

You may become illegal: An Interactive Comparative History of UK Immigration Laws

1905
1919

Both are Aliens Act and post-WWI immigration restrictions in Britain aimed to protect against undesirable immigration, while promoting economically and culturally beneficial migration. The Aliens Act 1905 also defined the rights of refugees, while post-WWI 1919 restrictions mandated identification (passports).

[ALIENS ACT](#)
[ALIENS ACT 2](#)

1948
1981

The 1948 British Nationality Act created the category of 'Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies' (CUKC) for individuals born within the UK and its colonies, with the Secretary of State having the power to grant or revoke citizenship. The 1981 Act aimed to simplify immigration law and align citizenship with the right to abode, granting mothers the right to pass on citizenship to their children.

[British Nationality Act 1](#)
[British Nationality Act 2](#)

1962
1968

The 1962 Act marked the beginning of restrictions on Commonwealth citizens moving to the UK for residency. In contrast, the 1968 Act granted deportation powers for the first time outside of wartime, and restricted entry rights of certain UK passport holders in response to public and media pressure during the arrival of Kenyan Asians.

[Commonwealth Immigrant Act 1](#)
[Commonwealth Immigrant Act 2](#)

1993

The 1993 Appeals Act aimed to improve the asylum system and reduce the number of individual applications by introducing an appeals process. However, during the appeal period, asylum seekers could be detained. Despite these efforts, the Act was not as effective as intended, and the number of asylum applications continued to increase. The Appeal process is currently being challenged.

[The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act](#)

1996
1999

The 1996 Act aimed to speed up the asylum process by giving powers to the Secretary of State to designate 'safe countries' and introducing fines for employers of illegal immigrants. In contrast, the 1999 Act introduced a 'One Stop Appeal' system and new categories of 'suspicious marriages' and 'sham marriages', with registrars required to report them.

[Asylum and Immigration Act 1](#)

[Asylum and Immigration Act 2](#)

2002
2004

The 2002 reforms made minor changes to the asylum system without altering its structure, while the 2006 Act revised the definition of an asylum claim to reflect the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention. The 2006 Act also prohibited those detained in removal centers from receiving the national minimum wage for work done there.

[Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 1](#)

[Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2](#)

2008
2016

The 2008 Points-Based System admitted migrants based on qualifications, with restrictions on work and visa extensions for Tier 4 visa holders. In contrast, the 2016 'Dubs Amendment' required the relocation of a specific number of unaccompanied refugee children to the UK and required 'fluent English' for public-facing roles.

[Points-Based System](#)

[Immigration Act](#)

2019

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, the EU Settlement Scheme was introduced in 2019 to enable EU citizens to secure their right to remain in the UK. Both the Windrush scandal and the EU Settlement Scheme scandal involve British citizens being wrongfully detained or denied their right to residency due to government failures. While Windrush affected mainly people of Caribbean descent, the EU Settlement Scheme scandal affected EU citizens and their families. Both scandals have led to public outcry and criticism of the UK government's immigration policies.

[Brexit and the EU Settlement Scheme](#)



Click the names of the Acts to read through them and learn more about them individually. Although, a summary and a comparison has been made for your understanding.