

MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** n/a
- **Approach:** Bottom-Up; Multiculturalism and diversity efforts mostly come from civil society

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The United States is highly diverse, with over 44 million immigrants living in the country as of 2018. Key pieces of legislation, including the Fifteenth Amendment (barring voter discrimination) and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, were formulated as responses to America's long and complicated racial divisions. Since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the federal government has required affirmative action policies for government agencies and companies on federal contracts.

DOMESTIC

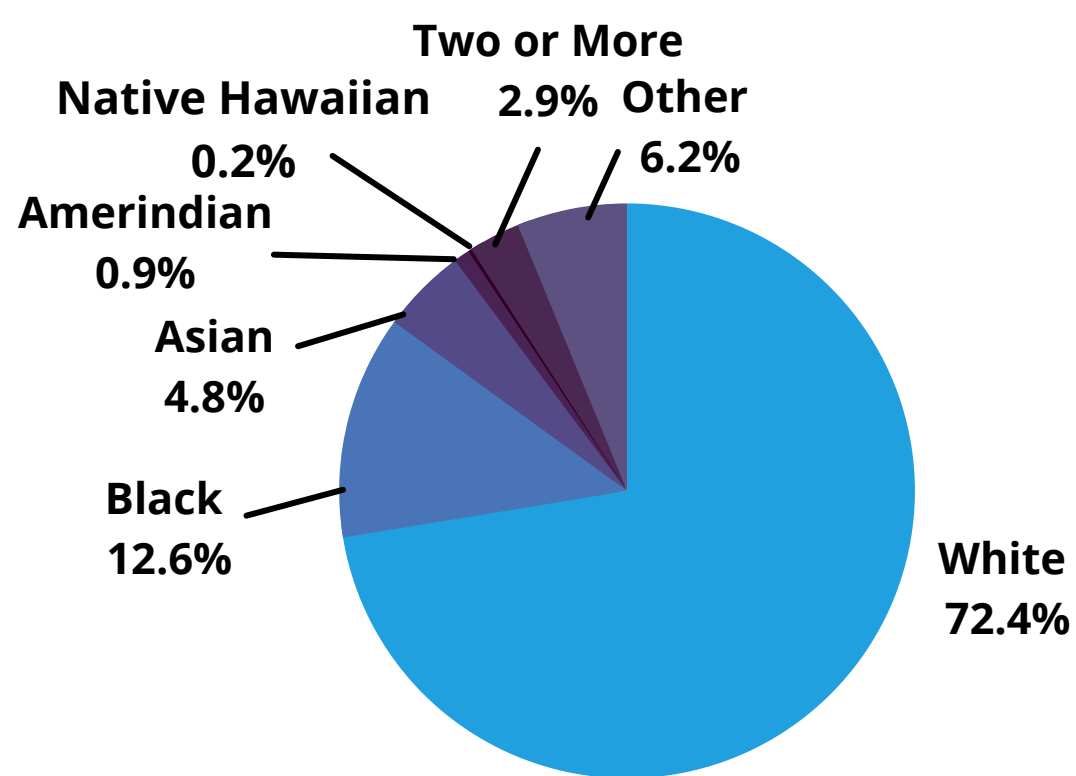
- American multiculturalism policies have largely been a bottom-up process -led by identity groups.
- To the extent that piecemeal laws and other protections have been put in place, they have been done so through the dogged effort of disadvantaged groups
- Race is also a perennial topic in politics; government has taken a series of steps, including affirmative action policies, to address racial disparities
- Pioneer in affirmative action, with the first permanent policies emerging in the 1960s under Kennedy and Johnson

INTERNATIONAL

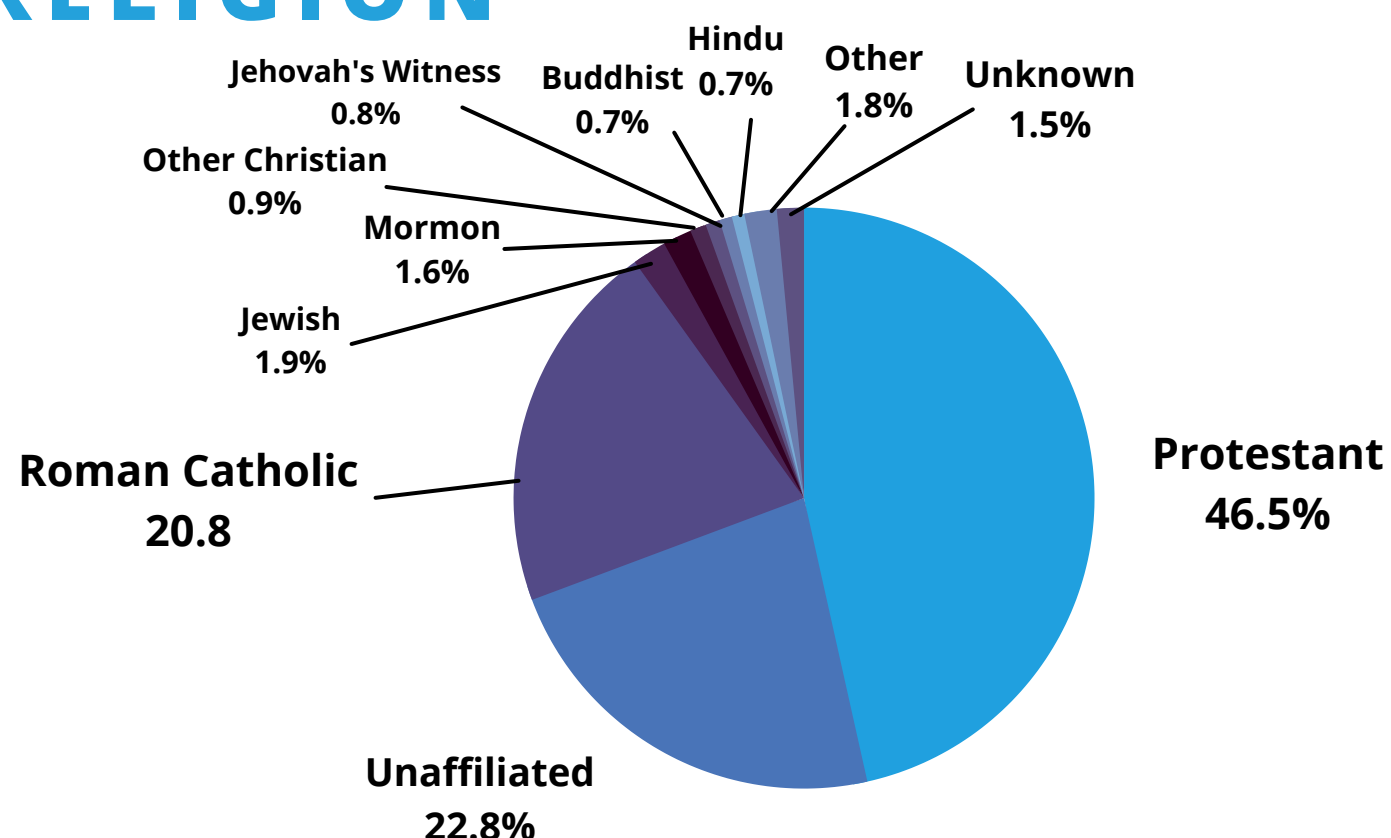
Treaties

- ✓ International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: (with reservations)
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: (with reservations)

DEMOGRAPHICS



RELIGION



United States of America

Backgroundⁱ

- Population: 332,639,102 (2020 est.)
- Demographics: White, 72.4%; Black, 12.6%; Asian, 4.8%; Amerindian and Alaskan native, 0.9%; native Hawaiian and Pacific islander, 0.2%; two or more races, 2.9%; other, 6.2%.
- Languages: English only, 78.2%; Spanish, 13.4%; Chinese, 1.1%; other, 7.3% (no official federal language, although the Hawaiian language has official status in Hawaii, as does several Indigenous languages in Alaska).
- Religion: Protestant, 46.5%; Unaffiliated, 22.8%; Roman Catholic, 20.8%; Jewish, 1.9%; Mormon, 1.6%; other Christian, 0.9%; Muslim, 0.9%; Jehovah's Witness, 0.8%; Buddhist, 0.7%; Hindu, 0.7%; other, 1.8%;
- Term: N/A.
- Top Down or Bottom Up: Bottom-Up

The United States of America is one of the world's most preeminent states. Widely acknowledged to be a superpower, it is highly influential economically, politically, and culturally, and is home to one of the world's oldest continuously functioning democratic systems. It also is also the country with which Canada shares the most culturally.

Like Canada, American politicians have often referred to their nation as a “nation of immigrants”ⁱⁱ and America's national character has long reflected this commitment, summed up in the motto affixed to the Statue of Liberty, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”ⁱⁱⁱ The United States is also highly diverse, with over 44 million immigrants living in the country as of 2018.^{iv} The United States is therefore a natural case study in any analysis of multiculturalism.

As in Canada, the most fundamental component of the American system is legal protection for basic rights and freedoms, which are necessary for the protection of minorities. The bedrock of these protections is the First Amendment,^v protecting the right of speech, religion, and assembly (the right of association is not explicitly mentioned, but is implied). Other key pieces of legislation, including the Fifteen Amendment (barring voter discrimination)^{vi} and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, were formulated as responses to America's long and complicated racial divisions.

Yet despite the similarities, the United States has traditionally taken a different approach to Canada in assimilating immigrants. America has long viewed itself as a “melting pot,” defined by the slogan “e pluribus unem,”^{vii} or “out of many, one.” Immigrants are expected to assimilate, while adding their distinctiveness to the American national fabric.

Because of this, most of America's multiculturalism and diversity efforts are bottom-up. The United States does not routinely fund cultural initiatives, and education policies for immigrant youth are geared towards helping immigrants gain proficiency in the English language,^{viii} rather than maintaining existing cultural ties. The United States does, however, have a vibrant civil society which routinely advocates for and asserts their rights, most recently seen with the Black Lives Matter Movement.

The efforts of activists and civil society have paid dividends in subsequent government policy. Since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the federal government has required affirmative action policies for government agencies and companies on federal contracts.^{ix} While it remains a controversial policy, it has been voluntarily adopted by many private corporations and educational institutions.^x The American government also promotes diversity through initiatives like Black History Month.^{xi}

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

Approach

Government-led; bottom up.

American multiculturalism policies have largely been a *bottom-up* process – led by identity groups.^{xii}

To the extent that piecemeal laws and other protections have been put in place, they have been done so through the dogged effort of disadvantaged groups.^{xiii}

By and large, the American governments do not officially support multiculturalism policies.^{xiv}

Constitutional Protections

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech, religion, and assembly.^{xv}

- The Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment bars the US government from implementing a state religion and allows considerable freedom of practice.
- The freedom of assembly provisions allows for groups to organize around their interests, including identity groups.
- The right of association is not explicitly mentioned in the American Constitution, but the Supreme Court has since recognized it.

The Fifteenth Amendment further bars denying the right to vote for any American citizen based on race or color.^{xvi}

The first American hate crime laws were put in place in 1981,^{xvii} and are designed to protect minority groups from crimes motivated by bias and hate.^{xviii} By 2005, the federal government and all but one state had enacted some form of a hate crime law.^{xix}

The Civil Rights Act (1964) bars discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. Among its provisions include Title VII, which ban discrimination by trade unions, schools, or employers.^{xx}

- There is also an enforcement body, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The EEOC is tasked with investigating and if necessary, charging, employers for violating civil rights.^{xxi}
- The Civil Rights Act (1991) added provisions for compensation as a method of redress.^{xxii}

There is also the Civil Rights Commission, which is a bipartisan government agency tasked with gathering data on the enforcement of civil rights laws.^{xxiii}

Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism

The United States does not explicitly recognize itself as a multicultural nation as Canada does, however it is not uncommon to give implicit recognition. For example, American politicians have referred to their country as a “nation of immigrants.”^{xxiv}

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

Valuing and Active Promotion of Diversity

The United States has a long and at times challenging history of managing diversity, especially between White and Black Americans.

Race is also a perennial topic in American politics. The US government has taken a series of steps, including affirmative action policies, to address racial disparities.

Advocate groups have nonetheless long called upon the government to do more, mostly recently and notably with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Although the number of immersion programs are increasing, bilingual education in the United States has been mostly oriented towards helping non-English speakers gain proficiency in English; since the early 2000s, this has been prioritized by federal policy.^{xxv}

Beginning in 1975, and every year since 1996, American Presidents have declared February as Black History Month,^{xxvi} while similar proclamations have been made declaring 15 September-15 October as National Hispanic Heritage Month.^{xxvii}

Like the Canadian government, the United States federal government is expected to set an example in being an inclusive and diverse workplace.^{xxviii} The most recent executive order to this effect, signed by Barack Obama in 2011, urges the promotion of diversity and removal of barriers.^{xxix}

Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration

Americans have long understood their country to be a “melting pot,” with a national motto of “e pluribus unum” (out of many, one).^{xxx}

Contrary to the Canadian model, the idea of a “melting pot” is that an immigrant both assimilates into and contributes to the formation of the American national fabric. It is a pursuit of homogeneity while recognizing immigration. The simplicity of the myth means that it is applied by nativists and multiculturalists alike.^{xxxi}

Affirmative Action Policies

The United States has been a pioneer in affirmative action, with the first permanent policies emerging in the 1960s under Kennedy and Johnson.^{xxxii}

These policies applied not just to the federal government, but also firms doing business with the federal government.^{xxxiii}

In 1967, universities receiving federal funds were required to develop affirmative action goals. However, these are applied to faculty. Their application to students has been voluntary.^{xxxiv}

Affirmative Action remains hotly debated and the subject of much debate in the United States.^{xxxv}

Comparative Analysis: International

International Treaties

The United States has signed and adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but did so with five reservations, five understandings, and three declarations,^{xxxvi} which has drawn criticism from various parties, including former President Jimmy Carter.^{xxxvii}

The USA has also signed the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with three reservations including those pertaining to criminalizing hate speech, as it is held to be contrary to the US Constitution.^{xxxviii}

International Promotion of Multiculturalism

The United States does not explicitly promote multiculturalism abroad, but does promote democratic freedoms, through organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy.^{xxxix}

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- vi "Fifteenth Amendment," Interactive Constitution, National Constitution Centre, accessed October 22, 2020, <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xv>
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- xiv Sielke, "Multiculturalism in the United States and Canada," 63.
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- xvi National Constitution Centre, "Fifteenth Amendment."
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- xviii Shively, "Study of Literature and Legislation on Hate," ii.
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