

Finding the American Dream

In 1990, Eddie (Duc) and Linda (Lieu) Tran left Vietnam with their young son to start over in Columbus, Ohio. Sponsored by Linda's brother, who had fled Vietnam by boat during the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Trans were aware of the obstacles that faced them in their new country.

“Learning the English language and finding jobs were our biggest challenges. We listened to the radio and tried to converse as much as possible with our co-workers to learn English. Everyone was helpful. And we were determined never to receive welfare. Linda got a job as a tailor ten days after we arrived. I owned a manufacturing business in Vietnam, but it took me six months to get employed here. Times were hard, and we still work 12-hour days in our restaurant now. But the best thing about this country is freedom. If you work hard, you can achieve the American dream.”

—Eddie and Linda Tran, 2005

▲ The Trans today (above) with their sons and at their wedding in Vietnam (left).

Americans Look to the Future

Objectives

- Analyze the impact of immigration on American society.
- Summarize the causes and effects of changing demographics.

Terms and People

Immigration Act of 1990
bilingual education
Immigration and Control Act of 1986

affirmative action
Violence Against Women Act
privatize

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details

Record supporting details about the changing American society in a table like this one.

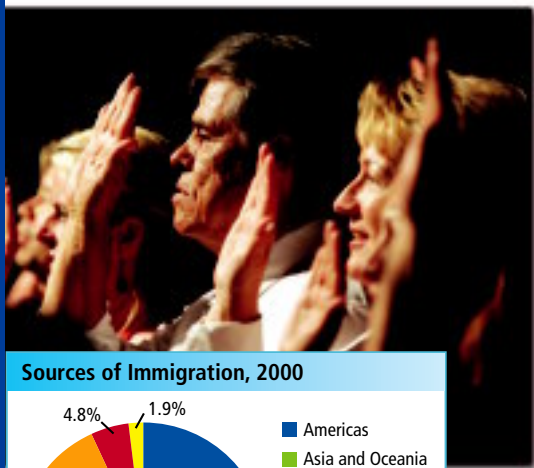
A Changing Society	
Immigration	Demographics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigration policies relax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family structures change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Why It Matters As the twenty-first century dawned, American society looked very different from the way it had during the previous century. It also faced different challenges. As the nation entered the new millennium, it sought ways to preserve its heritage while at the same time adapting to rapid social, political, and technological change. **Section Focus Question:** How was American society changing at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Immigrants Shape a Nation

For two centuries, American protection of religious and personal freedom, along with opportunities for social and economic mobility, has attracted huge numbers of immigrants. Over time, however, the nature of immigration has changed.

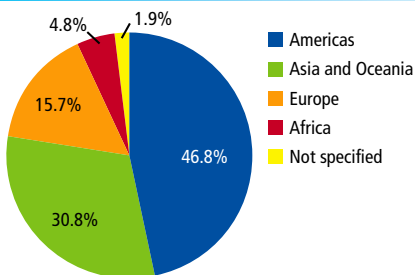
Immigration Policies Change For years, the government limited immigration to mainly northern and western Europeans. In the 1960s, however, laws began to relax immigration limitations. The **Immigration Act of 1990** increased quotas by 40 percent and eased most remaining restrictions. As a result, the period from the 1990s to the 2000s saw the largest numbers of immigrants in the country's history. During that time, almost one million immigrants arrived in America each year from all over the globe, representing a wide variety of cultures and religions. Today, immigrants account for more than 10 percent of the total American population.



Latinos Exert Their Influence Most of the new immigrants were Latinos. In 2000, 27 percent of the total immigrant population were Mexicans, with people from the Caribbean and Central America making up almost 17 percent. Mexicans and Central Americans settled largely in the South and Southwest. Caribbean immigrants, many of them Cubans, settled in Florida. The census of 2000 showed that a third or more of the residents of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California were Latinos.

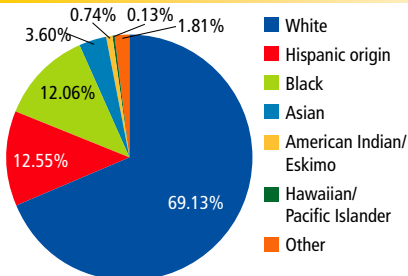
Like all immigrants, Latinos have varying educational and employment backgrounds. Often they are forced to take lower-paying jobs with no healthcare benefits. However, Latino immigrants have had a profound social, cultural, and political impact. By 2001, Latinos held about 5,000 political offices and 4 percent of the seats in Congress, primarily as Democrats. Cuban Americans in Florida, generally Republican, have had an enormous influence on American political policy concerning Cuba.

Sources of Immigration, 2000



SOURCE: Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2003

U.S. Population by Race, 2000



SOURCE: CensusScope

Graph Skills Every year, people from all backgrounds are sworn in as U.S. citizens. Study the two pie charts. What was the largest minority group in 2000? How does the Sources of Immigration graph support the data in the U.S. Population by Race graph?

A Surging Asian Population Asians make up the second-largest source of the new immigration. In 2000, they were nearly 23 percent of the total immigrant population, with the largest numbers coming from China, the Philippines, and India. The majority of Asian immigrants have settled in California, adding to the large Asian population in that state. As a group, Asian immigrants have had widely varying backgrounds, but overall they have the highest level of education. Some came to America with college degrees and marketable skills and found professional jobs. Others came from war-torn countries, with very little education.

Debating Immigration Immigration has long been debated in this country. People who would restrict it worry that immigrants take jobs and social services away from native-born Americans. They generally oppose **bilingual education**, in which students are taught in their native languages as well as in English, saying that immigrants must learn English in order to assimilate into American society. Proponents point out that immigrants contribute to the economy, often by taking jobs no one else wants. They also argue that with the U.S. birthrate falling immigrants help the country by maintaining its population.

Much of the debate concerns illegal immigrants. A large number of immigrants to the United States, especially Latinos, have come illegally. They labor in low-paying jobs, such as migrant farmwork, and receive no benefits. The **Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986** hoped to stop the flow of illegal immigrants by penalizing employers who hired them and by granting resident status to those residing in the United States since 1982. But illegal immigrants still regularly cross U.S. borders. How to treat these illegal—but often necessary—workers is an ongoing debate. In 2008, the Bush administration proposed changes that would make it easier for farm employers to legally hire immigrant workers. He also proposed a process by which illegal immigrants could eventually gain citizenship.

 **Checkpoint** How has immigration to America changed over time?

Changing American Demographics

At the beginning of 2000, Americans were on the move more than ever. Coastal cities as well as the Sunbelt, or the region of warm southern and southwestern states, saw rapid population and economic growth as people left the cold Northeast and the Rust Belt. Meanwhile, the family itself was changing.

The Changing Family In 1960, more than 70 percent of American households were headed by a working father and a nonworking mother, neither of whom had ever been divorced. By 2000, fewer than 15 percent of households fit this model. In 2000, one out of every two marriages ended in divorce, and in a high percentage of households both parents worked outside the home. Single-parent households were far more common, with a quarter of all children growing up in a single-parent household. The number of children born to unmarried mothers also rose. In 1960, only 5 percent of children were born out of wedlock. In 2000, one out of every four white babies, one out of every three Latino babies, and two out of every three African American babies were born to unmarried mothers.

Debating Affirmative Action In the 1960s, President Johnson introduced the idea of **affirmative action**, or improving opportunities for women and minorities by giving preference to them in school admissions and job applications. Since that time, affirmative action has been hotly debated. Proponents argue that without such initiatives, minorities cannot overcome generations of discrimination. Opponents say that the policy is unfair and discriminates against nonminorities. In 1996, Californians voted to end affirmative action in state hiring and education. That same year, a federal court struck down an affirmative action admissions program at the University of Texas. In 2003, however, the Supreme Court decided in two cases involving the University of Michigan that while race could not be the deciding factor in admissions, it could be one of several factors.

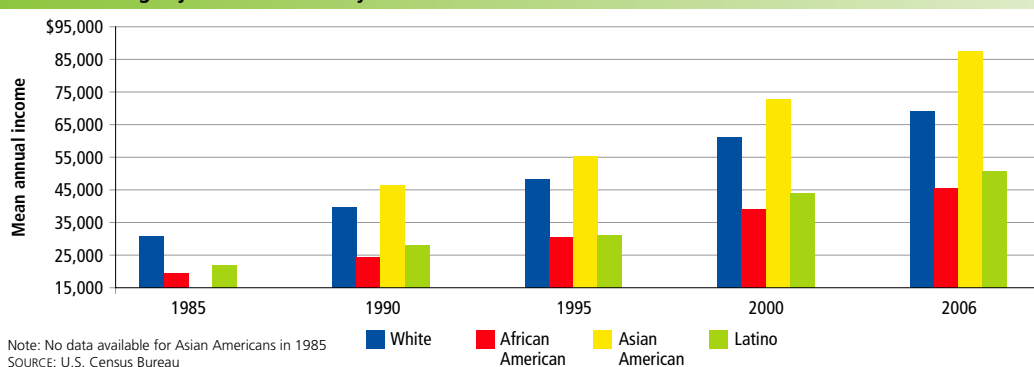
Expanding Rights for All At the turn of the new century, African Americans and women continued to make social and political gains. By 2002, 33 percent of African American families enjoyed incomes of at least \$50,000, placing them in the middle class. Also in 2002, 17 percent of African Americans over the age of 25 held bachelor's degrees. At the same time, legislation to enforce equal pay for equal work, address child care needs for working women, and end sexual harassment in the workplace has improved the lives of working women. Outside of the world of work, women have also achieved victories. Issues such as spouse abuse and date rape are now widely discussed. Incidents of violence against women are more often reported and more often punished than ever before.

Vocabulary Builder

discrimination—(dih skrihm ih NAY shuhn) *n.* unfair bias in the treatment of a particular group

Graph Skills While the income gap is slowly narrowing, wages among ethnic groups still vary widely. Study the graph. Which group enjoyed the highest income in the period shown? What might explain this?

Annual Earnings by Race and Ethnicity




The 1994 **Violence Against Women Act** increased federal resources to apprehend and prosecute men guilty of violent acts against women.

America Grows Older While the life expectancy of an American born in 1900 was less than 50 years, an American born in 2000 can expect to live to age 77. By 2000, older Americans tended to retire earlier, live longer, and exert more political influence. These factors have strained the country's social welfare system, especially Social Security and Medicare. In 1960, the federal government spent less than \$100 billion on social welfare. By 2003, the amount had increased to \$1.4 trillion.

With the large baby-boom generation reaching retirement age, the issue of elder care has become critical. Falling birthrates over the past two decades have meant that when the huge population of baby boomers retires, there will not be enough workers to cover their Social Security benefits. Politicians have been debating how to deal with this impending reality. In his second term, President Bush called for **privatizing** Social Security by allowing younger workers to invest some of their earnings in individual retirement accounts. Critics defeated the measure, saying that it would put younger workers at the mercy of fluctuating stock market returns without addressing the shortfall of funds. As Americans get older, the debate continues.

Facing the Future As the new millennium began, Americans looked back at a century of great change and technological progress. Looking forward, immense challenges remain. Americans still struggle with basic problems with which societies throughout history have struggled, as well as some new problems unique to the time. Yet with its greatest resource—the American people—the United States faces this new century with strength and optimism.

 **Checkpoint** What challenges have changing American demographics brought?

HISTORY MAKERS

George H. W. Bush (born 1924) and William Jefferson Clinton (born 1946)

Both presidents Bush and Clinton (below with the president of Indonesia) have spent much of their lives as public servants. Former political opponents, the two men formed an organization to bring relief to Southeastern Asians in the wake of the 2004 Asian tsunami. Touring the United States, the men raised millions of dollars by appealing to Americans to contribute to tsunami relief. A year later, Bush and Clinton went into action again in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The former Presidents raised \$100 million dollars and immediately set to work rebuilding and providing economic and educational opportunities to Americans devastated by the disaster. At the end of 2005, the former Presidents remarked that "the generosity of people never ceases to amaze us."



SECTION

5 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-2051

Comprehension

- 1. Terms and People** For each term below, write a sentence explaining its significance to American society in the twenty-first century.
 - Immigration Act of 1990
 - bilingual education
 - Immigration and Control Act of 1986
 - affirmative action
 - Violence Against Women Act
 - privatize

- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details** Use your completed table to answer the Section Focus Question: How was American society changing at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: List Details** You are writing an essay that analyzes the American issue of education and American society. List details from this section that support your analysis.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Draw Inferences** How can a nation's immigration policies affect its economy?
- 5. Identify Central Issues** Why is an aging population a problem for a society?