

BEYOND THE LABEL



Humanizing Immigrants, Refugees, Migrants,
Asylum Seekers, and Displaced Peoples

WHO EXACTLY ARE REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS, AND MIGRANTS?

The terms “refugee”, “immigrant”, “migrant”, and “asylum seeker” are used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their home countries and have crossed borders.

The terms “immigrant” and “migrant” are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish them since there is a legal difference.

(Source: International Rescue Committee IRC)

Refugee

A **refugee** is a person who has been forced to flee their home because of war, violence, or persecution — often without warning. They are unable to return home unless and until conditions in their native lands are safe.

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD NEVER FORCE ANYONE TO GO BACK TO A COUNTRY WHERE THEY ARE AT RISK OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. INSTEAD, REFUGEES SHOULD BE OFFERED A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE AND HAVE ACCESS TO WORK, EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE.

Immigrant

An **immigrant** is someone who makes a conscious decision to leave their home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there. Immigrants often go through a lengthy vetting process to immigrate to a

new country. Many become lawful permanent residents and eventually citizens.

Asylum Seeker

An **asylum seeker** is a person who is seeking international protection from dangers in their home country, but whose claim for refugee status hasn't been determined legally.

THOSE ARRIVING AT THE U.S. BORDER ARE OFTEN DEPICTED AS “ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS,” BUT IN REALITY, CROSSING AN INTERNATIONAL BORDER FOR ASYLUM IS NOT ILLEGAL AND AN ASYLUM SEEKER'S CASE MUST BE HEARD, ACCORDING TO U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL LAW.

Migrant

A **migrant** is someone who is moving from place to place (within their country or across borders), usually for economic reasons such as seasonal work. Similar to immigrants, they were not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence, but rather, are seeking better opportunities.

Why Should We Care About Them?

They Boost the Economy

At great personal risk, immigrants—including **Dreamers**, **DACA** recipients, and **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** holders—have played a crucial role in our economy. Furthermore, undocumented immigrants make up approximately **3.2%** of the country’s population, but the **7M** who are employed make up **4.4%** of the workforce.

They Pay Taxes

Undocumented immigrants and those with legal status pay over **\$23B** in income taxes, contributing to services like Social Security and Medicare, despite being prohibited from earning its benefits.



(Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)



(Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

They Put Their Lives t Risk

About **5M** undocumented immigrants and those who have legal status are considered essential workers, performing jobs that are necessary for maintaining the public health and safety of the country. They have put their lives at risk in construction, transportation, manufacturing, healthcare, grocery stores, farm work, meat packing plants, and more.

DID YOU KNOW?

About **5.5M** foreign-born workers — nearly a fifth of the immigrant workforce — work in education and health services.



They Are People, Just Like Us

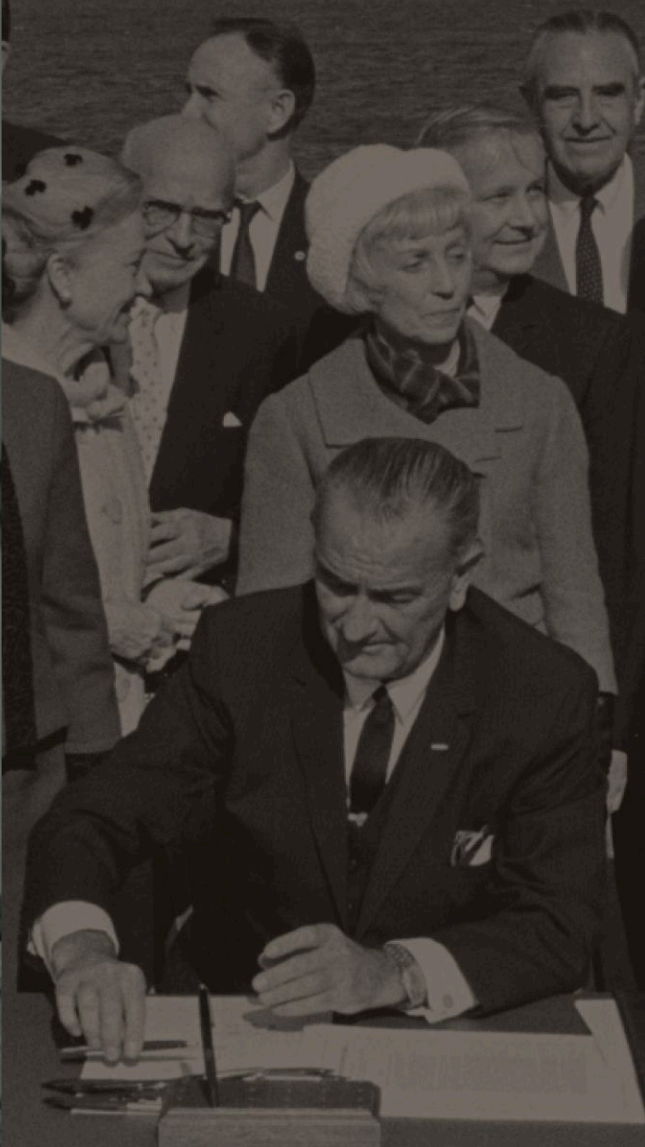
Whether they are undocumented or have legal status, it is important to remember that they are our neighbors, colleagues, family, and friends. Our nation is made up of immigrants, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and other displaced peoples. **It is our duty to respect, humanize, and welcome these communities.**





THE HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

1790



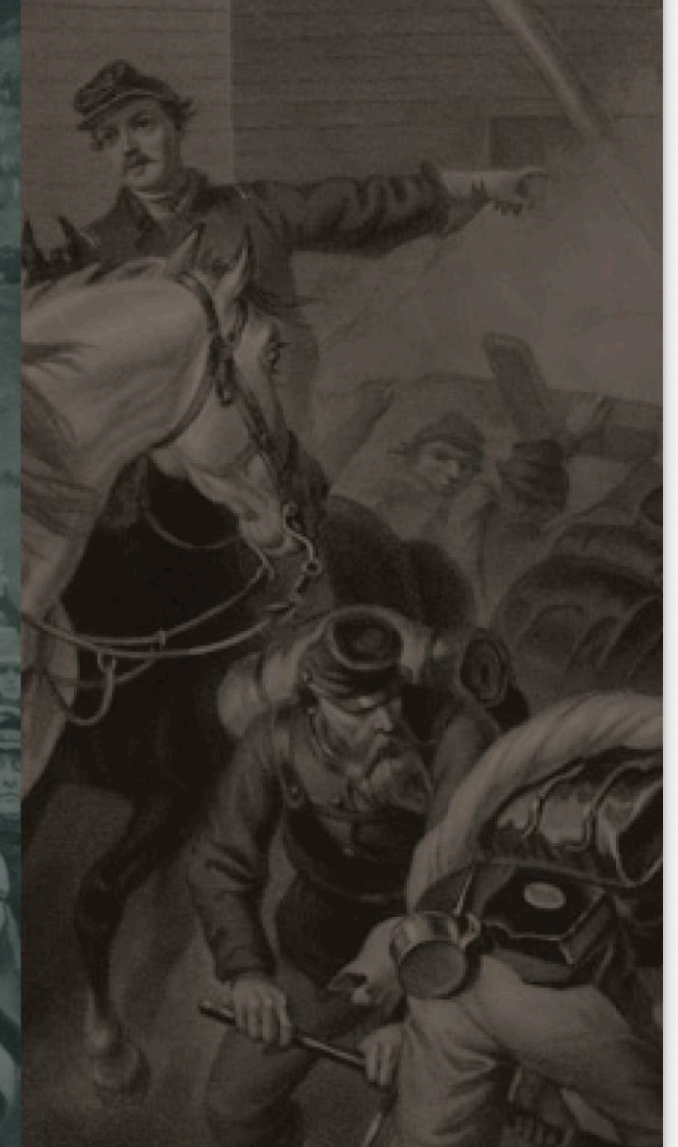
President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Immigration and Nationality Act into law.

1800



"The Famished" by John Falter, depicting an Irish immigration journey scene on the Grosse Isle, Canada.

1875



"Sherman's March to the Sea", depicts the American military campaign during the civil war.

White People of "Good Character" Granted Citizenship

Congress passes **The Naturalization Act of 1790**, which describes who should be granted U.S. citizenship.

This act allows any free white person of "good character," who has been living in the United States for two years or longer, to apply for citizenship.

Irish Immigration

Irish immigration to the United States began in the **1800s** and continued into the **20th century**.

The Great Irish Famine of 1845–1852 was a major factor in the large-scale emigration of Irish people.

Post Civil War (1865–1875)

During the **Post Civil War**, some states passed their own immigration laws.

In **1875** the Supreme Court declares that it's the responsibility of the federal government to make and enforce immigration laws.

Key Findings

AT A GLANCE

Selfless Sacrifices

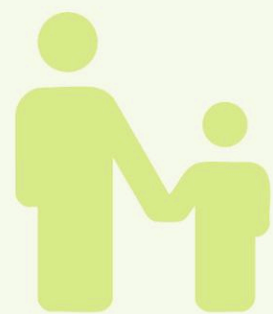
Most immigrants – regardless of where they came from or how long they’ve been in the U.S. – say they came to the U.S. for more opportunities for themselves and their children. The predominant reasons immigrants say they came to the U.S. are for better work and educational opportunities, a better future for their children, and more rights and freedoms. Other factors also showed them joining family members or escaping unsafe or violent conditions.

2023



About a third (34%) of immigrants say they have been criticized or insulted for speaking a language other than English since moving to the U.S., and say they have been told they should “go back to where you came from.”

(Source: The KFF Organization)



MORE THAN 5M

children under the age of 18 live with at least one undocumented immigrant parent.



117.3M

people worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.



4 IN 10

immigrants say they avoided talking to police, applying for jobs, or traveling because they didn’t want to draw attention to their or family member’s immigration status.

EDUCATION



FINANCE



EMPLOYMENT



SAFETY



Overall, a majority of immigrants say their educational opportunities (79%), financial situation (78%), employment situation (75%), and safety (65%) are better as a result of moving to the U.S.

Most immigrants are employed, and about half of all working immigrants have experienced discrimination in the workplace, such as lower pay, fewer advancement opportunities, being threatened or harassed, etc.

(Source: The KFF Organization)

Even with high levels of employment, one third (34%) of immigrants report problems affording basic needs like food, housing, and healthcare.

(Source: The KFF Organization)

DISPELLING THE COMMON MYTHS

⊗ MYTH

It's easy to enter and remain in the United States.

☑ REALITY

The legal immigration process is complicated and backlogged. Many of the rules change in response to current events and political considerations. Once an individual applies for citizenship, which cannot happen until at least **five years** after receiving a green card, they often have to **wait many years more**.

(Source: American Immigration Council)

⊗ MYTH

Immigrants are more likely to be criminals.

☑ REALITY

Statistically, immigrants residing in the U.S. are **less likely** to be criminals. While Fentanyl trafficking in the U.S. has been blamed on immigrants, this is false. In **2022**, U.S. Sentencing Commission data showed that **Americans** accounted for nearly **90%** of convicted fentanyl drug traffickers, and **96%** of fentanyl occurred at official points of entry.

(Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection)

ABOUT REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

⊗ MYTH

Immigrants take jobs from other Americans.

☑ REALITY

This is a falsehood often used to pit vulnerable groups against one another and divert focus from policies that exploit and undervalue workers. Far from stealing jobs, **immigrants often take on taxing jobs that other Americans are not willing to do**. This includes construction, transportation, public services, mining, agriculture, etc.

(Sources: Migration Policy Institute)

⊗ MYTH

Refugees and immigrants are a drain on the U.S. economy.

☑ REALITY

The support new arrivals receive is **extremely limited**. Most refugees and immigrants enter the U.S. workforce immediately upon becoming eligible and then go on to contribute tremendously to our economy, **giving back far more than they ever receive**. They expand the labor force, pay taxes, and contribute cultural diversity in our economy.

(Source: American Immigration Council)