

## Immigration Policy

We will cover:       History – how it has shaped our country  
                              Current system – complexities  
                              Debunk myths  
                              What are considerations for reform

### **1924 Immigration Act:**

National Origins System – restricted annual immigration to 2% of country's population living in the US in 1890 – primarily northern and western Europe so that most immigration was from Europe and Canada.

### **1965 Immigration and Nationality Act:**

-spurred by the Civil Rights movement  
-allowed 20,000 people from each country in the Eastern Hemisphere  
-this spurred dramatic change in racial and ethnic makeup of US since 1965  
(slowing birthrate in nonHispanic white population, self-identification)

1965: 84% White	2025: 58% White
4% Latino	20% Latino
11% Black	13% Black
1% Asian	6% Asian

### **Current System:**

- 1) Permanent immigrant visas, can lead to citizenship – 675,000 year
  - a. Reunification of families
  - b. Immigrants with skills that are valuable to US economy
  - c. Humanitarian Protections in immigration rules refers to granting permission to stay in a country due to compelling humanitarian reasons, even if the applicant doesn't qualify for refugee status or asylum. This protection is typically offered to individuals facing a real risk of serious harm in their home country due to

circumstances like widespread violence or conflict, without needing to demonstrate persecution based on specific grounds like race or religion.

- i. Biden Administration had such programs for 30,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans
- ii. No clear path to citizenship.

## 2) Refugees

- a. Congress and President annually develop a number for US Refugee Admissions Program cap often around 125,000.
- b. Refugees have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country.
- c. Leading countries in 2023 Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Afghanistan.
- d. After being in the country with a green card, refugees can apply for citizenship.

## 3) Undocumented immigrants

- a. Estimated 11 million in the US, primarily from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala.
- b. Contribute to the economy through employment and taxes (recent changes in social security numbers).
- c. Are ineligible for most social benefits and subject to deportation.
- d. Within a year of arrival, undocumented immigrants who qualify because they are being persecuted based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.
  - i. Asylees are protected from deportation, can work and access other immigrant benefits, and may qualify for a green card and citizenship over time.
  - ii. US immigration courts are significantly backed up - with over 3 million pending cases. Backlog has nearly tripled since 2020. Individuals can wait years to be heard.
- e. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals in 2021 provided temporary amnesty from deportation to undocumented immigrants who migrated to the US at young age. Still in courts.

## Deportation in the US

- 1) Deportations are when the US government orders a person to leave the country.
  - a. 1892 – 1997 – US deported 2.1 million people.
  - b. 2001-2008 George Bush, about 2.0 million people deported.
  - c. 2009-2017 Obama, about 3.2 million people deported.
  - d. More deportations under Biden administration than the first Trump administration.
  - e. Deportation is subject to due process in the US.
    - i. Individuals have the right to a hearing before a judge, the ability to challenge the deportation in court, and the right to be heard in their own defense.
    - ii. The Alien Enemies Act allows for deportation of individuals deemed to be associated with gangs or other groups during times of war or invasion, potentially bypassing due process.
    - iii. Individuals can be deported without a full hearing if they entered the U.S. without proper documents and have been in the country less than two years.

## Myths about immigrants:

### 1. Crime and immigration

A robust body of research shows that immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, are LESS likely to commit crimes than the US-born population. This is true at the national, state, county, and neighborhood levels, and for both violent and non-violent crimes.

### 2. Economic and Fiscal Consequences of immigration

- a. The impact of immigration on wages of native-born workers overall is small. Negative impact does occur for those native-born workers with the lowest levels of training and education.
- b. Recent immigrants reduce the employment rate of the prior generation of immigrants.
- c. Immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth, with large employers reaping most benefits.
- d. The federal government (up until now) has benefited by immigration through taxes. States and local governments bear more costs, including educating first generation children.

- e. The children of immigrants (second generation) are among the strongest economic and fiscal contributors in the US population, contributing more in taxes than their parents or the native-born population.
3. Immigration and housing prices
    - a. Immigrants may play a very small role in increasing housing prices in some areas, but the majority of the reason we're seeing increases in housing prices is other factors – slow construction, high interest rates, increase demand with more working at home, and increase in restrictive zoning laws across the country.

### Immigration Reform:

In the last three decades, Congress has made several attempts at crafting comprehensive legislation on immigration reform, but none have succeeded. Why have they failed – the complexity of the system means it touches so many areas that total membership never agrees on a comprehensive plan. Also, immigration policy is extremely complex and few members of congress understand the law and policy and how it actually operates which makes it challenging to have the deep knowledge necessary for writing legislation. The immigration system resists simple solutions.

What should we consider? Example of Denmark versus much of the rest of western Europe.

1. Improving conditions in countries of origin.
  - a. International effort
  - b. Example in Uganda
2. Streamlining and providing resources necessary to process asylum cases in a timely manner. Many people have been here for long periods of time before their cases come to court.
3. A healthy political debate over immigration will need to grapple with its complexities:
  - a. Immigration increases GDP in unequal ways, with the affluent enjoying more advantages (restaurant, landscaping, housecleaning) while poor and working-class people, including recent immigrants, bear more of the costs, holding down some wages, straining schools, increasing competition for housing.
  - b. Increases in immigration have been associated with increases in income inequality for complex reasons.

- c. Societies are more willing to fund generous social service programs as they feel social cohesion.
- 4. Clearly supporting everyone to feel pride in their culture is important – and very American – but integrating immigrants into communities may be important.  
Example: – Sackets Harbor where mother and three children were taken into custody by ICE. Population of 1,364 and nearly 1,000 people came out to support them. The community was supporting on of their own.
- 5. Border security – is it better to prevent crossing the border vs. deporting people.
- 6. Providing resources for education and healthcare needed. Providing resources to unskilled native-born communities affected by immigration.
- 7. Developing a visa system that reflects our values – family, jobs, etc.