

Ethnic Enclaves

New York has always been the principal gateway for European immigrants. It began with the Pilgrims and other northern European migrants. Later, waves of German and Irish immigrants passed through Castle Garden and later, Ellis Island. The next major influx came from Eastern Europe avoiding religious and political persecution. By the 19th century, ethnic neighborhoods had formed and New York had become a multi-cultural city.

Over the next hundred years, more races and nationalities found safety and freedom in New York. By 2000, New York had the second largest Asian population among the 50 states and Hispanics and Latinos were 15% of the state's population. Many of the more successful of these ethnic groups have moved to the suburbs but new immigrants still gravitate to their ethnic communities within the five boroughs and the metropolitan area.

What forms is an **ethnic neighborhood** – or an ethnic enclave – a neighborhood, district, or suburb that retains some specific cultural distinction of a specific race or nationality from a larger, surrounding area.

Ethnic enclaves are often formed due to housing prejudices. Nativist groups and mortgage bias have prevented certain sects of people from settling within different areas of a city. Despite discrimination and racism having played major roles in the formation of specific ethnic communities, they are not the only factors involved. Newly arrived immigrants usually settle in areas that are similar to their cultural settings back home. Within these zones, they feel safe and secure. It is also of note that most new immigrants are somewhat reluctant to learn a new language so they rely on the fact that their ethnic enclave still uses their primary tongue.

Certain enclaves within New York City have become major tourist attractions (such as Chinatown or Little Italy) where “outsiders” can experience a taste of another culture. Today, there are over 165 different languages spoken in New York City, with over 100 different countries represented by immigrants.

The idea of the ethnic enclave has been assisted by the “American Dream.” It is much easier to find a job or start a business within a community of people who come from the same culture. Any successful enclave revolves around businesses that are formed and managed by members of the community.

Ethnic enclaves have specific boundaries within the city. Jewish enclaves are often enclosed in an eruv. Muslim enclaves are within walking and hearing distance to the local mosque, others use streets and intersections as their territorial boundaries. The religion of a particular sect has always been a major factor, one that is visible by the various houses of worship within a specific enclave.



Chinatown

Indications that you are in a specific ethnic enclave

- Specific churches and other houses of worship
- Bilingual and dual-language schools and day-care centers
- Street and business signs in native or multiple languages
- Immigrant Associations
- Stores carrying imported goods not easily found in American outlets
- Restaurants and other food and drink stores catering to a specific cuisine
- Household items used within a specific culture not found in regular supermarkets
- Ethnic newspapers and in some cultures, ethnic television stations
- Popular culture items such as DVD's or Videos from the "old" country
- Clothing stores selling apparel not usually found in department stores
- Parades and carnivals celebrating foreign religious or secular holidays



West Indian Day parade