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African Immigrants in the United States

JULY 21, 2011 SPOTLIGHT | By Kristen McCabe

While the trans-Atlantic slave trade brought large numbers of Africans to the United States as forced migrants from the 16th to the 19th centuries, significant voluntary migration from Africa to the United States did not begin in earnest until the 1980s. From 1980 to 2009, the African-born population in United States grew from just under 200,000 to almost 1.5 million. Today, Africans make up a small (3.9 percent) but growing share of the country's 38.5 million immigrants.

In 2009, almost two-thirds of African immigrants were from Eastern and Western Africa, but no individually reported country accounted for more than 14.1 percent of the foreign born from the Africa region. The top countries of origin for the African born were Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya.

Classes of admission for African immigrants who gained lawful permanent residence in 2010 were also diverse, with 48 percent having done so through family relationships, 24 percent through the diversity visa program, 22 percent as refugees and asylees, 5 percent through employment, and the rest through other means.

Compared to the foreign born overall, African immigrants reported higher levels of English proficiency and educational attainment in 2009, and were more likely to be of working age and to participate in the labor force. Yet African immigrants were also more likely to be recent arrivals to the United States and to live in households with an annual income below the poverty line. Overall, striking differences are evident across African origin countries, with some refugee-origin countries appearing as outliers in certain measures of immigrant integration.

This Spotlight focuses on African immigrants residing in the United States, and examines the population's size, geographic distribution, admission categories, legal status, and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The data used are the most recent detailed data available and come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2000 Decennial Census (as well as earlier censuses), and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS).

Click on the bullet points below for more information.

Size and Geographic Distribution

- In 2009, about 1.5 million African immigrants resided in the United States.
- African immigrants made up 3.9 percent of all immigrants in 2009.
- Nearly two-thirds of African immigrants were from Eastern or Western Africa in 2009.
- The top countries of origin for African immigrants were Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya.
- Over one-third of all African immigrants resided in New York, California, Texas, and Maryland.
- Almost one-quarter of the African-born population lived in the metropolitan areas of New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV.
- About one in five immigrants in the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI metropolitan area was born in Africa.
- There were 3.5 million self-identified members of the African diaspora residing in the United States in 2009.

Definitions

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the **foreign born** as individuals who had no U.S. citizenship at birth. The foreign-born population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees, asylees, legal nonimmigrants (including those on student, work, or certain other types of temporary visas), and persons residing in the country without authorization.

The terms "foreign born" and "immigrant" are used interchangeably.

Modes of Entry and Legal Status

- From 2001 to 2010, African nationals accounted for 28.4 percent of refugee arrivals and 21.2 percent of persons granted asylum.
- An estimated 4,550 Africans received temporary protection from removal under Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure.
- Nearly half of all immigrants who received green cards through the diversity visa lottery program in 2010 were born in Africa.
- Over 860,000 African immigrants gained lawful permanent residence in the United States between 2001 and 2010.
- Naturalization rates for the African born and the foreign born overall were comparable in 2009.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

- Almost half of the African foreign born in the United States have arrived since 2000.
- The foreign born from Africa were less likely to be age 65 or older than the native born and the foreign born overall.
- African immigrant men outnumbered women in 2009.
- More than seven out of ten African immigrants spoke only English or spoke English "very well."
- Nearly three-quarters of African immigrants reported their race as "Black."
- African-born adults were more likely than the native born to have bachelor's degree or higher level of education.

- African immigrants of both genders were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than were foreign-born men and women overall.
- More than 30 percent of employed African-born men worked in service occupations and in construction, extraction, and transportation.
- The African born were more likely to live in poverty in 2009 than were the native born and the foreign born overall.
- Roughly 714,000 children resided with least one African-born parent in 2009.

Size and Geographic Distribution

In 2009, about 1.5 million African immigrants resided in the United States.

The number of African immigrants in the United States has increased more than 40-fold over the past 50 years, growing from 35,355 in 1960 to almost 1.5 million in 2009.

This growth has been driven in large part by increasing numbers of immigrants from Eastern Africa and Western Africa, who made up almost two-thirds of the entire African immigrant population. Although pre-1980 estimates of these two populations are not available, the numeric growth of the Western African (which grew by 492,030) and Eastern African (397,262) immigrant populations from 1980 to 2009 each outweighed that of African populations from any other individually reported region.

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African immigrants made up 3.9 percent of all immigrants in 2009.

The foreign born from Africa accounted for 3.9 percent of the country's 38.5 million immigrants in 2009.

Although African immigrants account for a relatively small percent of the total foreign born, the share of African-born immigrants has increased consistently over the past 50 years. Though African immigrants represented only 0.4 percent of all foreign born in 1960, this share grew to 1.4 percent in 1980, to 1.8 percent in 1990, and to 2.8 percent in 2000 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Total and African Foreign-Born Populations, 1960 to 2009

Year	Total foreign born	African born	
		Number	Share of total foreign born
1960	9,738,091	35,355	0.4%
1970	9,619,302	80,143	0.8%
1980	14,079,906	199,723	1.4%
1990	19,797,316	363,819	1.8%
2000	31,107,889	881,300	2.8%
2009	38,517,104	1,492,785	3.9%

Source: Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; 2009 data from the American Community Survey 2009. Data for earlier decades from Campbell Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper No. 29, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1999). **Available online.**

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Nearly two-thirds of African immigrants were from Eastern or Western Africa in 2009.

In 2009, about two-thirds (64.7 percent, or 965,330) of African immigrants in the United States were born in Western Africa or Eastern Africa (see Regional Designations sidebar).

Western Africa was the leading region of birth for African immigrants with 542,032 individuals (or 36.3 percent of all African immigrants), followed by Eastern Africa (28.4 percent; 423,298), Northern Africa (17.7 percent; 264,536), Southern Africa (5.7 percent; 85,145), and Middle Africa (4.4 percent; 65,457). For the remaining African immigrants (7.5 percent; 112,317), information on the region of birth was not available.

The shares of African immigrants born in Western, Eastern, and Middle Africa have increased substantially since 1980, the first year data is available for these regions. Conversely, the share of the African born from Northern Africa has decreased each decade since 1960, and the share from Southern Africa has decreased each decade since 1990 (see Table 2).

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The top countries of origin for African immigrants were Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya.

In 2009, the top five countries of origin for the 1.5 million African immigrants in the United States were Nigeria (209,908, or 14.1 percent of all African immigrants), Ethiopia (148,221, or 9.9 percent), Egypt (138,194, or 9.3 percent), Ghana (108,647, or 7.3 percent), and Kenya (87,267, or 5.8 percent). No individually reported country accounted for more than 14.1 percent of the African immigrant population.

Other individually reported countries of birth for African immigrants included: South Africa (82,339, or 5.5 percent), Liberia (72,111, or 4.8), Morocco (58,283, or 3.9 percent), Sudan (35,821, or 2.4 percent), Cape Verde (32,885, or 2.2 percent), Sierra Leone (32,467, or 2.2 percent), Cameroon (30,726, or 2.1 percent), and Eritrea (23,840, or 1.6 percent).

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Regional Designations

Eastern Africa includes the British Indian Ocean Territory, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Europa Island, Glorioso Islands, Juan de Nova Island, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Reunion Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Tromelin Island, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Middle Africa includes Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Gabon, and Sao Tome & Principe.

Northern Africa includes Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara.

Southern Africa includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland.

Western Africa includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, St. Helena, and Togo.

Note: Regions are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. More information about how regions, subregions, and countries are coded by the U.S. Census Bureau can be found [here](#).

Over one-third of all African immigrants resided in New York, California, Texas, and Maryland.

New York had the largest number of African immigrants in 2009 with 168,426 individuals, or 11.3 percent of the total African-born population, followed by California (143,214, or 9.6 percent), Texas (124,691, or 8.4 percent), and Maryland (117,315, or 7.9 percent). The African-born in these states collectively accounted for 37.1 percent of all African immigrants.

Other states with African immigrant populations greater than 60,000 in 2009 included New Jersey (79,420, or 5.3 percent), Massachusetts (76,832, or 5.1 percent), Georgia (75,692, or 5.1 percent), Virginia (69,941, or 4.7 percent), and Minnesota (63,982, or 4.3 percent).

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Table 2. African Immigrants by Region of Birth, 1960 - 2009

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2009
Africa total	35355	80143	199723	363819	881,300	1,492,785
Eastern Africa	(NA)	(NA)	26036	72300	213,299	423298
Middle Africa	(NA)	(NA)	3719	8800	26,900	65,457
Northern Africa	15903	32396	69777	99044	190,491	264,536
Southern Africa	(NA)	(NA)	16103	34707	66,496	85,145
Western Africa	(NA)	(NA)	50002	111566	326,507	542032
Africa n.e.c.	5756	21400	34086	37402	57,607	112,317
Africa total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Eastern Africa	(NA)	(NA)	13.0%	19.9%	24.2%	28.4%
Middle Africa	(NA)	(NA)	1.9%	2.4%	3.1%	4.4%
Northern Africa	45.0%	40.4%	34.9%	27.2%	21.6%	17.7%
Southern Africa	(NA)	(NA)	8.1%	9.5%	7.5%	5.7%
Western Africa	(NA)	(NA)	25.0%	30.7%	37.0%	36.3%
Africa n.e.c.	16.3%	26.7%	17.1%	10.3%	6.5%	7.5%

Note: Data is not available where (NA) is indicated; "n.e.c" stands for not elsewhere classified.

Source: Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; 2009 data from the American Community Survey 2009. Data for earlier decades from Campbell Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (US Census Bureau Working Paper No. 29, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1999). **Available online.**

Almost one-quarter of the African-born population lived in the metropolitan areas of New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV.

In 2009, 14.2 percent (211,560) of the African-born population lived in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA metropolitan area and 9.9 percent (147,336) lived in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV metropolitan area.

Other metropolitan areas with African immigrant populations greater than 60,000 included Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA (67,535, or 4.5 percent) and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (61,326, or 4.1 percent).

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About one in five immigrants in the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI metropolitan area was born in Africa.

African immigrants accounted for 19.2 percent (57,154) of all immigrants in the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro area in 2009.

Other metropolitan areas where more than one in ten immigrants was born in Africa included the Baltimore-Towson, MD Metro Area (14.5 percent) and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area (13.4 percent).

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There were 3.5 million self-identified members of the African diaspora residing in the United States in 2009.

Of the 3.5 million self-identified members of the African diaspora residing in the United States in 2009, 53.7 percent were U.S. citizens at birth (either born in the United States or born abroad to at least one U.S.-born parent) and 46.3 percent were foreign born.

While the vast majority (92.2 percent) of foreign-born members of the African diaspora were born in Africa, 3.8 percent reported a birthplace in the Caribbean and 1.5 percent reported a birthplace in Europe.

Note: There is no universally recognized definition of the term "diaspora." Most often, the term includes individuals who self-identify as having ancestral ties to a specific country of origin. To calculate the size of the African diaspora in the United States, we included all immigrants born in Africa (excluding individuals born in the Africa to at least one U.S.-born parent) and all individuals who selected a U.S. Census-designated African country, "African," "West African," or "Other Sub-Saharan Africa" (either alone or in combination with another option) as a response to the two ACS questions on ancestry.

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Modes of Entry and Legal Status

From 2001 to 2010, African nationals accounted for 28.4 percent of refugee arrivals and 21.2 percent of persons granted asylum.

African nationals arriving in the United States as refugees between 2001 and 2010 accounted for 28.4 percent (149,755) of total refugee arrivals during this period. Refugee arrivals from Somalia alone during this time accounted for 11.3 percent of all refugee arrivals.

Between 2001 to 2010, the leading origin countries of African refugee arrivals were Somalia (59,840, or 40.0 percent of total African refugee arrivals), Liberia (23,948, or 16.0 percent), Sudan (18,869, or 12.6 percent), Ethiopia (11,400, or 7.6 percent), Burundi (9,869, or 6.6 percent), the Democratic Republic of Congo (7,900, or 5.3 percent), Eritrea 6,493, or 4.3 percent), and Sierra Leone (6,280, or 4.2 percent).

During the same period, African nationals accounted for 21.2 percent (58,232) of the 274,848 total individuals granted asylum. The leading countries of origin for African nationals granted asylum were Ethiopia (17.1 percent of total African asylum grants), Cameroon (10.5 percent), and Egypt (8.5 percent).

Back to the top**An estimated 4,550 Africans received temporary protection from removal under Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure.**

The United States provides temporary immigration status to certain foreign nationals already in the United States who are not able to return to their country of origin due to "ongoing armed conflict," "an environmental disaster," or "other extraordinary and temporary conditions." This blanket form of humanitarian relief is known as Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Foreign countries are designated for TPS by the U.S. executive branch for a period of six to 18 months, an initial period that can be extended if country conditions remain unchanged. Congress can also grant TPS through legislation, although it has not done so since 1990.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has estimated that 700 individuals from Sudan and 250 individuals from Somalia benefit from TPS. USCIS has also estimated that 3,600 Liberians reside in the United States under Deferred Enforced Departure, another form of temporary blanket relief that protects certain foreign nationals from removal.

Back to the top**Nearly half of all immigrants who received green cards through the diversity visa lottery program in 2010 were born in Africa.**

Established by the Immigration Act of 1990, the U.S. Diversity Immigrant Visa program offers certain persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States the opportunity enter a "green card lottery" administered by the U.S. Department of State. The African born accounted for 48.0 percent (or 23,903) of the 49,763 persons who obtained legal permanent residence through the program in 2010.

Although diversity immigrants make up only a small share of persons granted LPR status each year (4.8 percent in 2010), diversity immigrants from five African countries – Ethiopia (3,987), Egypt (3,447), Nigeria (2,937), Kenya (2,279), and Ghana (2,086) – collectively accounted for 14.5 percent of all Africans who obtained legal permanent residence in 2010.

Back to the top**Over 860,000 African immigrants gained lawful permanent residence in the United States between 2001 and 2010.**

Among the 10.5 million immigrants granted lawful permanent residence (i.e., green cards) from 2001 to 2010, 8.2 percent (860,447) were born in Africa.

In 2010 alone, 101,355 African immigrants obtained green cards, accounting for 9.7 percent of all immigrants granted legal permanent residence. The foreign born from Africa gained legal permanent residence through varying routes: 48.3 percent obtained green cards through family relationships, 23.6 percent through the U.S. diversity immigrant visa program, 22.3 percent as refugees or asylees; 5.2 percent through employment, and 0.6 through other routes.

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Naturalization rates for the African born and the foreign born overall were comparable in 2009.

As of 2009, about 43.7 percent of African immigrants were naturalized U.S. citizens. This is about the same share of the overall immigrant population that are naturalized U.S. citizens.

About 60.1 percent of immigrants from Egypt were naturalized U.S. citizens, making them the most likely of all African immigrants to naturalize. Immigrants from Algeria (56.1 percent), Sierra Leone (54.7 percent), Eritrea (53.1 percent), and Morocco (52.8 percent) were also more likely to become naturalized U.S. citizens than other African immigrant groups. Naturalization rates were comparatively lower for the African born from Cameroon (24.0 percent), Senegal (26.2 percent), Zimbabwe (32.2), and Kenya (33.6 percent).

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Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview

Almost half of the African foreign born in the United States have arrived since 2000.

As of 2009, 47.7 percent of the 1.5 million African immigrants in the United States entered the country in 2000 or later, and 28.8 percent entered between 1990 and 1999. Thus, more than three-quarters of the African born arrived in the United States in the last two decades. In terms of earlier arrivals, 13.7 percent of African-born immigrants came to the United States between 1980 and 1989, 6.5 percent between 1970 and 1979, and just 3.2 percent prior to 1970.

In fact, African immigrants are significantly more likely than immigrants overall to be recent arrivals: 31.6 percent of the 38.5 million foreign born entered the United States in 2000 or later, 27.9 percent entered between 1990 and 1999, and 19.6 percent entered between 1980 and 1989. Eleven percent of the overall foreign-born population entered between 1970 and 1979, and 9.9 percent prior to 1970.

Among the African born, some origin groups are more established than others. For example, immigrants from Egypt (23.3 percent), Cape Verde (17.7 percent), South Africa (15.8 percent), and Algeria (13.4 percent) are more likely than some other African origin groups to have arrived in the United States prior to 1980, while immigrants from Cameroon (71.6 percent), Sudan (60.4 percent), Somalia (58.3 percent), and Kenya (58.0 percent) are the most likely among African origin groups to have arrived in the United States between 2000 and 2009.

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The foreign born from Africa were less likely to be age 65 or older than the native born and the foreign born overall.

Of the African born residing in the United States in 2009, 5.5 percent were age 65 or older (seniors), compared with 12.9 percent of the native born and 12.4 percent of all immigrants. The vast majority (86 percent) of African immigrants were of working age (ages 16 through 64), while a smaller majority of the foreign-born population (81.9 percent) and the native born (63.3 percent) fell into this age range.

African immigrants were more likely to be age 15 and under (youths) than the foreign born overall, with 8.5 percent of the former falling into that age range compared with 5.7 percent of the latter. Among the native born, a category that includes U.S.-born children of immigrants, 23.8 percent were youth.

The African origin countries with the highest share of seniors were Egypt (15.1 percent), Cape Verde (12.2 percent), Tanzania (10.9 percent), South Africa (10.3 percent), and Algeria (10.2 percent). African origin countries with the highest share of youth included Kenya (17.6 percent), Cape Verde (12.6 percent), Sudan (11.3 percent), Ethiopia (10.3 percent), and Guinea (10.2 percent).

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African immigrant men outnumbered women in 2009.

Of all African immigrants residing in the United States in 2009, 53.6 percent were men and 46.4 percent were women. In contrast, the native born (50.8 percent women) and immigrants overall (50.1 percent women) had more balanced gender distributions, both weighted slightly toward more women.

The gender imbalance among African immigrants was more pronounced among those from certain African countries. For example, the tilt towards men was more exaggerated for immigrants born in Senegal (63.7 percent men), Morocco (59.0 percent), Tanzania (58.3 percent), Ghana (57.6), and Guinea (57.6), while the African born from Zimbabwe (51.7 percent women), Somalia (51.3 percent), Sierra Leone (50.6 percent), and Cape Verde (50.2 percent) were more likely to be women.

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More than seven out of ten African immigrants spoke only English or spoke English "very well."

In 2009, 22.4 percent of African immigrants age 5 and older reported speaking only English, and 48.5 percent reported speaking English "very well." In contrast, 2.0 percent of all African immigrants reported not speaking English at all, 19.8 percent reported speaking English "well," and 7.3 percent reported speaking English, "but not well." Overall, 29.1 percent of African immigrants were Limited English Proficient (LEP), meaning that they reported speaking English less than "very well."

The African born were significantly less likely to be LEP than the foreign-born population overall, 52.0 percent of which reported limited English proficiency in 2009.

Rates of English proficiency varied substantially by African country of origin, due in part to the variety of languages spoken across African countries. Among African immigrants, those from Cape Verde were most likely to be LEP (60.9 percent), followed by those from Somalia (56.8 percent), Senegal (52.4 percent), Eritrea (51.5 percent), Guinea (47.9 percent), and Sudan (46.6 percent). The highest rates of English proficiency (i.e., speaking only English or speaking English "very well") for African immigrants occurred among immigrants from South Africa (96.9 percent), Zimbabwe (93.6 percent), Liberia (92.0 percent), Nigeria (87.0 percent), Uganda (86.2 percent), and Sierra Leone (81.6 percent).

Note: The term "limited English proficient" refers to any person age 5 and older who reported speaking English "not at all," "not well," or "well" on their survey questionnaire. Individuals who reported speaking only English or

speaking English "very well" are considered proficient in English.

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Nearly three-quarters of African immigrants reported their race as "Black."

In 2009, 74.4 percent of the African-born population reported their race as Black, either alone or in combination with another race. African immigrants identified as Black at a much higher rate than the native born (14.0 percent) and the foreign born overall (8.6 percent), and accounted for 33.3 percent of all foreign-born Blacks and 2.7 percent the total Black population in the United States.

Racial self-identification varied widely by African country of origin. For example, nearly all immigrants from Ghana (99.7 percent), Somalia (99.3 percent), Cameroon (98.8 percent), Nigeria (98.7 percent), and Ethiopia (98.2 percent) reported their race as Black, either alone or in combination with another race, compared to 4.6 percent of Algerians, 5.6 percent of Egyptians, 8.1 percent of Moroccans, 13.8 percent of South Africans, 56.7 percent of Tanzanians, and 65.7 percent of Cape Verdeans.

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African-born adults were more likely than the native born to have bachelor's degree or higher level of education.

In 2009, 41.7 percent of African-born adults age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 28.1 percent of native-born adults and 26.8 percent of all foreign-born adults. Of these, 25 percent of Africans reported a bachelor's degree as their highest credential, compared to 17.9 percent of the native born and 15.8 percent of immigrants, and 16.7 percent of Africans reported having a higher degree than a bachelor's, compared to 10.2 percent of the native born and 11.0 percent of immigrants.

Among those who reported not having obtained at least a high school diploma or equivalent credential, the African born more closely resembled the native born than the foreign born overall. In 2009, almost one-third (32.3 percent) of immigrants overall had not obtained this credential, compared to 11.7 percent of the African born and 11.4 percent of the native born. The share of African born who reported their highest educational attainment as a high school diploma or some college (46.6 percent) was higher than that of the foreign born overall (40.5 percent), but lower than that of the native born (60.5).

Levels of educational attainment, however, vary widely among African origin countries. The majority of immigrants from Uganda (66.5 percent), Egypt (61.1 percent), Algeria (61.0 percent), Nigeria (60.0 percent), Zimbabwe (57.5 percent), South Africa (55.3 percent), Cameroon (54.6 percent), and Tanzania (51.2 percent) reported a bachelor's degree or more as their highest educational credential. Yet more than a third of immigrants from Cape Verde (38.4), Somalia (37.5 percent), and Guinea (35.0 percent) lacked a high school diploma.

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African immigrants of both genders were more likely to participate in the civilian labor force than were foreign-born men and women overall.

African-born men age 16 and older had higher rates of civilian labor force participation (83.7 percent) in 2009

than did African-born women (67.2 percent). Yet both African-born men and women were more likely to be in the civilian labor force (i.e., to be employed or seeking employment) than were foreign-born men (80.0 percent) and foreign-born women (57.4 percent) overall. African immigrant men and women were also more likely than native-born men (69.1 percent) and native-born women (60.2 percent) to participate in the labor force.

While labor force participation rates for men from individually reported African origin countries did not dip below 67.2 percent (the percentage for Cape Verde), rates of labor force participation for women varied widely between African origin countries.

For example, while women born in Uganda (86.3 percent), Ghana (78.3 percent), Zimbabwe (76.2 percent), Cameroon (76.0 percent), Cape Verde (74.2 percent), and Kenya (73.7 percent), among other countries, exhibited above-average rates of labor force participation for African immigrant women, those from Algeria (36.5 percent), Egypt (49.4 percent), Somalia (50.8 percent), Morocco (53.0 percent), and Sudan (58.5 percent) – all countries with large Muslim populations – were less likely to be in the labor force.

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More than 30 percent of employed African-born men worked in service occupations and in construction, extraction, and transportation.

Among the 543,123 African-born male workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force in 2009, 15.9 percent reported working in construction, extraction, and transportation and 15.1 percent reported working in services. Additionally, 12.5 percent reported working in management, business, and finance professions and 10.7 percent reported working in sales.

Compared to male immigrants overall, African-born male workers were more likely to report working as health-care practitioners and in other health-care support occupations (see Table 3).

Among the 369,167 African-born female workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force, 18.7 percent reported working in service occupations, 13.9 percent in healthcare support, 13.1 percent in administrative support occupations, 9.0 percent in sales, and 9.0 percent in management, business, and finance roles.

Compared to female immigrants overall, African-born female workers were more likely to report working as registered nurses, other non-physician healthcare practitioners, and in healthcare support occupations (see Table 3).

Table 3: Occupations of Employed Workers in the Civilian Labor Force Age 16 and Older by Gender and Origin, 2009

	African born		Foreign born (total)	
		Female	Male	Female
Number of persons age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force	547,123	369,167	13,143,161	9,377,865
Total (percent)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Management, business, finance	12.5%	9.0%	10.7%	10.5%
Information technology	4.4%	1.2%	4.2%	1.9%
Other sciences and engineering	5.1%	1.5%	4.0%	2.2%

Social services and legal	2.9%	4.0%	1.1%	2.0%
Education, training and media, entertainment	5.3%	8.2%	3.5%	7.3%
Physicians	2.6%	1.4%	1.3%	1.0%
Registered nurses	1.4%	8.2%	0.4%	3.6%
Other health care practitioners	3.5%	5.9%	1.1%	3.2%
Healthcare support	3.3%	13.9%	0.7%	5.6%
Services	15.1%	18.7%	18.5%	26.5%
Sales	10.7%	9.0%	7.8%	10.3%
Administrative support	7.4%	13.1%	5.3%	14.2%
Farming, fishing, forestry	*	*	2.7%	1.0%
Construction, extraction, transportation	15.9%	1.8%	24.5%	3.0%
Manufacturing, installation, repair	9.7%	4.1%	14.2%	7.8%

Note: * indicates that sample sizes are not sufficiently large for reporting.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2009 American Community Survey. Accessed from Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2010.

Available online.

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The African born were more likely to live in poverty in 2009 than were the native born and the foreign born overall.

In 2009, a greater share of African immigrants lived in a household with an annual income below the federal poverty line (18.5 percent) than the native born (13.6 percent) and immigrants overall (17.3 percent).

There were substantial differences between origin countries with respect to the share living in poverty. For example, immigrants from Nigeria (10.6 percent), Morocco (10.8 percent), Sierra Leone (13.5 percent), and Ghana (14.6 percent) were much less likely than African immigrants overall to live below the federal poverty line. In contrast, almost half of all immigrants from Somalia (49.9 percent) live in poverty, and poverty rates for immigrants from Guinea (42.7 percent) and Sudan (41.2 percent) are also well above the average for African immigrants overall. Somalia and Sudan have both accounted for a large number of refugee admissions over the past decade.

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Roughly 714,000 children resided with at least one African-born parent in 2009.

In 2009, about 714,000 children under the age of 18 – or 4.5 percent of the 15.9 million total children under 18 who lived in immigrant families – resided in a household with at least one immigrant parent born in Africa.

Like the overall population of children with immigrant parents, the vast majority of children in African immigrant families were native born. However, this majority figure is somewhat smaller for children with African parents (80.4 percent) than for children with immigrant parents overall (86.4 percent).

Note: Includes only children who reside with at least one parent and households where either the household head or spouse is an immigrant born in Africa.

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For information about ACS methodology, sampling error, and nonsampling error, click **here**.

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