

## Why do immigrants come to the United States of America?

This year from January through August 2020, we have been hearing commercials on TV encouraging people to fill out their **census**. The census will count people who are citizens and even those who immigrated here and are not yet citizens. Have you ever wondered why people choose to **immigrate** to America? The answer to this question lies in the history of this country, because the history of the United States is deeply related to **immigration**.

Some of the **push factors**, reasons people **emigrate** or leave their country, are because their don't experience political and religious freedom, they are persecuted or treated unfairly, by their **native** government. They may be unable to find work. There are also people who are adventurers, wanderers, or are fortune seekers.

Immigrants built up the United States from the very beginning. This country was, and continues to be a **diverse** country of **ethnic** and cultural groups. Our earliest colonial history was brought together by a melting pot of English, German, Swedes, and the Dutch. Other groups such as the Irish and Chinese who came to America, eventually helped build our transcontinental railroad. Our cultural **diversity** still continues today with people from throughout the world from six of our seven continents.

The **pull factors** or reasons why they specifically chose to come to the US are wide and varied. Many want to live in freedom, to practice their religion freely, or to make better lives for themselves and their children.

Some people already have members of their family residing in this country, and desire reunification. Through family-sponsored **immigration**, a U.S. **citizen** can sponsor his or her foreign-born spouse, parent, minor, and adult married and unmarried children, and brothers and sisters.

Some **immigrants** come to the U.S. because of employment opportunities. Through employment-based immigration, a U.S. employer can sponsor an individual for a specific position where there is a demonstrated absence of U.S. workers.

But one of the biggest **pull factors** is prosperity. For decades, economic growth has easily surpassed population growth, giving the U.S., and much of the rest of the world, both more people and more prosperity. Simply put, the desire for a better life somewhere other than the current residence. The United States offers that better life they wish for.

After they get here, **immigrants** start contributing to the economy of this country. According to the US **census**, our newest **citizens** "wear" many hats in American society. They are family members, students, workers,



business owners, investors, clergymen, and members of the armed services, to name just a few of their roles. According to a very recent study by the *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine*, it was found that in all their combined roles, immigrants make indispensable contributions to the economy. They compose an increasingly essential proportion of the workforce.

The study also found that **immigrants** are a plus for the economy. **Immigrants** and their children bring long-term economic benefits to the United States as a whole. Immigrants add about \$10 billion each year to the U.S. economy.

The ideas of a new beginning for immigrants may often remind us of the Statue of Liberty, an amazing **cultural landmark**. To many an immigrant it represents our welcoming spirit to newcomers. The words of a poem written by Emma Lazarus and mounted inside the pedestal of the statue proclaim,

"... *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!*"

### Think About It:

1. Explain what would be the biggest reason you would ever leave the United States.
2. Explain whether you think people make an easy decision to leave their native country.
3. Explain whether you think the policy of **family-sponsored immigration**, a U.S. citizen can sponsor his or her foreign-born spouse, parent, minor, and adult married and unmarried children, and brothers and sisters is a good idea.
4. Explain whether you think the policy of **employment-based immigration**, a U.S. employer can sponsor an individual for a specific position where there is a demonstrated absence of U.S. workers is a good idea.
5. Explain whether you think the United States has a welcoming spirit to immigrants.
6. Explain whether you think there should be a limit on the number of people who come to the United States each year.
7. How does the article connect with what we are learning in class?

