times of economic boom as well as in periods of recession. But despite national gains, in some areas and for some groups, immigration may be an economic burden or create unwanted competition for jobs (Kochhar [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib723)).

What about the immigrants themselves? Considering contemporary immigrants as a group, we can make the following conclusions in [**Table 4.2**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04tab2). They represent a mix of successes and challenges to adaptation. These positive trends diverge among specific immigrant groups, with Asian immigrants doing better than European immigrants, who do better than Latino immigrants (Capps, Leighton, and Fix [**2002**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib219); Farkas [**2003**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib433); Myers, Pitkin, and Park [**2004**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib921); Zimmerman [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1429)).

**TABLE 4.2 Immigrant Adaptation to the USA**

| **Less Encouraging**  | **Positive Signs**  |
| --- | --- |
| * ■ Although immigrants have lower divorce rates and are less likely to form single-parent households than natives, their rates equal or exceed these rates by the second generation.
* ■ Children in immigrant families tend to be healthier than U.S.-born children, but the advantage declines. We consider this in greater detail later in this chapter.
* ■ Immigrant children attend schools that are disproportionately attended by other poor children and students with limited English proficiency, so they are ethnically, economically, and linguistically isolated.
 | * ■ Immigrant families and, more broadly, noncitizen households are more likely to be on public assistance, but their time on public assistance is less and they receive fewer benefits. This is even true when considering special restrictions that may apply to noncitizens.
* ■ Second-generation immigrants (i.e., children of immigrants) are overall doing as well as or better than White non-Hispanic natives in educational attainment, labor force participation, wages, and household income.
* ■ Immigrants overwhelmingly (65 percent) continue to see learning English as an ethical obligation of all immigrants.
 |

One economic aspect of immigration that has received increasing attention is the role of [**remittances**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss150), or the monies that immigrants return to their countries of origin. The amounts are significant and measure in the hundreds of millions of dollars flowing from the United States to a number of countries where they provide substantial support for families and even venture capital for new businesses. Although some observers express concern over this outflow of money, others counter that it probably represents a small price to pay for the human capital that the United States is able to use in the form of the immigrants themselves. Immigrants in the United States send annually about 31 billion to their home countries and worldwide remittances bring about $530 billion to all the world’s countries, easily surpassing all other forms of foreign aid. While this cash inflow is integral to the economies of many nations, it also means that during the global economic recession that occurred recently, this resource drops off significantly (World Bank [**2013a**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1405), [**2013b**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1406)).

The immigration debates range from loosening to tightening the flow of immigrants, whether illegal immigrants who came here as children and went to school should be allowed a pathway to citizenship (the proposed DREAM act), and whether states such as Arizona have overstepped their bounds in trying to identity illegal immigrants by empowering any person stopped or arrested if they have reason to believe they have immigrated illegally.

The concern about immigration today is both understandable and perplexing. The nation has always been uneasy about new arrivals, especially those who are different from the more affluent and the policymakers. In most of the 1990s, we had paradoxical concerns about immigrants hurting the economy despite strong economic growth. With the economic downturn beginning in 2008, it was clear that low-skilled immigrants (legal or illegal) took the hardest hit and, as a result, remittances immediately declined.

**Illegal Immigration**

**4-5** Discuss the scope of and issues related to illegal immigration.

The most bitterly debated aspect of U.S. immigration policy has been the control of illegal or undocumented immigrants. These immigrants and their families come to the United States in search of higher-paying jobs than their home countries can provide. While some people contend there are differences in their meaning, we will use the terms illegal, undocumented, or unauthorized interchangeably to refer to people who have entered the country without the proper documents as well as people who entered legally as students or tourists but then remained illegally.

Because by definition illegal immigrants are in the country illegally, the exact number of these undocumented or unauthorized workers is subject to estimates and disputes. Based on the best available information in late 2013, more than 11.7 million illegal or unauthorized immigrants live in the United States. This compares with about 3.5 million in 1990 and a peak of 12.2 million in 2007. With employment opportunities drying up during the economic downturn beginning in 2008, significantly fewer people tried to enter illegally, and many unauthorized immigrants returned to their countries (Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib527)).

The public has tied illegal immigrants, and even legal immigrants, to almost every social problem in the nation. They become the scapegoats for unemployment; they are labeled “drug runners” and, especially since September 11, 2001, “terrorists.” Arrest, detention, and deportation of illegal immigrants greatly increased. Their vital economic and cultural contribution to the United States is generally overlooked, as it has been for more than a hundred years. Considering it from the perspective of the immigrant, the possibility of apprehension and punishment are not significant determents. However, the decision to enter illegally is affected by the assessment of the employment possibilities in the home country and, as we will see later, the dangers of border crossing (Ryo [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib999)).

There are significant costs for aliens—that is, foreign-born noncitizens—and for other citizens. Civil rights advocates have expressed concern that the procedures used to apprehend and deport people are discriminatory and deprive many aliens of their legal rights. American citizens of Hispanic or Asian origin, some of whom were born in the United States, may be greeted with prejudice and distrust, as if their names automatically imply that they are illegal immigrants. Furthermore, these citizens and legal residents of the United States may be unable to find work because employers wrongly believe that their documents are forged.

In the context of this illegal immigration, Congress approved the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) after debating it for nearly a decade. The act marked a historic change in immigration policy compared with earlier laws, as summarized in [**Table 4.3**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04tab3). Amnesty was granted to 2.7 million illegal immigrants who could document that they had established long-term residency in the United States. Under the IRCA, hiring illegal aliens became illegal, and employers became subject to fines and even prison sentences. Little workplace enforcement occurred for years, but beginning in 2009, federal agents concentrated on auditing large employers rather than raiding workplaces (Massey and Pren [**2012**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib864); Siegal [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1203)).

Many illegal immigrants continue to live in fear and hiding, subject to even more severe harassment and discrimination than before. From a conflict perspective, these immigrants, primarily poor and Hispanic or Asian, are being firmly lodged at the bottom of the nation’s social and economic hierarchies. However, from a functionalist perspective, employers, by paying low wages, are able to produce goods and services that are profitable for industry and more affordable to consumers. Despite the poor working conditions often experienced by illegal immigrants, they continue to come because it is still in their best economic interest to work here in disadvantaged positions rather than seek wage labor unsuccessfully in their home countries.

**TABLE 4.3 Major Immigration Policies**

| **Policy**  | **Target Group**  | **Impact**  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882 | Chinese | Effectively ended all Chinese immigration for more than 60 years |
| National origin system, 1921 | Southern Europeans | Reduced overall immigration and significantly reduced likely immigration from Greece and Italy |
| Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965 (Hart-Cellar Act) | Western Hemisphere and the less skilled | Facilitated entry of skilled workers and relatives of U.S. residents |
| Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 | Illegal immigrants | Modest reduction of illegal immigration |
| Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 | Illegal immigrants | Greater border surveillance and increased scrutiny of legal immigrants seeking benefits |

Illegal aliens or undocumented workers are not necessarily transient. One estimate indicates 63 percent had been here for at least ten years. Many have established homes, families, and networks with relatives and friends in the United States whose legal status might differ. These are the mixed-status households noted earlier. For the most part, their lives are not much different from legal residents, except when they seek services that require documentation proving citizenship status (Pew Hispanic Center [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1046)).

Policymakers continue to avoid the only real way to stop illegal immigration: discourage employment opportunities. This has certainly been the approach in recent years. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) notifies major companies that it will soon audit its employment records looking for illegal immigrants. If found, civil and criminal penalties can be levied against the business. The workers themselves are subject to deportation. This has led corporations such as American Apparel and Chipotle Mexican Grill to look more closely at and fire hundreds of employees lacking sufficient documentation. In 2012, about 410,000 people had been deported, a similar number to the year before—this is equivalent to deporting the people of San Diego during a two-year period (Migration News [**2012b**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib903); Preston [**2013a**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1087)).

The public often thinks in terms of controlling illegal immigration through greater surveillance at the border. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, greater control of border traffic took on a new sense of urgency, even though almost all the hijackers had entered the United States legally. It also is very difficult to secure the vast boundaries that mark the United States on land and sea. The cost of the federal government’s attempt to police the nation’s borders and locate illegal immigrants is sizable. The federal government spends $18 billion annually with costs of proposed enhancements of border security ranging from fencing to drones easily reaching another 4.5 billion dollars (*Economist* 2013; Preston [**2013a**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1087)).

Numerous civil rights groups and migrant advocacy organizations have expressed alarm regarding people who cross into the United States illegally and perish in the attempt. Some die in deserts, in isolated canyons, and while concealed in containers or locked in trucks during smuggling attempts. Several hundred die annually in the Southwest by seeking ever more dangerous crossing points because border control has increased. However, this toll has received so little attention that one journalist likened it to several jumbo jets crashing between Los Angeles and Phoenix every year without anyone giving it much notice. Approximately 2,269 immigrant deaths were record for the 2 ½ year period from October 1999 through March 2012. The immigration policy debate was largely absent from the 2008 and 2012 presidential races and was replaced by concerns over the economy (Del Olmo [**2003**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib333); Helmore [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib582)).

An immigration-related issue that began being raised recently has been concern over illegal immigrants’ children who are born here and thus regarded as citizens at birth. Public opinion polls reveal that about half of the population has concerns regarding these children. Some people want to alter the Fourteenth Amendment to revise the “birthright citizenship” that was intended for children of slaves but has long been interpreted to cover anyone born in the United States regardless of their parents’ legal status. While such a movement is unlikely to succeed, it is yet another example of a relatively minor issue that sidetracks any substantive discussion of immigration reform (Gomez [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib521)).

So what is the future of immigration reform? It is unlikely to be resolved in any satisfying way because the issues are complex and are wrapped up in economic interests, humanitarian concerns, party politics, constitutional rights, and even foreign policy. Alongside immigration policy is how the nation is to accommodate people escaping political and religious persecution.

When it comes to issues of race and ethnicity, South Africa usually evokes past images of apartheid and the struggle to overcome generations of racial separation—both important topics to be considered in [**Chapter 16**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch16). However, in the Global View, we consider the contemporary challenge of dealing with immigration.

**A Global View: Immigration and South Africa**

With its over 52 million people, the Republic of South Africa is not rich by global standards, but its economy is very attractive to most of the African continent. For example, South Africa has a gross national income per person of $10,360, compared to well under $2,000 in neighboring Zimbabwe. Even when South Africa was ruled by a White-supremacist government, Black Africans from throughout the continent came to the country fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries and to work, often in the mining of coal and diamonds. In the post-apartheid era, the numbers of immigrants, legal and illegal, have skyrocketed. Today’s government is caught between compassion for those seeking entry and the growing inability of the economy to absorb those who seek work and shelter.

In 2008, the world took notice as riots broke out between poor South Africans taking out their rage on even more impoverished foreigners. The growing xenophobia took the government, which advocates racial harmony, by surprise as it tried to quell violence among Black Africans divided by citizenship status and nationality. In a matter of months in early 2008, some 32,000 immigrants had been driven from their homes, with attackers seizing all of their belongings. Some immigrants returned to their home countries—including Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe—but most settled temporarily in camps.

South Africa, with limited government resources, deported over 310,000 immigrants in 2007–2008, a proportion nearly comparable to that of the United States (with six times the population). However, estimates of the total number of illegal immigrants in South Africa range from 3 million to 5 million—a much higher proportion than estimated in the United States.

The scapegoating of immigrants, or “border jumpers” as they often are called in South Africa, is not unique to this nation. The tension between South Africans and foreigners has led to concerns over continuing xenophobia with threats toward foreign-owned shops. For the global community that still relishes Nelson Mandela’s peaceful ascent to power, it has been a reminder of immigration’s challenge throughout the world.

*Sources*: Dixon [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib373); Forced Migration Studies Programme [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib461); Haub and Kaneda [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib576); Koser [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib729); Nevin [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib955); Roodt [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1125); South African Institute of Race Relations [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib639).

**Path to Citizenship: Naturalization**

**4-6** Outline the process of naturalization.

In [**naturalization**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss123), citizenship is conferred on a person after birth, a process that has been outlined by Congress and extends to foreigners the same benefits given to native-born U.S. citizens. Naturalized citizens, however, cannot serve as president.

Until the 1970s, most people who were naturalized had been born in Europe. Reflecting changing patterns of immigration, Asia and Latin America are now the largest sources of new citizens. In fact, the number of naturalized citizens from Mexico has come close to matching those from all of Europe. In recent years, the number of new citizens going through the naturalization process has been close to one million a year (Baker [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib76)).

To become a naturalized U.S. citizen, a person must meet the following general conditions:

* ■ be 18 years of age;
* ■ have continually resided in the United States for at least five years (three years for the spouses of U.S. citizens);
* ■ have good moral character as determined by the absence of conviction of selected criminal offenses;
* ■ be able to read, write, speak, and understand words of ordinary usage in the English language; and
* ■ pass a test in U.S. government and history administered orally in English.

[**Table 4.4**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04tab4) offers the types of questions immigrants face on the citizenship test. This is a sample of the actual questions used; you must get six out of ten correct to pass. If a person fails, he or she can immediately retake it with different questions. If failed a second time, typically the person must wait 90 days to retake the test. As of 2013, the fee for applying for citizenship is $680, compared with $95 in 1998.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Although we often picture the United States as having a very insular, nativistic attitude toward foreigners living here, the country has a rather liberal policy toward people maintaining the citizenship of their old countries. Although most countries do not allow people to maintain dual (or even multiple) citizenships, the United States does not forbid it. Dual citizenship is most common when a person goes through naturalization after already being a citizen of another country or is a U.S.-born citizen and goes through the process of becoming a citizen of another country—for example, after marrying a foreigner (Department of State [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib346)).

The continuing debate about immigration reform often includes calls for some type of “amnesty” or pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants. Details in proposals vary but usually include proof of long-term residence in the USA, absence of criminal activity, and willingness to accept a waiting period before actual citizenship can occur. Critics of such proposals question the wisdom of “rewarding illegals” but also argue that if legal residency is acquired than their relatives will also apply for legal residency. Current policy as earlier noted has created long waiting periods for those abroad trying to join their relatives, but surveys also show that, as in 1986 when some type of amnesty was offered, not all qualified illegal immigrants will seek legal status. For example, in recent years only 46 percent of Hispanic immigrants eligible to naturalize have chosen to become citizens, compared with 71 percent of non-Hispanic immigrants. Typical difficulties with the English language and the costs of application serve as a barrier to the path to citizenship. Other special one-time programs since 1986 also show only about half taking advantage of naturalization (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib482)).

**Women and Immigration**

**4-7** Understand the special role of women in immigration.

Immigration is presented as if all immigrants are similar, with the only distinctions being made concerning point of origin, education, and employment prospects. Another significant distinction is whether immigrants travel with or without their families. We often think that historical immigrants to the United States were males in search of work. Men dominate much of the labor migration worldwide, but because of the diversified labor force in the United States and some policies that facilitate relatives coming, immigration to the United States generally has been fairly balanced. Actually, most immigration historically appears to be families. For example, from 1870 through 1940, men entering the United States exceeded women by only about 10 to 20 percent. Since 1950, women immigrants have actually exceeded men by a modest amount (Gibson and Jung [**2006**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib502)).

Immigration is a challenge to all family members. But immigrant women must navigate a new culture and a new country not only for themselves but also for their children, such as in this household in Colorado.

The second-class status women normally experience in society is reflected in immigration. Most dramatically, women citizens who married immigrants who were not citizens actually lost their U.S. citizenship from 1907 through 1922 with few exceptions. However, this policy did not apply to men (Johnson [**2004**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib661)).

Immigrant women face not only all the challenges faced by immigrant men but also additional ones. Typically, they have the responsibility of navigating the new society when it comes to services for their family and, in particular, their children. Many new immigrants view the United States as a dangerous place to raise a family and therefore remain particularly vigilant of what happens in their children’s lives.

Male immigrants are more likely to be consumed with work, leaving the women to navigate the bureaucratic morass of city services, schools, medical facilities, and even everyday concerns such as stores and markets. Immigrant women are often reluctant to seek outside help, whether they are in need of special services for medical purposes or they are victims of domestic violence. Yet immigrant women are more likely to be the liaison for the household, including adult men, to community associations and religious organizations (Hondagneu-Sotelo [**2003**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib608); Jones [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib666)).

Women play a critical role in overseeing the household; for immigrant women, the added pressures of being in a new country and trying to move ahead in a different culture heighten this social role.

**The Global Economy and Immigration**

**4-8** Illustrate the relationship of globalization with respect to immigrants.

Immigration is defined by political boundaries that bring the movement of peoples crossing borders to the attention of government authorities and their policies. Within the United States, people may move their residence, but they are not immigrating. For residents in the member nations of the European Union, free movement of people within the union is also protected.

Yet, increasingly, people recognize the need to think beyond national borders and national identity. As noted in [**Chapter 1**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch01), [**globalization**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss74) is the worldwide integration of government policies, cultures, social movements, and financial markets through trade, movement of people, and the exchange of ideas. In this global framework, even immigrants are less likely to think of themselves as residents of only one country. For generations, immigrants have used foreign-language newspapers to keep in touch with events in their home countries. Today, cable channels carry news and variety programs from their home countries, and the Internet offers immediate access to the homeland and kinfolk thousands of miles away.

**SPECTRUM OF INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Although it helps in bringing the world together, globalization has also highlighted the dramatic economic inequalities between nations. Today, people in North America, Europe, and Japan consume 32 times more resources than the billions of people in developing nations. Thanks to tourism, media, and other aspects of globalization, the people of less-affluent countries are aware of such affluent lifestyles and, of course, often aspire to enjoy them (Diamond [**2003**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib365)).

[**Transnationals**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss181) are immigrants who sustain multiple social relationships that link their societies of origin and settlement. Immigrants from the Dominican Republic, for example, not only identify themselves with Americans but also maintain very close ties to their Caribbean homeland. They return for visits, send remittances, and host extended stays of relatives and friends. Back in the Dominican Republic, villages reflect these close ties, as shown in billboards promoting special long-distance services to the United States and by the presence of household appliances sent by relatives. The volume of remittances worldwide is easily the most reliable source of foreign money going to poor countries, far outstripping foreign aid programs.

The presence of transnationals would be yet another example of pluralism, as illustrated in the Spectrum of Intergroup Relations. Since transnationals move back and forth, it is not unusual for any given moment that different generations of the same family will find themselves residing in different countries (Foner and Dreby [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib459)).

The growing number of transnationals, as well as immigration in general, directly reflects the world systems analysis we considered in [**Chapter 1**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch01). Transnationals are not new, but the ability to communicate and transfer resources makes the immigration experience today different from that of the nineteenth century. The sharp contrast between the industrial “have” nations and the developing “have-not” nations only encourages movement across borders. The industrial haves gain benefits from such movement even when they seem to discourage it. The back-and-forth movement only serves to increase globalization and help create informal social networks between people who seek a better life and those already enjoying increased prosperity.

The transnationals themselves maintain a multithreaded relationship between friends and relatives in the United Sates, their home country, and perhaps other countries where relatives and friends have resettled. Besides the economic impact of remittances described above, scholars are increasingly giving attention to “social remittances” that include ideas, social norms, and practices (religious and secular) throughout this global social network (Levitt and Jaworsky [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib777)).

**The Environment and Immigration**

**4-9** Interpret how immigration is related to the environment.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the public expressed growing concern on a variety of environmental issues, from water quality to global warming. As with so many other aspects of life, the environment and immigration are tightly linked.

First, environmental factors are behind a significant amount of world migration. Famine, typhoons, rising sea levels, expanding deserts, chronic water shortages, earthquakes, and so forth lead to cross-border migration. One estimate suggests up to 200 million people may move due to environmental factors between 2005 and 2050. [**Environmental refugees**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss52) are people forced to leave their communities because of natural disasters, or the effects of climate change and global warming. A particularly deadly aspect of this forced movement is that overwhelmingly the migration is by vulnerable poor people to developing countries ill-suited to accept the arrivals (International Organization for Migration [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib643); Meyers [**2005**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib901); Stern [**2007**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib688)).

Second, some environmentalists favor reducing or even ending United States population growth by imposing a much more restrictive immigration policy. The respected environmentalist group Sierra Club debated for several years whether to take an official position favoring restricting immigration. Thus far, the majority of the club’s members have indicated a desire to keep a neutral position rather than enter the politically charged immigration debate.

Yet others still contend for the United States to finally address environmental problems at home and become global environmental citizens and for the United States to stop population growth. Critics of this environmentalist approach counter that we should focus on consumption, not population (Barringer [**2004**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib84); CaFaro and Staples [**2009**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib207); National Public Radio [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib192)).

**Refugees**

**4-10** Restate the United States’ policies toward refugees.

[**Refugees**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss147) are people who live outside their country of citizenship for fear of political or religious persecution. Approximately 11 million refugees exist worldwide, enough to populate an entire “nation.” That nation of refugees is larger than Belgium, Sweden, or Cuba. The United States has touted itself as a haven for political refugees. However, political refugees have not always received an unqualified welcome.

The United States makes the largest financial contribution of any nation to worldwide assistance programs. As such, it resettles between 56,000 and 73,000 refugees annually and has hosted over one million refugees between 1990 and 2008. Following 9/11, procedures have become much more cumbersome for foreigners to acquire refugee status and gain entry to the United States. Many other much smaller and poorer nations have received much larger numbers of refugees, with Jordan, Iran, and Pakistan hosting more than one million refugees each (Martin and Yankay [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib725); United Nations High Commission on Refugees [**2008**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib177)).

**TABLE 4.5 Top Sources of Refugees**

| **2000**  | **2012**  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Bosnia-Herzegovina | 22,699 | Bhutan | 15,070 |
| 2. Yugoslavia (former) | 14,280 | Burma | 14,160 |
| 3. Vietnam |  9,622 | Iraq | 12,163 |
| 4. Ukraine |  8,649 | Somalia |  4,911 |
| 5. Russia |  4,386 | Cuba |  2,920 |
| Total of All Countries: | 85,076 |   | 58,179 |

*Source:* Martin and Yankay [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib848):3.

The United States, insulated by distance from wars and famines in Europe and Asia, has been able to be selective about which and how many refugees are welcomed. Since the arrival of refugees uprooted by World War II through the 1980s, the United States allowed three groups of refugees to enter in numbers greater than regulations would ordinarily permit: Hungarians, Cubans, and Southeast Asians.

Despite periodic public opposition, the U.S. government is officially committed to accepting refugees from other nations. In [**Table 4.5**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch04tab5), we consider the major sources of refugees. According to the United Nations treaty on refugees, which our government ratified in 1968, countries are obliged to refrain from forcibly returning people to territories where their lives or liberty might be endangered. However, it is not always clear whether a person is fleeing for his or her personal safety or to escape poverty. Although people in the latter category may be of humanitarian interest, they do not meet the official definition of refugees and are subject to deportation.

Refugees are people who are granted the right to enter a country while still residing abroad. [**Asylees**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm01_gloss14) are foreigners who have already entered the United States and seek protection because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country. This persecution may be based on the individual’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Asylees are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the United States. Asylum is granted to about 12,000 people annually.

Because asylees, by definition, are already here, they are either granted legal entry or returned to their home country. The practice of deporting people who are fleeing poverty has been the subject of criticism. The United States has a long tradition of facilitating the arrival of people leaving Communist nations, such as the Cubans. Mexicans who are refugees from poverty, Liberians fleeing civil war, and Haitians running from despotic rule are not similarly welcomed. The plight of Haitians is of particular concern.

Haitians began fleeing their country, often on small boats, in the 1980s. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepted many Haitians at sea, saving some of these boat people from death in their rickety and overcrowded wooden vessels. The Haitians said they feared detentions, torture, and execution if they remained in Haiti. Yet both Republican and Democratic administrations viewed most Haitian exiles as economic migrants rather than political refugees and opposed granting them asylum and permission to enter the United States. Once apprehended, the Haitians are returned. In 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court, by an 8–1 vote, upheld the government’s right to intercept Haitian refugees at sea and return them to their homeland without asylum hearings.

The devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti made the government reconsider this policy. Indeed, the United States halted deportations of 30,000 Haitians that were about to occur for at least 18 months. The moratorium also applied to the more than 100,000 Haitians believed to be living in the United States. As more residents of Haiti with U.S. citizenship or dual citizenship arrived from the island nation in the aftermath of the earthquake, the Haitian community increased. Despite continuing obstacles, the Haitian American community exhibits pride in those who have succeeded, from a Haitian American Florida state legislator and professional athletes to hip-hop musician Wyclef Jean. In fact, the initial earthquake refugees tended to come from the Haitian middle class or higher. Some even expressed annoyance at the quality of the public schools their children attended in America compared to the private ones in Haiti (Buchanan, Albert, and Beaulieu [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib164); Office of Immigration Statistics [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib983); Preston [**2010**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1086); Winerip [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib1390)).

New foreign military campaigns often bring new refugee issues. Large movements of Iraqis throughout the country and the region accompanied the occupation of Iraq, beginning in 2003. It is hoped that most will return home, but some want to relocate to the United States. As was true in Vietnam, many Iraqis who aided the U.S.-led mission have increasingly sought refuge in the West, fearing for their safety if they remain in Iraq or even in the Middle East. Gradually, the United States has begun to offer refugee status to Iraqis; some 39,000 arrived from 2010 through 2012 to create an Iraqi American community of 93,000. The diverse landscape of the United States has taken on yet another nationality group in large numbers (Asi and Beaulieu [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib62); Martin and Yankay [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib725)).

**Conclusion**

The immigrant presence in the United States can often be heard on the streets and the workplace as people speak in different languages, Check out your radio. As of 2011, radio stations broadcast in 35 languages other than English, including Albanian, Creole, Welsh, Yiddish, and Oji—a language spoken in Ghana. The Internet in 2013 expands it to over 90 languages via online radio stations aimed at the USA (Keen [**2011**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib692); Omniglot [**2013**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib996)).

Throughout the history of the United States, as we have seen, there has been intense debate over the nation’s policies that bring the immigrants who speak these and other languages to the country. In a sense, this debate reflects the deep value conflicts in the U.S. culture and parallels the “American dilemma” identified by Swedish social economist Gunnar Myrdal ([**1944**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/bm02bib922)). One strand of our culture—epitomized by the words “Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses”—has emphasized egalitarian principles and a desire to help people in their time of need. One could hardly have anticipated at the time the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in 1886 that more than a century later Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan immigrant, would be elected President of the United States.

At the same time, however, hostility to potential immigrants and refugees—whether the Chinese in the 1880s, European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, or Mexicans, Haitians, and Arabs today—reflects not only racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice but also a desire to maintain the dominant culture of the in-group by keeping out those viewed as outsiders. The conflict between these cultural values is central to the American dilemma of the twenty-first century.

The current debate about immigration is highly charged and emotional. Some people see it in economic terms, whereas others see the new arrivals as a challenge to the very culture of our society. Clearly, the general perception is that immigration presents a problem rather than a promise for the future.

Today’s concern about immigrants follows generations of people coming to settle in the United States. This immigration in the past produced a very diverse country in terms of both nationality and religion, even before the immigration of the last 60 years. Therefore, the majority of Americans today are not descended from the English, and Protestants are just more than half of all worshipers. This diversity of religious and ethnic groups is examined in [**Chapter 5**](http://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323151198/content/id/ch05).

**Summary**

* **1.** Immigration to the United States has changed over time from unrestricted to restricted, with the sending nations now in Latin America and Asia rather than Europe.
* **2.** Immigration began being regulated by the United States in the nineteenth century; the first significant restriction was the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.
* **3.** Subsequent legislation through the national origins system favored northern and western Europeans. Not until 1965 were quotas by nation largely lifted.
* **4.** Issues including the brain drain, population growth, mixed-status households, English-language acquisition, and economic impact influence contemporary immigration policy.
* **5.** Often more of a concern than legal immigration has been the continuing presence of a large number of illegal immigrants.
* **6.** Naturalization is a complex process that is still pursued by those abroad as well as by unauthorized immigrants.
* **7.** While immigrant men may typically dominate the workers, women play a critical role in the household formation and increasingly in the workforce.
* **8.** The worldwide integration of societies has been facilitated by transnationals who sustain multiple social relationships across borders.
* **9.** Environment affects and, in turn, is influenced by global immigration.
* **10.** Refugees present a special challenge to policymakers who balance humanitarian values against an unwillingness to accept all those who are fleeing poverty and political unrest.