

AFRICAN IMMIGRANT POPULATION: A NATIONAL & LOCAL VIEW

A REPORT PREPARED
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an in-depth analysis of the Black immigrant population in the United States, drawing on data from the 2020 Census and the 2022 American Community Survey. It focuses on the chronic underrepresentation and complex challenges in categorizing the African immigrant population, a group often overlooked in mainstream discussions. The report highlights the difficulty in accurately counting African immigrants, a task complicated by the nuanced U.S. categorization of race and ethnicity and the intersection with personal identities. The Census's division of the African continent into North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa is critiqued for oversimplifying the region's racial and ethnic diversity.

The report also examines the impact of the Black Civil Rights Movement on U.S. immigration policies, particularly the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which dismantled the National Origins Formula and led to increased immigration from diverse regions, including Africa. Despite these changes, African immigrants, constituting only 6% of the nation's foreign-born population, remain a minority within a minority and face unique challenges, including underrepresentation in policy considerations.

A key finding of the report is the potential underestimation of the African immigrant population in the U.S. by up to 25%, a discrepancy with significant implications for resource allocation and policy development. The report also sheds light on the workforce participation of African immigrants, noting systemic barriers that limit career advancement and earnings, particularly in sectors like healthcare. The report gives special attention to the situation in California, where the African immigrant community is diverse and growing slowly. Despite California's comprehensive services for immigrants and refugees, the report finds that the specific needs of African immigrants are often not adequately addressed, with a lack of robust infrastructure for settlement and relocation and fragmented community organizations.

The report concludes by emphasizing the vibrant and culturally rich nature of the African immigrant community in California while also highlighting the challenges they face due to systemic biases, income disparities, and housing issues. It advocates for addressing these intersectional biases as a crucial step towards ensuring equitable opportunities and fully integrating this dynamic community into the broader fabric of American society.

INTRODUCTION

Addressing Data Limitations at the Forefront

In presenting this report on African immigrants in the United States, discussing the significant data challenges encountered is crucial. Typically, data limitations are addressed in the latter sections of a report. However, in this case, the depth and nature of these data challenges profoundly influence both the context and content of our analysis and findings. Understanding these limitations from the outset is essential to fully grasp the nuances and implications of the report's conclusions.

Addressing these data limitations at the onset aims to provide a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the context within which this report's findings should be interpreted. Acknowledging these challenges is not only a matter of academic rigor but also a step towards advocating for improved data collection methods that can more accurately reflect the experiences and contributions of African immigrants in the United States.

U.S. Census data limitations

This report draws on data from the 2020 United States Census and the 2022 American Community Survey (A.C.S.). The Census, a constitutionally mandated demographic survey conducted every decade, was last conducted in 2020. The A.C.S., in contrast, provides annual updates, offering more frequent snapshots of demographic changes. The accuracy of the Census heavily relies on public participation. Historically, certain groups, often referred to as “hard to count,” have been consistently underrepresented in its results. According to Stempowski (2023), this underrepresentation is a significant concern. The Urban Institute, as noted by Lou & Martin (2022), observed that the 2020 Census likely undercounted groups such as Black people, Hispanic or Latinx people, Native Americans, and young children while overcounting white and Asian populations. Moreover, systemic issues often lead to an underrepresentation of people of color and immigrants¹ in census data. Added to this condition is the

¹ According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), immigrants are foreign-born persons who obtain legal permanent residence in the United States. (U. S. Census, 2022)

political climate and controversy surrounding the 2020 Census in the lead-up to the count, which may have impacted the participation rates of immigrant communities, including African immigrants.

Beyond these structural challenges, the complexities of identity and self-identification, central to the Census, add another layer of difficulty in accurately analyzing African immigrants. As a self-reporting survey, the Census requires respondents to navigate and reconcile a range of identity options with their sense of self, which can be particularly challenging. This challenge is even more pronounced for African immigrants, given the continent's diversity and widespread diaspora. The multifaceted nature of identity for these individuals can lead to discrepancies in how they are represented in Census data.

Personal identity v. Census categories

The task of accurately interpreting U.S. Census data to count African immigrants is laden with complexities stemming from the nuanced categorization of race and ethnicity in the U.S. and how these categories intersect with the personal identities of African immigrants. Analysts face the pivotal decision of whether to focus specifically on immigrants from the African continent or to include the broader category of Black immigrants². This choice significantly shapes the analysis' scope and potential outcomes.

Limiting the analysis to only African immigrants could inadvertently exclude diverse groups within the continent, such as those from North Africa or Africans of Asian or white ancestry, leading to an underrepresentation of Africa's true demographic diversity. Conversely, including all Black immigrants broadens the scope, encompassing individuals with a wide array of experiences and backgrounds from beyond the African continent.

The U.S. Census categorization, shaped by broader U.S. policy, divides the African continent into North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, turning the Sahara Desert, long a space of trade and migration, into a geographical delimiter. This categorization labels individuals from Sub-Saharan Africa as Black and some from North Africa as Arab or white, overlooking the racial and ethnic diversity throughout the

² This report uses the term "Black immigrant" recognizing the presence of Black individuals from regions beyond Africa, including Latin America, Asia, and Europe.

to immigrant parents. This limitation hampers the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions about recent immigration trends and the precise demographic compositions of immigrant populations in the U.S.

Moreover, Census data concerning race and ethnicity, which includes information on the place of birth, reveals that 4,664,030 foreign-born individuals identify as Black, either alone or in combination with other races. However, similar to the ancestry data, this information does not provide a transparent view of the respondents' immigration status. The figures do not distinguish between recent immigrants, long-term residents, or those born to immigrant parents. An essential notable gap is the Census's inability to account for U.S. children with foreign-born parents accurately.

TABLE 2: PLACE OF BIRTH BY NATIVITY AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS		
<i>Black alone or in combination with one or more other races</i>		
	UNITED STATES	CALIFORNIA
Foreign born:	4,664,030	209,128
Naturalized U.S. citizen	2,792,326	127,064
Europe	49,527	4,749
Asia	26,928	3,826
Africa	1,070,948	74,065
Oceania	1,489	521
Latin America	1,629,155	42,777
Northern America	14,267	1,126
Not a U.S. citizen	1,871,704	82,064
Europe	39,415	4,051
Asia	20,402	2,408
Africa	892,516	47,873
Oceania	1,127	169
Latin America	903,465	26,059
Northern America	14,763	1,504

The underrepresentation of undocumented African immigrants in the U.S. is another crucial aspect often overlooked in official statistics. Estimates suggest that the number of undocumented African immigrants might be comparable to those with legal status. Many of these individuals initially enter the U.S. on tourist or temporary visas, intending to transition to legal residency. However, they frequently

face barriers such as limited financial resources, insufficient guidance, and complex legal procedures, which can result in losing their legal status.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the presence of undocumented African immigrants significantly increases the actual number of Africans in the U.S., yet this is not reflected in official statistics. The Census, which does not inquire about residency status, coupled with prevailing fear and distrust among undocumented individuals, leads many to abstain from participating in the Census. This reluctance to engage with official data collection processes not only results in the undercounting of the African immigrant population but also compromises the accuracy and quality of sample data related to undocumented individuals.

Given the nuances in national data, it's reasonable to surmise that the number of African immigrants in the U.S. might exceed current estimates by about 25%. The analysis of the 2020 Census data reveals significant challenges, including structural underrepresentation and complexities related to identity, which likely contribute to an undercount of the immigrant population. This is evident in the stark discrepancy between various data points and the figures from Table S0504, which records only 2,752,965 foreign-born³ individuals from Africa, constituting 6% of the total foreign-born population in the U.S. Consequently, the authentic demographic portrait of African immigrants in the U.S. remains largely obscured and substantially underestimated, leaving a considerable portion of this community invisible in official data.

This underrepresentation has far-reaching consequences, impacting resource allocation, policy formulation, and understanding of demographic trends. A more nuanced and inclusive approach to data collection is imperative to bridge these gaps. Such an approach must consider the intricacies of immigrant identities and statuses to accurately represent the African immigrant community and understand this population's diverse experiences and contributions within the U.S. demographic fabric.

³ The foreign-born population includes anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes respondents who indicated they were a U.S. citizen by naturalization or not a U.S. citizen.(U. S. Census, 2022)

The limitations inherent in the Census data necessitate a refined approach to data analysis that acknowledges the complexities of immigrant identities and the multifaceted nature of immigration status. This sophisticated approach is crucial for genuinely reflecting the realities of the community and comprehending the demographic composition of African and Black immigrants in the United States.

The following discussion underscores the limitations and challenges in arriving at an accurate count of the African immigrant community. It highlights the array of issues and obstacles encountered. Therefore, while reading the remaining sections of this report, it's important to consider these challenges and not overemphasize the numerical data. Nonetheless, despite the inaccuracies in quantifying the number of African immigrants, it's still possible to delineate a detailed profile of the African immigrant community in the U.S. and, more specifically, California. Utilizing the Census category of "Africa Born," the report successfully outlines this community's compelling and informative profile, as detailed in the subsequent section.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF U.S. IMMIGRATION

The history of contemporary America is one of global migration, with waves of immigrants arriving from all over the world. Immigrants have shaped the U.S. through their willingness to participate in the multicultural experiment, from the first arrivals on the Mayflower to today's arrivals at international airports.⁴ To fully comprehend modern-day immigration, particularly in relation to the Black Diaspora, it is necessary to recognize the first sizable Black presence in the United States, which was characterized by the forced migration of millions of Black Africans. Although Black Africans, free and enslaved, arrived in the United States as early as the 1500s, 1619 was a watershed moment in history.⁵ It

⁴ For purposes of this discussion *immigrant* is defined as "A person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another." Black immigrant is specifically used to discuss those immigrating from Africa and the non-Hispanic regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁵ The arrival of the first African captives can be traced to Jamestown Colony in 1619. However, the arrival of both free and enslaved Africans is thought to have occurred earlier. It is thought that Christopher Columbus' expedition included Africans, though it is unclear whether they were free or enslaved. The Spanish expedition in 1526 to establish a presence in what is now South Carolina included enslaved Africans. (Ponti, 2019). Esteban de Dorantes (Esteban the Moor), a native of Azamor, Morocco, was an enslaved African, explorer, and *conquistador*, who was part of the Coronado Expedition of 1528 traveling from Florida through the Southwest to Mexico (Goodwin, 2009).

marked the start of forced migration, with many Black Africans brought to the U. S. to work as enslaved people. These men, women, and children arrived not as immigrants looking for new opportunities but as captives coerced into labor by a brutal, dehumanizing system. This dark period in history laid the foundation for the complex dynamics of race and immigration that continue to shape the American landscape.

The diverse tapestry of modern U.S. immigration is inextricably linked to the struggles and aspirations of this critical segment of the global Black Diaspora, whose experiences and movements have significantly shaped the immigration landscape today. From the arrival of the first enslaved Black Africans and centuries after, the consequences of forced migration into slavery—the denial of fundamental human rights and the total disregard for their human dignity—were the impetus for the Black Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s and 1960s.

The rich tapestry of modern American immigration is deeply rooted in the struggles and aspirations of this vital component of the global Black Diaspora. The Black Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and 1960s was fueled by the enduring aftermath of the forced arrival of enslaved Black Africans, which was marked by a stark denial of basic human rights and a flagrant disregard for human dignity. Longstanding discriminatory immigration and legalization policies, particularly those affecting people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, have been profoundly challenged and called into question as a result of their historical fight for human rights.

Civil Rights Movement and immigration reform

The Black Civil Rights Movement profoundly reshaped U.S. immigration, underpinned by its commitment to equality, non-discrimination, and anti-segregation. Its influence extended beyond immediate goals, significantly transforming societal attitudes and legislative reforms and redirecting national conversations on race and equality. This shift in ideology played a pivotal role in dismantling racial and ethnic barriers embedded in U.S. immigration laws, as highlighted by President Lyndon B. Johnson's critique of the pre-existing system and his condemnation of the 1924 Immigration Act as contrary to American values (Barber, 2017).

As a direct consequence of the movement's impact, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 revolutionized U.S. immigration policy. It overturned the National Origins Formula, which favored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe while restricting those from Asia and Africa (United States Code: Immigration and Nationality, 8 U.S.C., 1964). The 1965 Act's focus on family reunification and skilled immigrants led to a surge in immigration from Asian, Latin American, African, and Caribbean nations, significantly diversifying the American demographic landscape.

Although pivotal, the Black Civil Rights Movement's role in shaping U.S. immigration reforms is frequently understated in modern discourse. This facet of the movement's legacy illustrates its extensive influence, reaching far beyond African American rights to encompass broader themes of social justice and equality in the U.S. This highlights the profound link between civil rights advocacy and immigration policy, showing how the movement's advocacy for marginalized groups set the stage for a more inclusive, equitable society. Consequently, the increase in immigrants from non-European regions and the rights and freedoms that generations of immigrants now enjoy are the results of hard-won battles by the Black Civil Rights Movement. This struggle led to a shift from a Eurocentric perspective to a more globally inclusive outlook in U.S. immigration, mirroring America's evolution into a diverse, multicultural society.

Phases of U.S. immigration

U.S. immigration history is divided into four significant periods, beginning with the arrival of colonists in the 1600s and peaking just before the Revolutionary War in 1775. This early period was characterized not only by English colonists but also by Swedish migrants. The second wave, which started in the 1820s and lasted until the early 1870s, was characterized by an influx of immigrants from Ireland, Norway, and German states, many fleeing economic hardship and crop failures.

The third wave of immigration, which took place between the 1880s and the early 1920s, was the most significant. Ellis Island opened as an immigration processing center in 1892 to handle the increased migration following the lifting of migration restrictions from non-western Europe. During this time, over 20 million immigrants arrived, the majority of whom came from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe. It

was also a time of tightening immigration restrictions, beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first of several laws prohibiting certain groups and non-European countries from entering the United States.

The modern wave of immigration in the United States was significantly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, specifically the 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished discriminatory policies and opened the doors for increased migration from Africa and the Caribbean. While the presence of Black immigrants in the U.S. extends back to the early 19th and 20th centuries, it was not until the latter part of the 20th century that a significant influx of African immigrants began, marking them as one of the newest immigrant groups in the country. In contrast, Caribbean immigration, especially from Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, started earlier, primarily in the early 20th century, and was concentrated mainly in the eastern United States, establishing a longstanding Caribbean community within the U.S. demographic landscape.

AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

Accurately estimating the rapidly growing African immigrant population has been a challenging and elusive task, making precise state and county-level estimates virtually unattainable. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that African immigrants have often been the ‘invisible’ segment within the broader immigrant narrative in the United States. Unlike their counterparts from Asia and Central America, African immigrants have not been as visible in the public eye, leading to a lack of sufficient recognition and, consequently, a shortage of targeted services that are typically provided to other immigrant groups.

This lack of visibility has significant implications. When immigration issues are discussed, the conversation often centers around Asian or Latino communities, overshadowing the presence and specific needs of African immigrants. As a result, this group is frequently overlooked in public discourse and policy considerations related to immigration. Their unique challenges and contributions are rarely acknowledged, and their specific requirements are seldom addressed. This oversight affects the provision of necessary services and impacts the broader understanding and integration of African immigrants into

the fabric of American society. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more inclusive immigration discussions that recognize and cater to the diverse experiences of all immigrant communities, including those from Africa.

Census data reveals that African immigrants constitute 6% of the total foreign-born population in the United States, trailing behind Latin American (50%) and Asian (31%) immigrants. A notable upward trend in African migration is evident, with their proportion within the overall foreign-born population steadily increasing. For instance, Africans accounted for just 3% of all immigrants arriving in the U.S. before 2000, which climbed to 6% by 2009 and increased to 9% between 2010 and 2022.

Delving deeper, 26% of African immigrants in the U.S. entered between 2000-2009, while a significant 48% arrived after 2000. Before 2000, only 26% of African immigrants had arrived in the U.S., with the majority (56.6%) entering between 1990 and 2000, 25.7% between 1980 and 1989, and the remaining 17.6% before 1980. These trends align with estimates that suggest at least 20,000 Africans have been leaving the continent annually since 1990.⁶

The migration patterns of African immigrants over the last three decades have been influenced by both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. The 1980s saw a ‘push’ from Africa, primarily due to political and civil strife, leading refugees and asylum seekers to flee their home countries. Many of these refugees, affected by the Cold War conflicts on African soil, found resettlement in the U.S. through international programs. In contrast, the later waves of African migration have been driven by ‘pull’ factors, with skilled and educated professionals seeking better opportunities abroad rather than fleeing adverse conditions at home.

This evolving migration pattern highlights African immigrants’ increasingly significant role and presence in the U.S., marking them as integral to the country’s diverse demographic landscape.

Diversity Visa

Since its establishment by Congress in 1990, the Diversity Visa Program (DV) has played a crucial role in boosting African immigration to the U.S., particularly among the professional class.⁷ This

⁶ UN Economic Commission for Africa & International Organization for Migration (IOM)

⁷ Section 203 (c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act

program, distinct from the pathways created by the 1965 Immigration Act, such as refugee and family sponsorship, specifically targets countries with historically low immigration rates to the U.S., many of which are in Africa. Each year, the DV Program allocates 55,000 immigrant visas via a lottery, and in 2021, African nations had the highest number of applicants, reaching 105 million.

The DV Program is characterized by its rigorous educational and professional requirements. Applicants must possess at least a high school education or equivalent or have two years of work experience within the last five years in a job necessitating at least two years of training or experience. This criterion ensures that the majority of immigrants under this program come from the educated and professional segments of their respective countries. Initially offering 55,000 visas annually, this number was adjusted to 50,000 in 2017, returning to the original quota in 2022. The program faced a brief suspension in 2020 as part of a more comprehensive immigration ban under President Trump, which was later reversed.

REGION	TOTAL			DV-2020		DV-2010	
	Applicants	Selected	% Accepted	Applicants	Selected	Applicants	Selected
Africa	105,527,954	887,368	0.84%	11,315,826	31,562	5,105,302	54,003
Asia	64,776,672	321,863	0.50%	3,548,165	15,941	6,175,452	15,001
Europe	63,537,717	620,731	0.98%	7,185,456	30,794	2,154,539	29,803
Latin America	6,663,590	57,810	0.87%	1,090,751	4,189	126,168	1,982
North America[c]	47,209	300	0.64%	2,748	20	2,624	18
Oceania	602,107	42,221	7.01%	39,608	1,378	33,743	1,803
Total	254,346,545	1,930,293	0.76%	23,182,554	83,884	13,597,828	102,610

The DV program has significantly influenced African immigration. Between 1997 and 2002, 87,254 Africans and 22,351 on employment-based visas entered the U.S. via the DV lottery, bringing over 100,000 skilled professionals from Africa to the U.S.⁸ In the same period, 5,190 Afro-Caribbean

⁸ US Department of State Diversity Visa Lottery results

individuals were DV lottery recipients, with another 14,850 entering on employment-based visas, totaling 20,040 skilled and educated immigrants from the Caribbean.⁹

In 2022, of the 55,000 available visas, Africa was allocated 19,215, a slight decrease from 23,607 in 2013. In contrast, Asia received 11,693 visas in 2022 (up from 9,785 in 2013), and Latin America and the Caribbean received 1,961 (up from 1,029 in 2013). Europe had the largest DV allocation, with 21,806 visas in 2022, up from 17,296 in 2013. In 2013, Nigeria, Egypt, and Ethiopia were the top African recipients of the DV lottery. By 2022, the top African recipients shifted to Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt, reflecting changes in DV allocations and the dynamic nature of this immigration pathway.

CHARACTERISTIC OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

The African immigrant community in the United States presents a demographic profile that, while showing some divergences, broadly aligns with the overall trends seen in U.S. immigration. A vital aspect of this profile is the naturalization rate: 61% of African immigrants are naturalized citizens, compared to 39% who are not. Delving into the timeline of their citizenship, 23% of those naturalized entered the U.S. before 2000, whereas, among non-citizens, 31% arrived after 2010. This rate of citizenship is somewhat higher than the overall foreign-born rate of 53%, and it contrasts with 67% for European immigrants, 43% for those from Latin America, and 63% for Asian immigrants.

In terms of age demographics, African immigrants predominantly fall within the most productive years of their lives, with 50% aged between 18 and 44. This contrasts with the broader immigrant population, where 41% fall within this age range. Specifically, for European immigrants, this age group constitutes 32%, for Asian immigrants 40%, and for Latin American immigrants 43%. Additionally, only a small fraction of African immigrants are under 18 (9%) or over 65 (10%).

When it comes to marital status, African immigrants align with other immigrant groups, where typically 50-60% are married. In the African immigrant community, 57% are married, and 27% have

⁹ US Immigration and Citizenship Services “2002 Immigration Report”

never been married. Gender distribution within the African immigrant population is nearly balanced, with 52% male and 48% female.

These statistics offer an insightful glimpse into the U.S. African immigrant community, highlighting their unique characteristics while demonstrating commonalities with other immigrant groups regarding naturalization, age distribution, marital status, and gender balance.

Education

African immigrants stand out for their remarkable educational achievements in the diverse tapestry of the U.S. immigrant population. They rank just below immigrants from Northern and Western Europe in terms of educational attainment, making them one of the most educated groups among all immigrants in the United States. This is particularly notable when compared to the overall foreign-born population: while a quarter of all U.S. immigrants have not completed high school, this rate is significantly higher among Latin American immigrants (38%), lower among Asian immigrants (14%), and even lower among European immigrants (9.3%), dipping to just 5.6% for those from Northern and Western Europe.

Digging deeper into the educational profile of African immigrants, one can see that only 11% have less than a high school education. A remarkable 89% have completed high school, with a slight gender difference (92% of men and 86% of women). Furthermore, 70% have pursued some college education, and 20% boast graduate or professional degrees. A significant 58% of African immigrants, irrespective of gender, are currently engaged in higher education.

In contrast, within the broader foreign-born population in the U.S., including African immigrants, the statistics show 25% without a high school diploma, 75% with at least a high school education, 53% with some college education, and 16% holding graduate or professional degrees. Moreover, 53% of this group is currently enrolled in higher education.

In terms of English language proficiency, African immigrants again demonstrate impressive capabilities. While 46% of the entire foreign-born population in the U.S. reports speaking English less

than “very well,” this figure rises to 57% among Latin American immigrants. It drops to 41% for Asian immigrants, 25% for European immigrants, and 27% for African immigrants.

These statistics underscore the high level of educational attainment among African immigrants in the U.S. and highlight their distinct position within the broader immigrant community, reflecting their significant contribution to the nation’s intellectual and professional landscape.

Employment

The U.S. workforce landscape is witnessing a significant trend with the increasing prominence of African immigrants. They are actively participating in the labor force, with an engagement rate of 76% and an employment rate of 72%, coupled with a remarkably low unemployment rate of just 4%. A substantial 80% of African immigrants contribute their skills in the private sector, with a notable 42% flourishing in managerial, business, science, and arts sectors. This distribution is almost equally shared between men and women. Additionally, 21% of African immigrants are employed in the service sector, with women having higher representation, while the rest are divided between white-collar (15%) and blue-collar jobs (22%). An entrepreneurial spirit is also evident, with 7% venturing into self-employment.

The active participation of African immigrants in the U.S. workforce is indeed encouraging. Still, it’s crucial to consider this within the context of race-based employment discrimination prevalent in the country. Despite their significant presence across various professional sectors, African immigrants often confront systemic barriers that impede their career growth and earning potential. While more empirical research is needed to fully understand the combined impact of anti-Black and anti-immigrant biases in the workplace, anecdotal evidence across several fields paints a telling picture.

For example, highly credentialed and respected medical professionals, including doctors and nurses from African countries, frequently find themselves starting from the lowest rungs of the career ladder in the U.S. They often have to retake courses and exams before they can practice their profession, a requirement not typically imposed on their counterparts from other regions. Additionally, the considerable number of educated African immigrants working in the service industry is indicative of the employment

challenges they face. This reality contrasts sharply with their high levels of education and professional qualifications.

This disparity in career opportunities and progression for African immigrants becomes more evident compared to the broader immigrant workforce. While 70% of all immigrants participate in the labor force, with 64% employed and 82% working in the private sector, the distribution of roles is quite different. In the general immigrant population, 37% hold managerial positions, 21% are in service, 15% in white-collar, and 27.5% in blue-collar jobs, with 8% opting for self-employment. The underrepresentation of African immigrants in higher-level positions despite their qualifications and the overrepresentation in lower-paying sectors reflect the nuanced challenges they face due to the intersection of racial and immigrant biases.

Comparatively, European immigrants have a lower labor force participation at 60% and an employment rate of 57%, yet a higher 55% are in managerial positions. Latin American immigrants have a 69% labor force participation, with 66% employed, mainly in service (26%) and blue-collar jobs (39%), and only 21% in managerial roles. Their self-employment rate stands at 10%. Asian immigrants also display robust engagement with a 66% labor force participation rate and 63% employment, having the highest proportion in managerial roles at 57%, followed by 15% each in service and white-collar jobs, and a smaller presence in blue-collar roles (13.5%), with 6% being self-employed.

The employment sector disparities experienced by African immigrants in the United States shine a light on the pervasive issue of racial discrimination in the job market. These immigrants, possessing high qualifications and a significant representation in various professional sectors, face substantial obstacles in accessing equal opportunities and fair remuneration. The race-based biases at play, often subtle in their manifestation, do more than just hinder the economic prospects of African immigrants; they also mirror the broader societal challenge of integrating diverse talents into the workforce fairly and equitably.

This situation underscores the resilience and valuable contributions of African immigrants to the American workforce, even as the complexities of race-based bias and employment discrimination

significantly shape their experiences. Their journey in the professional landscape of the U.S., marked by commendable participation and success, is a clear indicator of their capability and adaptability. However, it is also a stark reminder of the systemic barriers that continue to impact their career trajectories and overall integration into American society.

Therefore, addressing and overcoming these systemic barriers in the American labor market is not just a matter of fairness or compliance with egalitarian principles; it is also essential for harnessing the full potential of African immigrants' contributions to the U.S. economy and society. As we move forward, ensuring equitable opportunities for all, regardless of race or immigrant status, becomes imperative. This commitment to equity is critical to realizing a truly diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the rich tapestry of talents and backgrounds in the United States.

Income, earnings, and home ownership

In the economic fabric of the United States, African immigrants exhibit a unique story of resilience and achievement. Yet, their journey is marked by challenges deeply rooted in race-based biases affecting employment and income. With a median household income of \$71,809, African immigrants fall just below the national average of \$75,489 for all immigrant groups. Men earn a median of \$58,859 and women \$49,607, slightly above the national average, but this does not paint the complete picture of their economic challenges.

The disparity becomes more apparent when comparing African immigrants to other immigrant groups with similar educational backgrounds. European and Asian immigrants, with median incomes significantly higher than those of African immigrants, exemplify this. For Europeans, median incomes are \$90,777 for men and \$64,461 for women, and for Asians, \$85,109 for men and \$64,363 for women. This income gap is not a reflection of the qualifications or professionalism of African immigrants but rather points to the systemic racial biases in the U.S. job market. These biases, which traditionally affected African Americans, seem to extend to African immigrants, impacting their earning potential and career advancement opportunities.

Despite their high levels of education and professional skills, African immigrants are more susceptible to poverty. Approximately 14% of African immigrant families live below the poverty line, higher than the national average of 12%. This issue intensifies in female-headed households, where the poverty rate climbs to 27%, indicating the compounded impact of racial and gender biases.

Homeownership, a crucial indicator of economic integration, is another area in which African immigrants lag in. Their homeownership rate stands at 42%, far lower than the national average and significantly beneath the rates for Asian and European immigrants. Meanwhile, 58% of African immigrants are renters, much higher than the national average, underscoring the economic disparities they face.

The economic narrative of African immigrants in the U.S. is thus a complex interplay of achievement and challenges. While they show strong workforce participation and higher-than-average earnings in some respects, their experience is significantly shaped by the prevailing race-based biases in employment and income. These biases, historically impacting African Americans, seem to extend to African immigrants, affecting their opportunities for economic advancement and integration into American society.

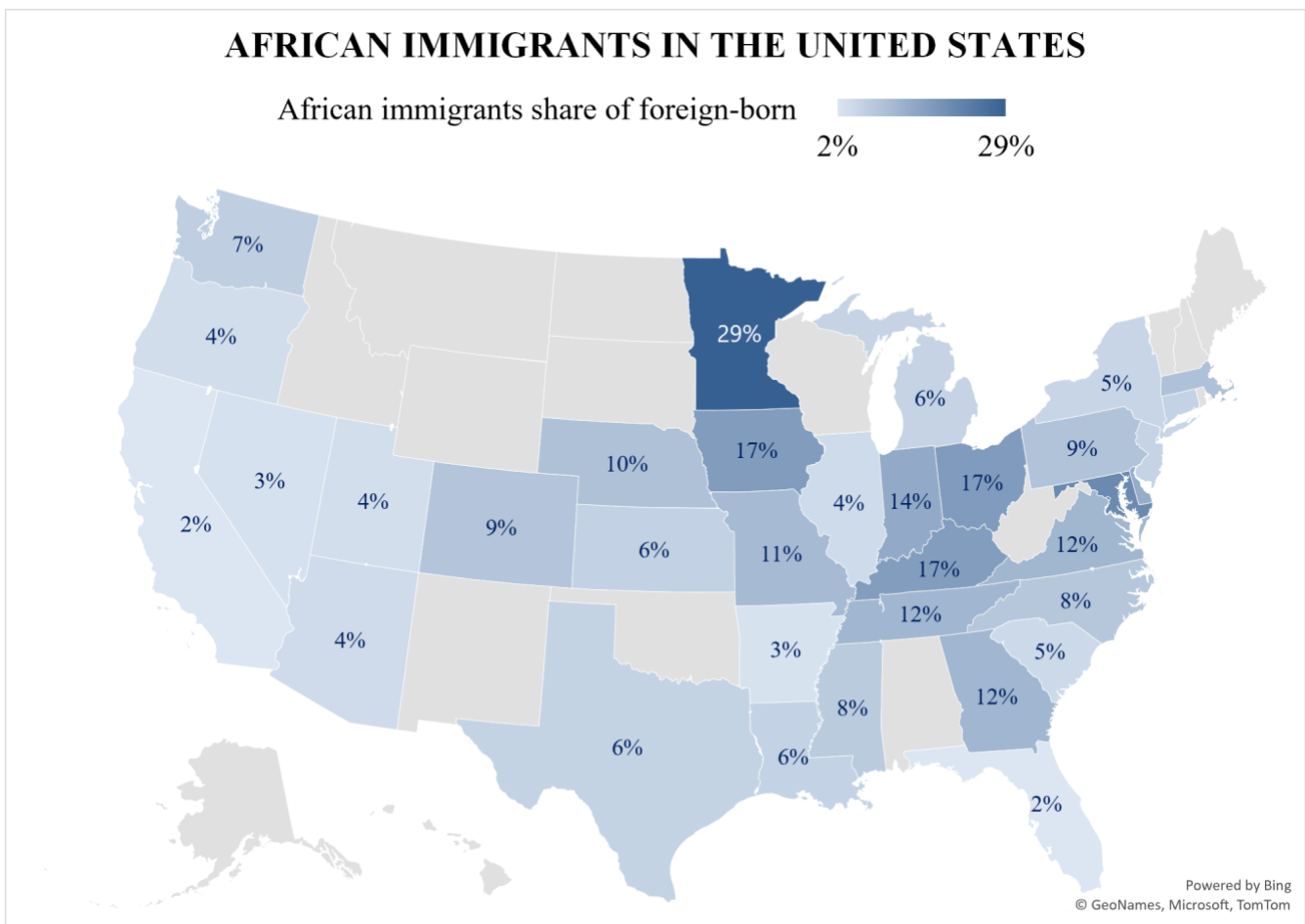
AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA

The narrative of African immigrants in California is a complex tapestry marked by modest presence and incremental growth. This demographic trend opens up intriguing avenues for research, particularly in understanding the factors influencing the settlement choices of African immigrants and refugees.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that immigrants gravitate towards locations with established familial or community connections. Yet, the role of California's infrastructure for settlement and relocation services in shaping these decisions remains an area ripe for exploration. Despite the state's comprehensive services geared towards its substantial immigrant and refugee populations, predominantly from Asia and Latin America, the specific needs of African immigrants often remain unaddressed.

In California, active African immigrant community organizations exist, yet their integration into the state’s public service infrastructure is limited, casting uncertainty on their outreach effectiveness. Moreover, these organizations’ fragmented and ad-hoc nature raises questions about their long-term viability and impact.

In contrast, other regions in the U.S. have adopted more formalized approaches to meet the needs of their growing African immigrant communities. Notably, metropolitan areas with significant African immigrant populations, such as Minnesota, the District of Columbia, and Maryland, have established dedicated bureaus like the D.C. Mayor’s Office on African Affairs and the African Immigrants Community Services in Minneapolis. These official entities play a pivotal role in connecting African immigrants to vital services and support, showcasing a model of inclusivity and effectiveness.



Despite being home to the largest share of the nation's foreign-born population, California's African immigrant community constitutes a relatively small fraction. With over 10 million foreign-born residents, African immigrants in California account for just about 2% of this number. This is markedly lower than the proportions seen in other states like Arkansas and Utah and contrasts with the dominant Latin American and Asian immigrant groups in California.

The rate of African immigrant arrivals in California has been gradual and shows no signs of a significant uptick. While they accounted for merely 1% of the foreign-born population arriving before 2000, this percentage rose modestly to 3.1% for those arriving post-2010. This slow growth stands in contrast to the patterns observed in states like Minnesota, the District of Columbia, and Maryland, which have become increasingly popular destinations for African immigrants in recent years.

Minnesota, for instance, has seen a steady rise in its African immigrant population – a mere 13% arrived before 2000, but this number soared to 41% in the last decade. Similarly, the District of Columbia and Maryland have emerged as preferred destinations, though the former has witnessed a slight decline in recent years.

This evolving geographic dispersion of African immigrants across the United States reflects a shift in settlement patterns and indicates a broader narrative of African migration. The story of African immigrants in California and across the U.S. is one of gradual integration and adaptation, set against the backdrop of diverse socio-economic landscapes and evolving community support structures.

Demographic profile of African immigrants in California

Delving into the demographic landscape of California, the African immigrant community stands out with its rich diversity and dynamic characteristics. This group is a microcosm of the global African diaspora, with 56% identifying as Black, 30% as white, and 4% as Asian, reflecting a broad spectrum of racial identities. Citizenship patterns reveal 68% having attained U.S. citizenship, with 36% of these naturalized citizens arriving before 2000, while 32% are yet to attain citizenship, a figure that includes 24% who have arrived post-2010, underscoring an ongoing influx of new immigrants.

Gender distribution is almost evenly split, slightly leaning towards males at 52% and females at 48%. The age profile is youth-centric; only 6% are minors, while the lion's share, 43%, falls within the active working-age bracket of 18-44 years, and a smaller 18% are seniors, indicating a community predominantly in its prime. Marital status further enriches this portrait: 61% are married, and 22% are single, pointing to a blend of family life and individual pursuits. This pattern speaks to the community's varied social dynamics.

Educational attainment among California's African immigrants is notably high, with a staggering 92% having at least a high school diploma – a rate surpassing the national average for African immigrants and most other immigrant populations in the state. This figure starkly contrasts with 50% of Latin American and 13% of Asian immigrants in California having less than a high school education, emphasizing the different immigration patterns as well as the importance of the DV program in African migration to the U.S. In higher education, an impressive 66% of African immigrants are enrolled in college or graduate programs, with women (71%) slightly outpacing men (60%).

The African immigrant community in California presents an economically active portrait, as evidenced by their engagement in the labor market, with a low unemployment rate of only 4% and a robust 73% participation in the labor force, where 70% are employed, and 7% are self-employed. The employment sector distribution reveals that 79% are engaged in the private sector, with 55% holding managerial positions. Additionally, 18% are employed in the service industry, 13% in white-collar jobs, and 14% in blue-collar roles, showcasing a diverse range of skills and occupations.

A notable 31% of African immigrants work in education, healthcare, and social services, reflecting their vital contribution to these essential sectors. Another 16% are employed in professional, scientific, or management industries, highlighting their integral role in California's innovative and knowledge-driven economy.

The economic profile of African immigrants in California is marked by the overall challenges of affordability in California. Earnings within this demographic reveal a gender disparity, with men typically earning an average of \$85,190, significantly more than the \$62,868 average for women. The median

household income stands at an impressive \$90,940, and the average household earnings amount to \$135,254, surpassing both the national median and mean incomes for African immigrants.

There is a relatively low dependency on public assistance, with 5% utilizing these resources. Additionally, the poverty rate among African immigrant families in California is fairly modest, with only 10% living at or below the poverty line. This figure is considerably lower than the national average for African immigrants. However, the economic challenges faced by women are more acute, as evidenced by the higher poverty rate of 17% among female-headed households.

The housing situation of African immigrants in California also paints a picture of the state's housing affordability crisis. Homeownership rates stand at 43.4%. Meanwhile, a majority of 57% opt to rent, reflecting a community actively navigating the challenging Californian housing market.

The African immigrant community in California epitomizes vibrancy, economic dynamism, and educational prowess. This group embodies a rich mosaic of racial identities, cohesive family units, notable professional achievements, and remarkable financial resilience, significantly enriching California's multifaceted cultural landscape and vibrant economy.

Despite these strengths, the community also faces unique challenges reflective of broader issues encountered by African immigrants across the United States. The intersectionality of their identities – as both Black and immigrants – adds layers of complexity to their experience. This is further compounded for female members of the community, who navigate additional gender-related barriers.

One of the most striking aspects of this community is the high level of educational attainment, which unfortunately does not always translate into commensurate benefits in employment, income, and housing opportunities. This discrepancy points to systemic issues within the broader societal and economic frameworks, including well-documented biases against Black individuals and immigrants. These biases are evident in the employment sector, where, despite high qualifications, African immigrants may not attain positions that fully utilize their skills and education. Similarly, in the realm of income, there's a noticeable gap between their earning potential and actual income, especially for women.

The housing situation also mirrors these challenges. While a significant proportion of African immigrants in California are homeowners, a more significant percentage are renters, navigating the complexities of a competitive and often expensive housing market. This scenario underscores the need for more equitable policies and practices that recognize and address the unique challenges faced by this community.

In essence, while showcasing commendable resilience and contributions, the African immigrant community in California also highlights the critical need for systemic change to ensure that their educational and professional achievements are equitably, fully recognized, and rewarded. Their experience serves as a mirror, reflecting the broader challenges African immigrant communities face in the U.S., and underscores the importance of addressing intersectional biases to ensure equitable opportunities for all.

CONCLUSION

This report has methodically explored the demographic and socio-economic dimensions of African immigrants in the United States, with a special lens on California, by harnessing data from the 2020 U.S. Census and the 2022 American Community Survey (A.C.S.). Our analysis reveals the intricate challenges in accurately representing the African immigrant population, predominantly stemming from structural underrepresentation and the complexities inherent in identity.

A pivotal finding is the noticeable undercount of undocumented African immigrants in official statistics. The suggestion that their numbers might be on par with legal immigrants yet remain largely invisible in Census data leads to the compelling inference that the actual count of African immigrants in the U.S. could surpass current estimates by approximately 25%.

In California, African immigrants constitute a modest yet steadily growing segment of the broader immigrant population. Despite the state's array of services for immigrants, the distinct needs of the African immigrant community are often overlooked. This starkly contrasts with regions like Minnesota, the District of Columbia, and Maryland, where more structured approaches have been adopted to cater to their African immigrant populations.

The story of African immigrants in California and across the U.S. is one of slow but continuous integration and adaptation. This narrative unfolds against a backdrop of diverse socio-economic terrains and evolving community support mechanisms, signaling a shift in settlement patterns and epitomizing the broader narrative of African migration.

In summary, this report emphasizes the critical need for more nuanced and inclusive approaches in data collection to reflect the African immigrant community accurately. Accurately capturing their diverse experiences and contributions is vital for enriching our understanding of the U.S. demographic mosaic. The challenges African immigrants face, particularly in structural underrepresentation and identity intricacies, underscore an urgent need to acknowledge and address these barriers. Doing so is crucial not only for their equitable opportunities and integration but also for enriching the social and cultural fabric of the U.S. as a whole.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC DATES AFFECTING U.S. IMMIGRATION

The Naturalization Act of 1790, the first piece of U.S. legislation governing naturalization, laid the groundwork for foreigners to become U.S. citizens. This Act limited naturalization to “free white persons” of “good moral character” who had lived in the United States for at least two years and had given notice of their intention to become citizens at least a year before. It also required applicants to give up any titles of nobility and swear allegiance to the United States Constitution. Reflecting the young nation’s early immigration policies, the Act was quite restrictive in its racial and gender qualifications, excluding non-white people and, indirectly, women from the naturalization process.

1875 United States Supreme Court landmark decision affirming that the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over immigration regulation. This decision established a significant precedent by clarifying that individual states do not have the authority to enact their own immigration laws. Before this decision, states had occasionally passed their own immigration policies, resulting in a patchwork of inconsistent and conflicting regulations. The Supreme Court’s decision centralized immigration control, establishing a consistent, nationally governed approach to managing foreign nationals’ entry and residency in the United States. This decision laid the groundwork for developing federal immigration laws and policies.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was a landmark federal law in American history, the first and only time a specific ethnic group was targeted for exclusion from immigration. The Act prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years and declared Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization as U.S. citizens. It was initially intended to last a decade, but it was repeatedly extended and effectively made permanent until it was repealed in 1943. The Chinese Exclusion Act had profound and lasting impacts on the Chinese American community, and it set a precedent for more restrictive immigration policies based on race and nationality in the United States.

The Alien Contract Labor Law of 1885 prohibited the importation and migration of foreigners and aliens under contract or agreement to perform labor in the United States, effectively prohibiting employers from contracting foreign laborers.

The 1887 amendment to the Alien Contract Labor Law of 1885 broadened the restrictions on contracting foreign laborers and added more stringent enforcement measures. These laws marked a shift in U.S. immigration policy toward greater labor market regulation, as well as an early step in a larger movement to control and restrict immigration based on economic and labor considerations.

The Immigration Act of 1891 centralized immigration under federal control. This Act expanded on previous federal immigration laws by establishing a framework for the inspection, admission, rejection, and processing of immigrants at U.S. ports of entry. It also represented a significant step forward in the evolution of U.S. immigration policy, reflecting a growing national interest in better managing immigration and addressing related issues.

The Ellis Island Immigration Center, 1892, became the primary entry point for millions of immigrants arriving in the United States. Ellis Island, located in New York Harbor, was the nation’s busiest immigrant inspection station from 1892 to 1954. The facility was built in response to the growing number of immigrants and the need for a more organized and centralized system for their inspection and processing. Immigrants passing through Ellis Island were subjected to medical and legal examinations to determine their eligibility for entry into the United States.

The Immigration Act of 1903, also known as the Anarchist Exclusion Act, amended existing legislation to address concerns about political radicals entering the country. This Act, prompted largely by an anarchist's assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, specifically targeted anarchists, adding them to the list of individuals barred from immigrating to the United States. Furthermore, the Act included provisions for deporting non-citizens found to be anarchists after entering the country. It also expanded the excluded groups to include people with epilepsy, beggars, and prostitute importers. This legislation was an early example of the United States government restricting immigration based not only on health and economic concerns, but also on political beliefs and affiliations, reflecting the growing complexity of immigration policy in the early 20th century.

The U.S. Immigration Act of 1907 was a comprehensive law that refined and broadened immigration restrictions. It continued the practice of categorizing and excluding certain groups based on health, moral, and economic considerations. It established the concept of a "barred zone," which effectively limited immigration from most of Asia. The Act also established the Dillingham Commission, which was tasked with investigating the effects of immigration and resulted in more restrictive immigration policies in subsequent years. It was part of a larger push in the early twentieth century to control and limit immigration, reflecting widely held national concerns about immigrants' integration and impact on American society. This law significantly impacted the direction of U.S. immigration policy, resulting in more stringent restrictions in subsequent years.

The Immigration Act of 1917 (Asiatic Barred Zone Act) built on previous legislation by creating the "Asiatic Barred Zone," which barred immigrants from much of Asia and the Pacific Islands. It also instituted a literacy test for immigrants over 16, requiring them to demonstrate basic reading comprehension in any language.

The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 was enacted in response to the post-World War I surge in immigration and growing nativist sentiments. It limited the number of immigrants admitted from any country to 3% of the number of residents from that country living in the United States as of the 1910 census, resulting in a significant reduction in immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.

The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, further restricted immigration by lowering the quota to 2% based on the 1890 census, limiting immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and completely excluding those from Asia. This Act also established the United States Border Patrol.

The Alien Registration Act of 1940, also known as the Smith Act, compelled all non-citizen adult residents to register with the government. Passed in the run-up to World War II, amid growing concerns about national security, the Act's primary goal was to identify and monitor non-citizens in the United States. It required all non-citizens over 14 to be fingerprinted and registered and to notify the government if their address changed. Furthermore, the Smith Act made it illegal to advocate for the overthrow of the United States government, and it was later used during the Cold War to prosecute people suspected of communist ties.

The Internal Security Act of 1950, also known as the McCarran Act, was a watershed moment in U.S. legislative history, reflecting Cold War concerns about internal security and communism. This Act was intended to combat perceived threats to national security by enhancing the government's ability to monitor and control the activities of suspected dissident individuals and organizations. It required Communist organizations to register with the government and set up procedures for investigating and prosecuting suspected dissenters. Furthermore, the Act authorized the detention of potentially dangerous individuals during times of national emergency, broadening the government's authority over internal

security. The McCarran Act responded to the anxieties of the time and contributed to the intensity of anti-communist efforts in the United States during the Cold War era.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, was a major piece of U.S. legislation that codified and reformed immigration laws. While it made progress by eliminating race-based immigration restrictions and making all races eligible for naturalization, it controversially maintained the national origins quota system, which favored Northern and Western European immigrants while discriminating against Asians, Africans, and other non-European nationalities. Reflecting Cold War tensions, the Act included strict anti-communist measures and expanded government deportation powers. It also established a preference system for skilled workers and encouraged family reunification. Despite its progress, the Act was criticized for its discriminatory aspects. It laid the groundwork for future reforms, culminating in the Immigration and Nationality Act 1965, which would eventually dismantle the quota system.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, was a landmark piece of U.S. legislation that fundamentally altered American immigration policy and demographics. Signed during the Civil Rights Movement, the Act repealed the racially discriminatory National Origins Formula of the 1920s, allowing immigration into previously restricted regions such as Asia and Africa. It implemented a new preference system that prioritized family reunification and job skills, established annual immigration limits with a per-country cap, and significantly expanded the immigrant population, with a notable increase from Asian and Latin American countries. The Act also amended refugee and asylum policies, granting the President the authority to set annual refugee admissions.

The Immigration Act of 1968, which built on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, refined U.S. immigration policy. It modified the visa quota system established in 1965 to limit immigration from the Western Hemisphere. It established a ceiling of 120,000 immigrants per year with a per-country limit, aligning it with the Eastern Hemisphere's restrictions. However, it did not extend the same preference system based on family reunification and skills to Western Hemisphere countries, a gap that will be addressed in future legislation. Furthermore, the Act modified non-quota categories, particularly for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens.

The Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1976, enacted during President Gerald Ford's administration, overhauled the immigrant preference system, aiming for a more equitable distribution of visas among various immigrant categories, including family members and skilled workers. A significant reform was the implementation of numerical limits on immigration from Western Hemisphere countries, which aligned with existing caps on Eastern Hemisphere countries. This resulted in a uniform global immigration ceiling, eliminating the previous distinction between hemispheres. The Act also prioritized family reunification by exempting immediate relatives of U.S. citizens from the caps while imposing limits on family-preference visas. Furthermore, it facilitated the adjustment of status to permanent residency for refugees in the U.S. for at least two years and refined employment-based immigration categories to better fit

The Refugee Act 1980, signed by President Jimmy Carter, changed U.S. refugee and asylum policy. It standardized the definition of a refugee in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which defined refugees as people who are unable or unwilling to return to their home country due to fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or other factors. The Act established a standardized process for refugee admissions, establishing an annual ceiling set by the President in consultation with Congress, thereby moving away from the previous ad hoc approach. It also provided federal funding for refugee resettlement, including financial assistance and social services, to help refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency once they arrived in the United States. The Act formalized the asylum process for individuals in the United States or at ports of entry and established the

Office of Refugee Resettlement to coordinate refugee resettlement. It allowed the President to address unforeseen refugee crises by allowing emergency admissions beyond the annual limit.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, signed by President Ronald Reagan, was a watershed moment in American immigration history, addressing all aspects of immigration comprehensively. A key feature was the legalization program for undocumented immigrants, which provided a path to legal status for those who arrived in the United States before January 1, 1982, resulting in millions of legalizations. IRCA implemented sanctions against employers who hire people without legal work status, a first in national immigration policy. It also established the Special Agricultural Workers (S.A.W.) program, which allows certain farmworkers to become permanent residents. The Act significantly strengthened border security by increasing funding and resources for the United States Border Patrol and improving internal enforcement of immigration laws. IRCA changed legal immigration policies, particularly for temporary and seasonal agricultural workers, and imposed new employment documentation requirements, requiring employers to verify and keep records of their employees' work eligibility. This comprehensive Act represented a significant shift in the United States' approach to legal and illegal immigration.

The Immigration Act 1990, signed by President George H.W. Bush, instituted significant changes. It significantly increased the legal immigration limit. The Diversity Visa Lottery was a key innovation designed to diversify the immigrant population in the United States by granting visas to nationals from countries with low immigration rates. The Act divided visa categories into three categories: family-sponsored, employment-based, and diversity immigrants, with separate allocations for each. It expanded employment-based immigration, creating categories ranging from highly skilled to unskilled labor. Family-based immigration was also revised, with more visas available for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and new categories for other family-sponsored immigrants. The Act reformed asylum and refugee procedures, establishing time limits for asylum applications and granting the President the authority to determine annual refugee admissions. It also codified Temporary Protected Status (T.P.S.), which allows nationals from specific countries to stay in the United States temporarily under certain conditions and imposes penalties for employment discrimination based on national origin or citizenship status.

The U.S.A. Patriot Act of 2001 significantly expanded the powers of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in various areas. It increased its surveillance capabilities and amended the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to make obtaining warrants for foreign surveillance easier. The Act increased scrutiny of individuals entering the United States and monitored foreign nationals within the country. It included measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing and stricter penalties for related financial crimes. Immigration laws were significantly changed, allowing for the detention and deportation of non-citizens associated with terrorist activities, as well as broadening the definition of terrorist activities and material support. The Act promoted inter-agency information sharing to better prevent and respond to terrorist threats and established new terrorism-related crimes and penalties. It allowed for "sneak and peek" warrants, permitting searches without immediate notification.

USCIS 2003. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) was established on March 1, 2003, as part of a federal agency reorganization following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The Homeland Security Act of 2002, signed by President George W. Bush, resulted in the most extensive reorganization of the U.S. federal government in recent history, establishing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.), previously part of the Department of Justice, was dissolved to create the USCIS. The I.N.S.'s responsibilities were divided into three agencies under DHS: USCIS, which took over service functions such as processing immigration applications, naturalization, and asylum; Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.), which oversees enforcing immigration and customs laws; and Customs and Border Protection (C.B.P.), which manages border security.

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) 2012. Enabled undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children to receive a renewable two-year deferral from deportation and become eligible for a work permit.

Immigration Executive Actions, 2014. President Obama announced a series of executive actions to reform U.S. immigration policy. These actions included expanding the DACA program, removing the age cap, and extending the arrival date, allowing more undocumented immigrants who arrived as children to apply. The actions also aimed to improve visa processing for highly skilled workers, graduates, and entrepreneurs, increasing their employment flexibility and mobility. The provisional waiver program was expanded to include more family members, facilitating reunification. A significant shift in deportation policy prioritized criminals and national security threats over families and people without clean criminal records. Efforts were made to modernize and streamline the visa system to reduce backlogs and improve efficiency, as well as initiatives to promote naturalization among eligible permanent residents, making the process more accessible and clearer.

Travel Ban, 2017. President Trump issued Executive Order 13769, also known as the “Muslim ban” or the “travel ban,” suspending entry of nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries. This order faced legal challenges and was amended in subsequent orders.

Zero Tolerance Policy, 2018. This policy required the criminal prosecution of all adults who illegally entered the country. It resulted in family separations at the border because children could not be held in federal custody alongside their parents.

Migrant Protection Protocols (M.P.P.), 2019: The “Remain in Mexico” policy required asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border to wait in Mexico while their immigration cases were heard in U.S. courts.