



New Americans Columbus Diversity Today

Historical Context and Overview

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

– Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants, but patterns of immigration have changed over time as global dynamics and U.S. policies intersected. The patterns of immigration evident in the U.S. today are largely a result of changes created by the Immigration Act of 1965. The act abolished the use of quotas based on country of origin. Previous quotas established in the 1920s ensured that immigration was primarily reserved for those coming from Northern and Western Europe.

The Immigration Act of 1965 produced a profound and lasting demographic change in the U.S. In 1960, 56 percent of immigrants were from Europe. By 2010, 90 percent of immigrants came from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The total number of U.S. foreign-born residents increased from 9.6 million in 1965 to 45 million by 2015. In 1965, immigrants made up about only 5 percent of the American population. Today, immigrants are about 14 percent of the population.

The diverse make-up of Columbus mirrors broader national trends in immigration and population demographics. More than 100 languages are spoken in Columbus today, and one in six residents are first or second generation immigrants – a reflection of the city's long tradition of cultural diversity. Immigrants and resettled refugees have enriched the city. They have brought new cultural practices—languages, religions, art, music, and food. Many have also used their entrepreneurial spirit to revitalize the economies of Columbus communities.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's Learning Standards: Social Studies

Grade 3

Content Statement 3. Local communities change over time.

Content Statement 8. Communities may include diverse cultural groups.

Grade 4

Content Statement 13. The population of the United States has changed over time, becoming more diverse. Ohio's population has become increasingly reflective of the cultural diversity of the United States.

HS American History

The continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migrations from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, and the increase in immigration resulting from passage of the 1965 Immigration Act have had social and political effects.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the factors that have contributed to the diversity of Columbus today.
- Discuss the diverse experiences of immigrants living in Columbus today.
- Explain the impact of immigrants on the economy of Columbus.
- Analyze the challenges of living as an immigrant in the United States today.

Discussion Questions

1. What statistics in the segment show the diversity of Columbus today?
2. What conditions in other countries have led to refugee resettlements in Columbus?
3. How do the experiences of various groups of immigrants differ from one another? What experiences can you relate to? What similar life experiences have you had?
4. How have immigrants and refugees contributed to the economy of Columbus? What impact have they made on the revitalization of areas such as the Morse Road corridor?
5. What difficulties and barriers do immigrants often face when trying to earn a living or start a business in the United States today?

Extension Activities

- Conduct a survey of your school or neighborhood to track the number of languages spoken, religions practiced, and countries of origin. Compile the data in a spreadsheet and create charts, graphs, and maps and to show the diversity of your neighborhood.
- Use Google maps to identify restaurants and grocery stores in the city that serve the international community of Columbus. Sample various foods and recipes, and create an international food festival at your school.
- Interview a first or second generation immigrant in your community and record an oral history account of their experiences.

Additional Resources

- President Lyndon B. Johnson's Remarks at the Signing of the Immigration Bill, Liberty Island, New York, October 3, 1965 - <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson/timeline/lbj-on-immigration>
- Columbus: Not What You Thought - https://youtu.be/5q0XIm_9-T4