**U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY**

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| **Three Possible Causes of Biggest U.S. Population Boom Ever** |



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| [**Click here**](http://www.numbersusa.com/PDFs/TraditionalLevelsofUSImmigration.pdf) **to view the history of Traditional Levels of Immigration in the U.S. prepared by NumbersUSA. (PDF)**[**Click here**](http://www.numbersusa.com/overpopulation/immtrad.html) **for HTML version**  |

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| **Our Immigration Traditions** |

What IS our traditional immigration? Well, nobody can say there is just one definition. Because immigration has always had wide swings, there is no level that predominated throughout our history. But by running averages over various periods, we can get a sense of traditional averages in which there were long enough and deep enough lulls to handle previous peaks, etc.**Here are some options for looking at our traditions:**

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| **OUR NATIONAL TRADITION *UNTIL THE 1965 ACT RADICALLY CHANGED THE RULES***  |
| **1776-1965: 230,000 per year average**We became a nation with the Declaration of Independence in 1776, so that makes a legitimate starting point. And because the 1965 Act so radically changed the numbers, it is fair to talk about what went before as being our traditions -- especially since the promoters of the Act promised that it would not raise immigration numbers. |

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| **OUR FIRST 200 YEARS TRADITION** |
| **1776-1976: 250,000 per year average**This provides a nice rounded period to claim for our tradition from the founding of our nation to its bicentennial 200 years later. It encompasses the 1972 year in which American women adopted a replacement-level fertility rate that would on its own ensure that the country's population would stop growing and stabilize (if immigration were in balance). |

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| **OUR NEW NATION TRADITION** |
| **1776-1819: 6,500 per year average**This was the flow of immigrants when the new nation was trying to populate Eastern frontiers to push back the indigenous peoples.These statistics come from the work of Prof. Vernon Briggs, labor economist and historian from Cornell University. He has done more than any scholar to estimate the level of immigration during the emerging nation period before records were kept. ALL OF THE IMMIGRATION TOTALS FROM 1820 THROUGH THE PRESENT ARE FROM FEDERAL IMMIGRATION RECORDS THAT WERE PROVIDED BY THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE (NOW THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY). |

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| **OUR CONTINENTAL EXPANSION TRADITION** |
| **1820-1879: 162,000 per year average**This marked the first period for which there are official government records. Immigration was used to try to settle all the frontiers of the now continental nation. It was this level of immigration that succeeded in sectioning off the land of virtually the entire country, driving the Indians into reservations, decimating the buffalo, plowing under the prairies. Just after this period after the 1890 Census, demographers declared that the population had grown and spread out so much that there no longer was any frontier in the U.S. Never in history had such a sustained numerical level of immigration filled one country. |

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| **OUR GREAT WAVE/INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TRADITION** |
| **1880-1924: 584,000 per year average**Based on faster and safer transportation and a virtually insatiable appetite for cheap foreign labor to expand their industries, the Robber Barons of the Guilded Age more than tripled the level of immigration, using it to keep wages for all American workers low, to bust unions and to keep freed slaves from moving off the South's plantations to take jobs in the North. The industrialists ships were in perpetual motion bringing new workers from other lands. The net immigration during this period was considerably lower, though, than the nearly 600,000 average because scores of thousands of immigrants went back home every year, unable to handle the living and working conditions of America during that time. |

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| **OUR RISE-OF-THE-MIDDLE-CLASS, END-OF-MASS-IMMIGRATION TRADITION** |
| **1925-1965: 178,000 per year average**Based on the excesses of the Great Wave, Congress severely limited the numerical levels of immigration and declared finished the ages of using immigration to fill frontiers or to provide masses of unskilled labor to factories and farms. It was during these 40 years that most Americans -- aided by tighter labor markets -- moved into the middle class for the first time. |

**Origin of the 250,000 figure for traditional immigration**Approximately 250,000 per year always seems like it the most accurate way of describing our immigration tradition before the 1965 Act reopened Mass Immigration.All of those very different numerical traditions shown above average out to an overall tradition before the 1965 Act (that our movement is sworn to overturn) of around a quarter-million immigrants a year.It also is a level that is part of our very recent immigration tradition, at time when nearly all Americans told pollsters they felt good about immigration. As it turns out, 250,000 is almost exactly the average of the 1945-1970 quarter century that ran from the end of WWII to the beginning of population-stabilization-level fertility shortly after the passage of the 1965 Act.**Origin of the 300,000 figure for traditional immigration**It is unclear where the 300,000 figure that is often referenced as our traditional average came from. It may be based on our immigration tradition after we started keeping federal records (1820) and until the 1965 Act. The average for that 145-year period was about 295,000. That also coincidentally happens to be almost exactly the level of immigration in 1965 when Congress changed the law and inadvertently unleashed levels of immigration totally out of proportion to our immigration tradition to that point.**Our Mass Immigration Tradition since the inadvertent effects of the 1965 act have given us these two periods:**

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| **THE POST-1965 CHAIN MIGRATION WAVE** |
| **1966-1989: 507,000 per year average**The 1965 Act was not intended to raise immigration from the around 300,000 year level of 1965 because there were no new frontiers to populate or massive factories needing unskilled labor. Inadvertently, though, the Act led to an ever growing chain of family connections so that the average of the next quarter century was nearly as high as the Great Wave which had itself been so totally different from all the rest of U.S. immigration history. |

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| **THE NEW GUILDED AGE OF MASS IMMIGRATION** |
| **1990-2005: 1,000,000+ per year average**By 1990, major industries were addicted to cheap foreign labor that enabled them to keep wages down for all Americans. A growing class of conspicuously affluent Americans depended on a foreign servant class and ensured that immigration remained at DOUBLE the level of the Great Wave prompted by the Robber Barons a century earlier. Legal immigration crossed the million-a-year mark at the beginning of this period and averaged above a million ever since. |

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