

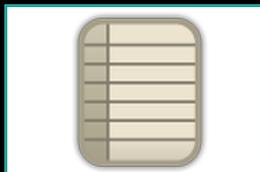
3.3 Coming to America

In what ways did the American Dream become a reality for immigrants to the United States?

Explore

Waves of Immigration

Why did immigrants come to the United States?



Coming to America: Push / Pull Chart

As you read page 1, use the Push / Pull Chart to analyze the push and **pull factors** that led to immigration to the United States.

By the mid-1800s, the Industrial Revolution had created major changes in the United States. Cities and urban centers grew as more people moved from the rural United States, mainly in search of work. In 1870, 52 percent of Americans worked on farms. By 1890, this number had dropped to 43 percent, and by 1920 it had plummeted to 29 percent.

The changes that were occurring were not just a result of people moving from the countryside. People from other countries were also flocking to American cities. This trend was evident in New York City. In 1890, New York City's population was 1.5 million. By 1920, the city's population had reached more than 5.6 million. The promise of jobs and a better life combined with **push factors** at home—such as poverty, famine, religious persecution, and political upheaval—fueled massive waves of immigration to the country beginning in the middle of the 1800s. This first wave of immigrants came mostly from England, Ireland and Germany.

Immigration from other parts of Europe increased in the 1880s and after. By 1900, immigrants from Italy, Russia, and southern and eastern Europe were arriving to the United States in record numbers. When Russian ruler Czar Alexander II was killed in 1881, some non-Jewish Russian citizens blamed the czar's assassination on the Jewish population in the region. In response, a series of violent anti-Jewish riots, called pogroms, swept across the Russian Empire between 1881 and 1884. As a result, some 200,000 Russian and Eastern European Jews came to the United States to escape religious persecution by 1890. Even more would come in later decades.

At the same time, Italians seeking economic opportunities also moved to the United States. Earlier, Italian immigrants had primarily been northern Italian business owners and tradespeople looking for new markets for their products and services. However, these later immigrants were commonly poor farmers and peasants from southern Italy and the island of Sicily.

Italian emigration rose in 1861 after Italian unification brought stability to the country and improvements in medicine and hygiene spurred population growth. However, this success was not matched by Italy's economy and food supply; industrialization was far too slow to support Italy's growing population. People had to choose between leaving and starving. Often, the young and middle-aged men left first—if they were fortunate enough to afford a transatlantic ticket. Once in the United States, they hoped to earn and save enough money to buy passage for the rest of the family.

During this time period, many Slavs also emigrated from eastern and central Europe. In the first decade of the 1900s, more than 2 million people came to the United States fleeing ethnic discrimination and political repression in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Many other immigrants came from Europe as well—notably from Greece, Romania, Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, and Scandinavia. Between 1900 and 1920 alone, some 14.5 million immigrants arrived on the shores of the United States.

Chinese immigrants traveled to California in search of wealth after word of the gold rush spread. By 1851, 25,000 Chinese had made the long journey only to find hard work and little gold. Competition between Americans, Chinese, and Europeans made the Chinese look for employment elsewhere, including on the railroads and in the service industry.