

Immigration recommendations of every blue-ribbon federal commission since 1969

[Rockefeller Commission Report on Population Growth and the American Future, 1969](#)

The Rockefeller Commission recommended that annual immigration be [capped at 400,000](#) per year¹ (a minority of the members recommended reducing immigration by 10 percent every year until it was reduced to the 1925-1965 average of 178,000 per year²).

U.S. Population 1969: 202,677,000

[Persons obtaining Legal Resident Status \(LPR\) 1969](#): 358,579³

The commission concluded:

"After two years of concentrated effort, we have concluded that, in the long run, no substantial benefits will result from further growth of the Nation's population, rather that the gradual stabilization of our population through voluntary means would contribute significantly to the Nation's ability to solve its problems. We have looked for, and have not found, any convincing economic argument for continued population growth. The health of our country does not depend on it, nor does the vitality of business nor the welfare of the average person."

[Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, 1978](#)

The recommendations by the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy⁴, chaired by Reverend Theodore Hesburg of Notre Dame University (and previous chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission), called for a "sound, coherent [and] responsible immigration and refugee policy" including:

¹ Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. Chapter 13: Immigration (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972). https://www.population-security.org/rockefeller/013_immigration.htm

² Roy Beck, *The Case Against Immigration* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p. 99. <https://numbersusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TheCaseAgainstImmigrationRoyBeck.pdf>

³ Department of Homeland Security, Office of Homeland Security Statistics, Lawful Permanent Residents Annual Flow Report. Accessed April 25, 2025. <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/lawful-permanent-residents/annual-flow-report>

⁴ The Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest, final report, 1981. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED211612.pdf>

- An annual ceiling of 350,000 numerically limited immigrant visas with an additional 100,000 visas available for the first five years to account for backlog;
- Fully automated system of non immigrant document control be established by Immigration and Naturalization Services to track aliens and verify departure; and
- Increased Border Patrol funding to firmly enforce the law.

U.S. Population 1978: 222,585,000

[Persons obtaining LPR 1978](#): 589,810⁵

President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, 1993

A quarter of a century ago, national environmental groups - including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club – served on President Clinton's Task Force on Population and Consumption, which **recommended** Congress regulate immigration (which was and is projected to drive the majority of future U.S. population growth) to allow for population stabilization⁶.

- “The size of our population and the scale of our consumption are essential determinants of whether or not the United States will be able to achieve sustainability.”
- “...tremendous progress has been made in reducing pollution and enhancing efficiency. Nonetheless, with the world's largest economy, the United States consumes enormous amounts of resources and still generates more wastes of all kinds. In addition, steady population growth has been a major force driving up the use of many resources.”
- “Recommendation: Develop immigration and foreign policies that reduce illegal immigration, while researching the links between demographic change and sustainable development.”

"This is a sensitive issue," they wrote, "but reducing immigration levels is a necessary part of population stabilization and the drive toward sustainability."

U.S. Population 1993: 258,799,753

[Persons obtaining LPR 1978](#): 903,916⁷

"As a matter of public debate, immigration is a sensitive and explosive issue, and both legal and illegal immigration must be addressed with great sensitivity and care in order

⁵ Department of Homeland Security

⁶ The President's Council on Sustainable Development, Task Force on Population and Consumption, 1993. https://clintonwhitehouse3.archives.gov/PCSD/Publications/TF_Reports/pop-exec.html

⁷ Department of Homeland Security

to advance the debate. We acknowledge these impediments to easy and informal dialogue, and we urge that participants take appropriate care so that a reasoned discussion of immigration and the American future can begin. We believe that reducing current immigration levels is a necessary part of working toward sustainability in the United States." - [President's Council on Sustainable Development](#), established in 1993 to find ways "to bring people together to meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing the future."

[U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, 1990-1997](#)

This bi-partisan commission, chaired by the late Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-Texas), made the most thorough examination of the impact of U.S. immigration policies of any federal commission to date. The final recommendations were presented to Congress and President Clinton in 1997 (more than six years after the commission was formed). Their recommendations to create a "credible, coherent immigrant and immigration policy" and a "credible, efficient naturalization process" included setting an immigration admissions level of 550,000 per year, to be divided as follows⁸:

- Nuclear family immigration 400,000;
- Skill-based immigration 100,000;
- Refugee resettlement 50,000.

U.S. Population 1990: 250,132,000

U.S. Population 1997: 272,912,000

Persons obtaining LPR 1990: 1,535,872

Persons obtaining LPR 1997: 797,847⁹

⁸ U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, *Becoming an American: Immigration and Immigrant Policy*, 1997. <https://www.numbersusa.com/u-s-commission-on-immigration-reform-full-report/>

⁹ Department of Homeland Security