

**MAPPING THE JOURNEY:
HEALTH AND WEALTH, LOVE AND LUCK,
FROM AFRICA TO LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES**

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ABSTRACT

It is widely believed that black immigration to the United States has increased in recent years and that this increase is due to the provision of U.S. immigration law by which 50,000 immigrant visas are awarded every year by lottery. This paper uses newly available data to describe the new black immigration.

Because the large microdata bases in the United States focus on the set of all foreign-born, as opposed to legal immigrants, little has heretofore been known about the characteristics and behavior of legal immigrants and their pathways to U.S. legal residence. A new longitudinal data base, the New Immigrant Survey, makes it possible, for the first time, to examine a probability sample from a well-defined population – all persons admitted to legal permanent residence in a given year. The first full cohort of the NIS is the immigrant cohort of 2003. Respondents were interviewed soon after admission to LPR (within 17 weeks, on average), and a second round of interviews of the same respondents is planned for early 2007.

The NIS Adult Sample, in which adult immigrants are the sampled respondents, includes 8,573 immigrants, plus their spouses; additionally, children aged 3-12 received cognitive assessments, and a sample of children aged 8-12 was interviewed. In the Adult Sample, 1,107 respondents identified themselves as black; weighting for the sampling stratification by visa category, the black subsample constitutes approximately 11% of the Adult Sample. A little over half (51.3%) of the black subsample were born in Africa (in a total of 36 countries, with the main contingents coming from Ethiopia and Nigeria; about 47% were born in the Americas (in a total of 31 countries, with the main contingents coming from Haiti and Jamaica; the remainder (1.5%) were born in 7 countries of Europe, Asia, and Oceania.

This paper focuses on the black subsample. Initial contrasts are made between the entire black subsample and nonblacks and between Africa-born blacks, Americas-born blacks, and nonblacks. Multivariate analyses will in many cases enable assessing the net effects of the four largest countries involved (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Haiti, and Jamaica). Topical areas covered include virtually every aspect of the journey to U.S. legal permanent residence, from the duration of the

visa process and whether documents were lost to the immigrants' own gender, religion, and language to their putting down stakes by purchasing a home.

It is anticipated that this mapping of the journey will stimulate many analyses of the milestones – and of the tapestry of effects on the immigrants and their children, on the origin countries, and on the United States.