

Immigration Phases

Phase 1 - (1607-1882)

Most immigrants had their passage sponsored by someone whom they worked as an indentured servant for seven years after arriving in the colonies. Only about 20% survived the seven years of indentured servitude because work conditions were so brutal. Later immigrants had their passage paid by ship captains, who held their belongings as ransom until they found a sponsor who would pay their passage in exchange for seven years of work. Life expectancy was much higher under this later system. There was very little or no protection for immigrants.

Phase 2 - (1882-1924)

This was called the Great Immigration. There were very few restrictions on immigration (proper paperwork, paid fare to America, had to have \$20 and pass a medical exam). European immigrants had to go through Ellis Island, New York. Chinese immigrants had to go through Angel Island, San Francisco and had to prove they were related to a Chinese person living in the US (huge immigration black market). All other immigrants did not have to go through any check point. The Mexico-US and Canadian-US borders did not have any check points.

Phase 3 – (1924-1964)

Immigration was based on nationality. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 established the total number of immigrants at 357,802 people and 3% of each nationality based on the 1910 census. The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 set the total number of immigrants at 165,000 and 2% of each nationality based on the 1890 census. The Customs and Border Patrol was established, but only had about 500 border officers to patrol the entire US-Mexican border.

Phase 4 – (1965-1986)

The Hart Cellar Act of 1965 changed immigration to be based on family ties and work skills (skilled labor) for a post-industrial society instead of nationality. It also allowed asylum for political refugees. The total number of immigrants was set at 120,000 people from the western hemisphere and 290,000 overall, allowing more Asian and Latin American immigrants into the US.

Phase 5 – (1986-2012)

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986) made it illegal to employ an illegal immigrant and made a pathway to citizenship for some undocumented immigrants. About 2.7 million undocumented immigrants became US citizens through IRCA. Border Patrol Agents were increased. The Immigration Act of 1990 increased the number of immigrants to 700,000 per year (in addition to children, work visas, etc.). It provided more paths of legal immigration, specifically for family members and those seeking asylum.

Phase 6? – (2012-Present)

Under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) children who came to the US as undocumented immigrants were protected from deportation and work authorization. President Biden reconfirmed DACA in 2022.