

Discuss the impact that a socioeconomic issue has had on a world power you have studied.

A socioeconomic issue that has had an impact on the USA is immigration. Over the years there has been much debate about its impact. Some argue that it has had a positive impact in that it adds cultural diversity to the country while others argue that there is a huge cost to American society in terms of welfare benefits. Views on immigration have changed much since 9/11 and many Americans feel that it is a national security issue. Illegal immigration is also a huge issue in America and there are different views on its social and economic impact on American citizens.

Historically, the USA has a rich history of immigration. Modern America was founded by immigrants with people drawn from all over the world in the hope of achieving the American Dream and it is therefore argued that it would be hypocritical to deny others the opportunities that previous generations had. Further it could be said that immigration provides the US with a much needed cultural diversity that makes America the country it is today. For example Little Havana in Florida has Hispanic supermarkets and restaurants that provide new tastes and styles in food and culture. This is beneficial as it makes America a more culturally diverse and tolerant nation. However others would argue that mass immigration has led to a form of informal segregation between different ethnic groups forming their own communities and that this is leading to tension and racism between them. Many American nationals are concerned that some immigrants are not committed to “American Values” and pose a threat to American culture. It can be said that this fear was heightened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks which also played a role in negative feelings from American born citizens towards immigrants.

It can be argued that immigration has many major economic benefits for the USA as immigrants form a necessary part of the workforce. They often find employment in labour intensive or low waged jobs that many native born Americans simply do not want to do as the wages, while small by American standards, are often higher than what they would get in their own country. This is both beneficial to the US and the immigrant as the immigrant is filling an, often vital, low paid job that may otherwise go unfilled. Immigrants are a vital part of the national workforce in America and some sectors, such as the services sector in California and Texas, would not be able to function without immigrant labour. However many Americans blame legal and more so illegal immigrants for the high and rising levels of unemployment that America faces. Mass immigration has increased job competition and driven down wages as they are often willing to work for lower pay. This can lead to negative feelings towards immigrants and immigration. Others would argue however that these feelings are often amplified in bad economic times, the jobs immigrants tend to take are those Americans tend to ignore (according to 60% of NY Times readers) except in times of financial crisis which often reduces the number of jobs available in the first place further enforcing the idea that immigrants are taking American citizens jobs when it often isn't a job they wanted in the first place.

In addition immigration is also beneficial to the US economy as many economic migrants start up new businesses. These businesses then create new jobs for American citizens which in turn is beneficial for the US economy. For example immigrants have founded 40% of America's largest companies including Ebay and Google and in 2007 small businesses owned by immigrants employed 4.7 million people and generated \$77 billion. This clearly shows that immigrants are beneficial to the US economy and job market. However a key economic concern to many Americans is the cost of illegal immigrants to the taxpayer. Illegal immigrants are a drain on US public spending and place an unfair tax burden on native born Americans due to their use of government services, such as education, while in many cases they do not pay the taxes used to fund the welfare system. A prime example of this is the Californian education system where it is estimated they spend \$7 billion a year caring for the children of illegal immigrants. This is clearly unfair as it takes away resources from the children of tax paying citizens and dilutes the services government can provide, therefore having a negative economic impact on the US. It can be said however that all immigrants, including illegal immigrants, have economic benefit as they keep the economy moving through spending which in turn generates taxes for government.

Immigration has also largely benefited America in terms of politics. Mass immigration has seen increased voter turnout in the last few years amongst ethnic minorities who feel that they deserve a voice in government. This is beneficial to US society as it is making the government more representative of the people they represent. For example in the 2012 Presidential Election, Hispanics made up 10% of voters. It can also be argued that immigration is a growing factor in deciding the result of presidential elections as can be seen with the election of Barack Obama, the USA's first black president, being elected in 2012 with 71% of Hispanics voting for him. This clearly shows that immigration is beneficial to the US as it is making government more representative of the voters.

In conclusion, immigration has had both positive and negative effects on the USA however the positives outweigh the negatives in terms of benefits. Immigration has benefited the USA both culturally and economically for generations, as it is a nation founded by immigrants, and continues to do so in modern America. Immigrants form a vital part of the workforce in the US, create jobs for American born citizens and bring over their culture which are all positive benefits. There are some negatives such as the taxation spent on illegal immigrants however these are largely offset by other factors such as spending by immigrants. Overall immigration has clearly benefited the USA.