

A brief timeline of American immigration policy and its effect on Jewish community

Year	American immigration policy	What this policy did	Effect on Jewish community	Effect on other communities
Pre-1900	Immigration Acts (1875, 1882, 1891)	Barred the admission of criminals, prostitutes, "lunatics," "idiots," those "likely to become a public charge" and established head tax on immigrants	Barred some immigrants, but generally not well enforced	Barred some immigrants, but generally not well enforced
	Chinese exclusion acts (1882 and 1888)		No direct effect	Severely limited Chinese immigration; halved Chinese population in U.S.
Early 1900s	Immigration Act (1903)	Barred polygamists and anarchists	Anti-anarchist law aimed at foreign-born (specifically Jewish) radicals.	Anti-polygamist law aimed at Mormons
	Gentlemen's Agreement (1907)	Limited Japanese immigration	No direct effect	Virtually cut off Japanese immigration
	Immigration Act (1917)	Created literacy test (in any language) for admission; barred almost all Asians	Though goal was to filter out Eastern European (including Jewish) and Southern European immigrants, these immigrants turned out to be more literate than expected	Failed to have intended negative impact on Southern and Eastern European Immigrants

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1920s	Reed-Johnson Act (1924)	Restricted immigration from each (European) country to percentage of people of that nationality living in the U.S. in 1890	Drastically restricted Jewish immigration; made it virtually impossible for refugees from Nazi Germany to obtain visas	Drastically reduced immigration from southern and eastern Europe; Barred Asian immigrants
1940s	Bracero Program (1943)	Brought Mexican workers to fill wartime jobs	No direct effect	Brought several million Mexican workers into the U.S.; led to the Farmworkers movement
	War Brides Act (1945)	Allowed American soldiers to bring home wives married overseas	No direct effect	100,000 spouses entered US after WWII and the Korean war; 1,000,000 more after Vietnam war
	Displaced Persons Acts (1948 and 1950)	Allowed those displaced by WWII to enter the U.S.	Allowed between 60,000-80,000 Jewish survivors to enter U.S.	Allowed about 330,000 others displaced by Nazis—mostly Eastern Europeans-- to enter U.S.
1950s	Refugee Relief Act (1953) and Refugee-Escapee Act (1957)	Extended the definition of "refugee" to include those living in communist countries	Allowed Jews from the Soviet Union to enter the United States	Granted visas to about 190,000 people—mostly Germans, Italians, and Soviet Union "escapees"

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1960s	Hart-Celler Act (1965)	Eliminated national origins quotas; gave preference to family members of U.S. citizens, people with needed job skills, and refugees from communist countries	Allowed about 100,000 Soviet Jews to enter (Soviet government allowed about 250,000 Jews out in 1970s; about 140,000 of these went to Israel)	Allowed increased numbers of immigrants who had been negatively affected by national origins quotas (mostly Latino and Asian immigrants) Granted between 250,000 and 1,000,000 visas a year between 1960s and 1990s
	Cuban Refugee Act (1966)	Permitted undocumented Cubans to gain permanent residence in US without proving refugee status	More than 10,000 Cuban Jews emigrated to the United States in the 1960s	Approximately 400,000 Cubans immigrated between 1959 (when Castro came to power) and 1970
1980s	Refugee Act (1980)	Created category of "asylee"— someone who applies for refugee status while already on U.S. soil	No direct effect	Granted asylum to approximately 300,000 Cubans between 1981 and 2000, as well as to Haitians and others escaping violence or political turmoil

	Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986)	Allowed immigrants who had illegally resided in US since 1982 to legalize their status; allocated 5,000 visas/year for those negatively affected by 1965 law (the lottery); allowed legalization of migrant workers; Prohibited employers from knowingly hiring workers not authorized to work in the United States; Increased border enforcement;	No direct effect	Approximately 2.68 million people received permanent residence status (70% Mexican, 20% from Central and South America); granted large number of visas to Irish immigrants (40% of new visas created); led to increased number of deportations of undocumented residents
1990s	Immigration Act (1990)	Removed political tests for visa applicants; raised number of immigrants to be admitted to cap of 700,000 plus 50,000 immigrants and 10,000 asylees; removed preference for Irish immigrants; created more employment-based visas	No direct effect	Allowed in increased numbers of immigrants from Eastern Bloc and African countries; granted "temporary protected status"— exemption from deportation to people from war-torn countries-- to hundreds of thousands of

				Latin American and many African refugees
	Illegal Immigration Reform and Individual Responsibility Act (1996)	Restricted ability of legal (but not naturalized) residents to get public assistance (specifically food stamps and SSI); increased border control; authorized construction of barrier at Mexican border; increased penalties for immigration violations	No direct effect	Made it more difficult and dangerous for immigrants to enter United States