

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## 1. *Why hasn't this information been available before?*

There are several reasons. First, the government has tried to keep it a secret. Second, until the Japanese Americans were granted an apology and compensation in 1988, the Italians and Germans kept quiet; now they are demanding acknowledgement of their experiences. And, finally, a lack of curiosity on the part of historians, politicians, reporters, and the general public.

## 2. *How many Italians and Germans were relocated on the West Coast in 1942?*

No one knows the exact number. No comprehensive records were kept. The best guess (by government officials at the time) is that between 8,000 and 10,000 were relocated on the West Coast.

## 3. *How many Italians and Germans were interned?*

According to one postwar document, the Immigration & Naturalization Service took custody of 3,278 Italians and 10,905 Germans. These numbers included, however, those who were released or paroled, voluntary internees (family members) and those deported to the United States from 15 Latin American countries. Most detainees were either quickly released or paroled, and the length of actual internment varied greatly, making any general statement about the numbers interned useless. This is why historians generally refer to the figures (above) provided by the INS at the end of the war.

## 4. *What are the differences between "relocation," "internment," and "exclusion"?*

The program of "relocation" on the West Coast was initiated in late January 1942. It was managed by the army and—for the Japanese alone—the War Relocation Authority. Relocation affected *all* enemy aliens and citizens of Japanese ancestry. Between 8,000 and 10,000 Italians and Germans were forced out of West Coast security zones through most of 1942, although they were never put into camps. Between 110,000 and 120,000 Japanese nationals and U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry were put into 10 relocation camps, stretching from the mountain West to Arkansas.

"Internment" was a Department of Justice program that began within hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor. On orders from President Franklin Roosevelt, the FBI arrested individuals it deemed "dangerous," who, after a hearing, were either released, paroled, or interned for varying lengths of time, some as late as 1949. Scores of camps for internees were scattered across the United States.

Individual "exclusion" was a prerogative of army defense commanders on the West, Gulf, and East Coasts that lasted until mid-1944. Its purpose was ensure that army commanders could remove "dangerous" American citizens (and some aliens) from security zones, people who could

not otherwise be arrested by the FBI and interned. Constitutional considerations of this sort did not apply to U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry, of course, and they were relocated en masse (above).

**5. *Were Italians and Germans not living on the West Coast affected?***

Yes. Internments occurred throughout the country, a majority of them on the East Coast where Italian and German communities were larger. Italian and German nationals were also subject to petty restrictions: curfew, travel, confiscation of weapons and short-wave radios, and so forth. Moreover, army commanders along the East and Gulf Coasts excluded individual Italians and Germans who could not be interned because they were U.S. citizens. It appeared at first that Italians and Germans might also be relocated as they were on the West Coast, but the government stopped short of this due to home front morale, and logistical and economic realities.

**6. *How many Italians and Germans were deported to the United States from Latin America?***

This was a program initiated and managed by the State Department with assistance from various U.S. agencies in Latin America, including the FBI and the army. From 15 Latin American countries: Italians: 288; Germans: 4,058; Japanese: 2,264 (mostly from Peru). Most were brought to the United States for internment and possible repatriation; others were deported to their mother countries directly from Latin America.