

Answer Key--Discriminatory Law Case Study: *Chinese Exclusion Act (1923)* <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-immigration-act>

Law: *Chinese Exclusion Act (1923)*

Background Information:

The law was preceded by the 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act* which instituted the head tax (initially 50\$ but rising to 500\$) on all Chinese immigrants.

The new *Chinese Immigration Act*, also called the *Chinese Exclusion Act (1923)*, banned Chinese immigration almost completely. Despite restrictions on immigration by visible minorities, only Chinese people were singled out through a specific law in this manner.

How did this Law maintain inequalities? Consider political, social, and economic factors.

Political:

- every person of Chinese descent required to register for an identity card
- those of Chinese descent were also already not allowed to vote
- fewer than 50 immigrants allowed in during this period of 1923-1947

Social:

- Chinese people they were the only group to be singled out in this manner by a law although other immigration laws prevented other immigrants from other countries from entering Canada
- family ties and community growth were affected as immigration halted - the vast majority of Chinese in Canada were men (80%). Many had families back in China; their families no longer were able to immigrate after them.

Economic:

- individuals could be fined up to 500\$ or even imprisoned if they did not register for an identity card
- Chinese immigrants had previously been involved in the Fraser River and Cariboo Gold rushes and as labourers constructing the CPR, often dealing with discrimination in unfair work situations and dishonest business practices

-other legislation prevented Chinese from owning property and limited employment and housing options

-Chinese workers often faced protests from White workers and unions, as well as earning lower wages

How was this law reformed or amended?

The end of WWII resulted in lessening hostility towards the Chinese community, who participated in military service and fundraising. Canada's recent signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also signified changing values and awareness.

Removing anti-Chinese legislation was supported by politicians, war veterans, church leaders and even labour unions. In 1947, the *Chinese Exclusion Act* was repealed (removed).

Legacy of Law and/or policy:

Chinese immigrants still faced unfair restrictions until 1967, when an equitable system through the points-based immigration system was reduced.

Campaigns were instituted to ask the government to apologize for its treatment of Chinese-Canadians. IN 2006, Stephen Harper apologized for the head tax and discriminatory immigration legislation.