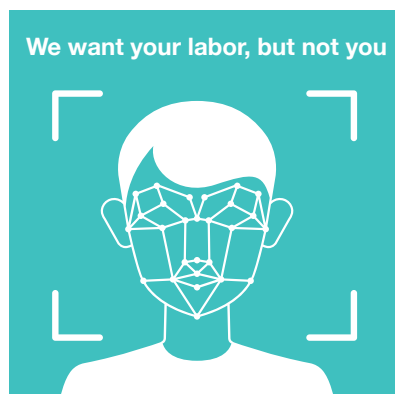# The Future of Immigration

Four Paths

Immigration reaches deep into who we are as a society. It cuts across legal frameworks, policies, and strategies. It shapes stories of cultural identity and material survival. It invents—and is reinvented by—global and local institutions. How we treat those who want to be part of our cities, our states, and our country in the future defines who we will become as Americans.

In the future of American immigration, there's no single standout story, no fated path. Instead, the country faces a complex interplay of future drivers: political economy, technology, demographics, media, culture, and of course, climate. At the same time, a diverse history of precedents belies a single history of American immigration.

This map is a guide that offers four different opening lines for a multitude of future stories for Americans, both generations-old Americans and modern American immigrants. It's also an invitation to think beyond today's questions of walls and quotas and green cards and instead craft stories that will bring 21st century America to life. The four opening lines are presented below:

Immigrants are welcome here

We want your labor, but not you

In algorithms we trust

We will not be replaced

Institute for the Future in partnership with The James Irvine Foundation and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigration and Refugees

Today, the world finds itself at a critical moment in the history of human migration

Global commerce and communications seem to supersede national borders, driving more mobility than at any other time in human history. Meanwhile, climate change is on track to displace millions of people around the world, exacerbating human suffering and threatening human survival in this century.

To steer through this critical time and make our communities ready for the complex choices of the coming decade, this map offers four starting points: four scenarios designed to launch conversations among policymakers and grantmakers, communities and businesses, families and friends. These four scenarios emerge from two fundamental variables: the economy and attitudes toward immigrants.

Economics has always been a core variable in human migration. It's a push-pull force. Struggling local economies push migrants in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Areas with strong economies pull migrants to fill the demand for productive labor. The basic measure of economic strength is growth, and the scenarios start there: two are growth scenarios and two are stories of economic stagnation. But in both growth and stagnation economies, inequalities of wealth and income can reshape the experience of immigration. So economic equality is a sub-theme of each scenario.

At the same time, attitudes toward immigrants shape the experiences of both hosts and immigrants. The Pew Research Center has surveyed the public in the United States. and worldwide to ask about a fundamental belief: Do immigrants make us stronger as a country or weaker? About twice as many Americans believe immigrants make us stronger, but this belief varies over time and by age cohort. The four scenarios build on this survey research to create this second core dimension of the scenarios.

The result is a classic four-square set of scenarios. In each square, subsidiary drivers— different assumptions about future climate impacts, political-economic factors, demographics, technology, media, and culture—lead to distinctly different futures for American immigration. Taken together, these form the starting-point stories for the the next decade and beyond.

DRIVERS OF THE IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Beyond the core drivers (economic growth/stagnation, immigrants will make us stronger/weaker) that define the four-square scenario map, several other forces are set to shape immigration in the coming decade. These drivers play out differently in each of the four scenarios. Here, however, are baseline forecasts:

CLIMATE CHANGE

According to The World Bank, by 2050, climate change could push as many as 120 million people to migrate locally or between countries in the most at-risk regions of the world: Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. In 2017, an estimated 22–24 million people in these regions were forced to move by "sudden-onset" weather events, according to the Brookings Institution. In response to either chronic environmental degradation or repeated sudden disasters, labor migration (working in one country while sending money home to family in another) and distress migration (escaping to temporary camps) will both increase.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Over the past few decades, a vastly more interconnected global economy has created relatively stable growth built on the so-called post-WWII political consensus. Today, however, this vision of a world of autonomous nations working together to manage a global political economy based on a free market has begun to fray under the pressures of growing wealth inequality, a slowdown in global economic growth, the rise of online disinformation, and a need for a new global energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, plutocratic governments undermine democratic institutions, fueled by globally connected networks of crime and corruption. The result is greater political and economic volatility, with more populations at risk of economic and political displacement.

DEMOGRAPHICS

U.S. immigration has been growing since 1970. Currently, immigrants and their U.S.-born children number nearly 90 million, or about 28% of the American population. In California—a state with a leading role to play in immigration—1 in 2 children has at least one immigrant parent. Nationwide, 1 in 4 workers is an immigrant, and nearly one-third of these immigrants are employed in management and professional occupations. The rest work across service jobs (16.6%), sales and office jobs (11.2%), resource and construction jobs (22.8%), and production and transportation jobs (18.6%). Meanwhile, the native-born population is also shifting in age and ethnic composition. One in 5 Americans will be over 65 in 2030, and millennials will take over as the largest single age cohort by 2020. The number of non-Hispanic whites will continue to decrease every year, reaching a plurality (but not a majority) by 2043—all while conventional categories for race, ethnicity, and gender undergo rapid redefinition, with so-called "spectrum identities" likely to supplant these categories over the coming decades.

TECHNOLOGY

Robotics and artificial intelligence dominate the forecasts for technology, with anticipated large-scale disruptions in everything from labor to security and surveillance. But demands for a new energy infrastructure will also likely drive new kinds of green jobs alongside a growing demand for a disaster-relief workforce. In addition, biotechnologies hover on the horizon, ready to reorganize food production (think lab-grown meat) while dispelling many of the long-standing beliefs about race and ethnicity. Looking further out, biotechnologies will yield more powerful tools to "engineer" biological entities, including humans, for desired traits.

MEDIA & CULTURE

Twentieth-century media—from books to newspapers to broadcast and cable news— have undergone profound changes in response to user-generated content and its automatic aggregation. This fragmentation of the media landscape sets the conditions for the proliferation of new forms of digital propaganda and manipulation techniques, with experiments in AI-generated personas creating a next-generation wave of news bots (software that can mimic human actions online) and "deep fakes." These have become political tools for undermining the legitimacy of nearly every institution and will continue to evolve as user-generated AI becomes mainstream over the next decade.

Immigrants are welcome here

Scenario 1: Climate changes everything. The U.S. government is pursuing an interventionist path with dual goals of reversing inequality and building a new "resilience workforce" to tackle climate change. It's a path that requires more workers skilled in everything from science to service, and immigrants figure prominently in this narrative where reinvention is the name of the game: as millennials ascend to leadership, they are reinventing the concepts of citizens, refugees, and borders just as they have reinvented everything from learning and work to food and urban lifestyles.

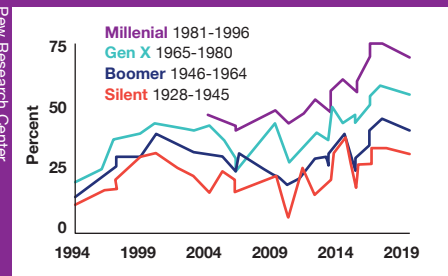## CLIMATE CHANGE
Asylum for climate refugees

The impacts of climate change escalate into worst-case scenarios around the world, driving large-scale distress migration. The world community comes together to define a new class of climate refugees, creating international agreements about the provisos of long-term asylum. In the United States, those seeking asylum from climate disruptions—and their political consequences—find a clear path to permanent residency and citizenship within five years.

In American communities, a host of immigrant programs and organizations work to build cultural and civic skills alongside work skills for the hundreds of thousands of newly protected foreign workers. Many of these programs are led by immigrants themselves. They often work in tandem with local governments and civic groups to rezone and repurpose old-economy infrastructure into new kinds of community spaces designed explicitly for cross-cultural exchange between the immigrants and the native-born—while upskilling everyone for a climate-friendly economy.

RESILIENCE WORKFORCE
A new deal for immigrants

The immigrant-friendly attitudes of 2030 are grounded in a growth economy built on the 2020 proposals for a new green deal—policies designed to put people to work on critical new green infrastructure projects and post-disaster community rehabilitation. Some of this work is hands-on labor, like the work projects of the 1930s New Deal. But it's also innovation and invention work, designed to rapidly create new products and services for more climate-responsible lifestyles.

Much of this innovation happens in the community spaces that immigrants build in conjunction with local civic groups. Communities can invest in these spaces and their products—with options to return profits to public community programs, individual participants, and the community spaces themselves. The result is a resilient cycle of investment in reinvention that keeps the gains local in the integrated immigrant-native communities that produce them.

MILLENIAL LEADERSHIP
Intersectional immigration reform

Millennials become the largest demographic age group at the start of the 2020s, electing more of their cohort to positions across city, state, and national governments. These millennial leaders bring with them a commitment to so-called intersectional movements that link race, ethnic, and gender issues to climate solutions and reform of rampant economic inequality. With a core belief that immigrants make us stronger, it's only natural for them to connect immigration reform to these solutions as well.

Their reforms are system-wide. They decriminalize unauthorized entries and overstays, making these civil rather than criminal offenses. They argue that undocumented workers represent a failure of policies, calling out "immoral borders." Cities like San Francisco, Seattle, and Houston develop blueprints for open-border jurisdictions to experiment with border-free migration. Meanwhile, immigration reforms redirect ICE and CBP resources to build strong pathways toward naturalization, including requirements to work in new climate-driven sectors and engage in civic activities that connect climate work with local community building.

We want your labor, but not you

Scenario 2: The country is aging, and immigrants are the inconvenient solution. In 2030, a strong but unequal economy and an aging population drive a resurgence of social welfare programs and low-wage care-giving jobs. But to pay for these programs, the country needs a stronger tax base and more low-wage workers. Immigrants fit the bill for both. Unfortunately, the older citizens they serve are the least immigrant-friendly: they're willing to tap immigrant labor but don't want immigrants to settle in. Instead, they seek to contain them with a second-class "guest worker" status that limits their integration into society and their prospects for citizenship.

AGING SOCIETY
The immigrant tax solution

In 2030, Baby Boomers have swelled the ranks of the older population while 25- to 64-year-old Americans have dwindled. As a result, the so-called dependency ratio—the ratio of older Americans to working-age Americans—has risen to 35%, compared to 22% in 2010. These demographics open the door to younger immigrants, especially those who can fill the demand for low-wage caregiving jobs, while increasing the tax base to pay for the safety net for older, dependent Americans.

But even though the door is open, immigrants are not actually welcome. The older population still clings to an earlier ideal of a white monoculture and resents the very workers on whom they depend. Policymakers thus seek to balance incentives for low-wage immigrants with opportunities for Americans, while maximizing the tax advantages for the country. The solution is a set of policies designed to attract poorer immigrants for short periods of work with substantial taxes.
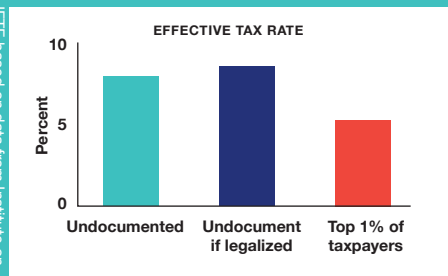
DIGITAL SECURITY
Immigrant surveillance

At the heart of this immigration strategy is the concept of the guest worker: someone with a short-term visa and no path to long-term residency or citizenship. This strategy requires continuous vigilance to make sure that guest workers don't overstay their visas—or that undocumented workers don't flood the low-wage market. Guest workers are thus submitted to near-constant surveillance with leading-edge digital technologies.

Much of this technology is passive and unobtrusive. Guest workers receive digital ID cards that are linked to their phones, credit cards, and car GPS systems, channeling data into worker profiles. The profiles are monitored, and red flags are issued when guest workers violate obvious restrictions, such as length of stay. But data mining of these profiles also detects patterns of behavior, and these patterns are then used to define additional restrictions or incentives.

IMMIGRANT SEGREGATION
Separate and unequal

The highly restrictive guest worker visas, together with zealous surveillance, set guest workers apart. And indeed, the landscape of daily life for guest workers echoes the separate (but not quite equal) experiences of African Americans in the pre-civil rights era. With no pathway to citizenship, no opportunity for family reunification, and very few rights, guest workers are dependent on their employers and vulnerable to exploitation.

In this situation, a host of private services emerges to help guest workers advance their opportunities and escape the invisible walls that separate them from citizens. Many of these are simply scams. But even legitimate services, such as education and skills training, perpetuate a "race to the bottom," as desperate workers spend hard-earned wages to buy promises that will likely never be fulfilled. Buying rights, protection, and dignity is a pathway for a limited few.

We will not be replaced

Scenario 3: The reality of carbon collapse hits hard. Restructuring the fossil-based economy creates widespread pain as old-economy enterprises shed workers. The declining quality of life across the country, combined with growing cultural fragmentation, leads to a hardening of anti-immigrant attitudes. Boldly empowered, white supremacists turn to DNA-based quotas and de-naturalization to preserve their power. As worst-case scenarios drive distressed migrants to risk their lives by breaking restrictive immigration laws, domestic anti-immigrant sentiments incite ever more punitive measures. Even naturalized citizens, dubbed the "illegal majority," are not safe from discrimination: they become the target of an aggressive effort to "re-whiten" America.

ECONOMIC COMPETITION
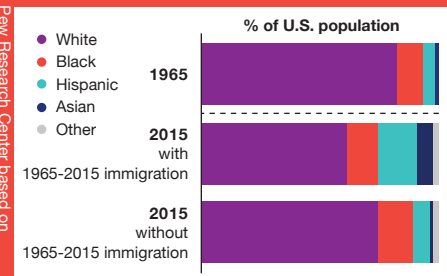### American jobs for American citizens

To deal with extreme economic competition as the old carbon economy crumbles, the nation puts on a face of patriotism. "Buy American" and "Hire American" policies in the government expand to the private sector as Congress passes an "American Jobs for American Citizens Act." The legislation allows qualified U.S. citizens to petition for any job held by a noncitizen in any sector and requires employers to replace that person with the qualified petitioner.

Although the bill is passed with the support of people of color who believe that immigrants are their primary competition in the labor market, its authors next take aim at those same supporters, rewriting the 14th Amendment that granted equal citizenship rights to both native-born or naturalized Americans. New immigration policies reinstate the 1942 quotas based on ancestry rather than nationality or birthplace—taking aim at all non-white immigrants.

CLIMATE SERVITUDE
Refugee work camps

While the United States participates half-heartedly in international agreements to accept climate refugees, the asylum camps established for these refugees resemble the country's earlier Chinese work camps that isolated laborers and treated them as indentured servants. Arguing that climate refugees should help solve climate problems, the refugees are put to work on infrastructure and post-disaster cleanup in exchange for their food, shelter, and filing fees.

The private corrections industry is the big winner in these camps, as companies erect tent cities for profit and use part of that profit to support political candidates who, in turn, support government policies that favor privately run refugee work camps. Meanwhile, immigrants create their own informal economies within these camps, selling whatever they can for cash or through barter arrangements.

GENETIC RIGHTS
DNA immigration quotas

White supremacists argue that the best way to rebuild a strong America is to honor the genetic ancestry of its founders—that is, to "re-whiten" America from its DNA up. Under siege from economic stagnation and inequality, white America buys this prescription and accepts the potent new tool of DNA testing to implement it.

The faux science of genetically defined races has a long history, and even though race is not actually a DNA-based category, much of the effort in 2030 is spent correlating DNA details to "suboptimal contributors to society." These details translate to features that most whites consider either desirable or undesirable. With invasive biometric data collection, often at border crossings, U.S. borders are thus closed to all but these DNA-defined "whites."

In algorithms we trust

Scenario 4: American geography isn't what it used to be. Stagnating economic growth and climate disasters have devastated entire communities. Relief comes in the form of the "good immigrant" narrative: immigration is a source of economic strength, and technology can make it work for the country. With massive amounts of data, strong monitoring, and artificial intelligence tools, algorithms find and funnel good immigrants to communities in need of new talent or just capable, caring neighbors. The result is a merit-based immigration system that algorithmically settles immigrants in "good fit" communities to redefine the American landscape.

A REAL-TIME WORKFORCE
AI-directed immigration

A key driver of merit-based "good immigrant" policies is the need for an adaptable workforce that can quickly respond to a volatile labor landscape. Algorithmic talent matching, already well underway in 2020, offers a data-driven path for immigration reform that fills talent needs in near realtime. Special place-based visas are offered to skilled workers and their families in algorithmically identified restoration zones. These zones include communities that are on the edge of economic collapse or have recently suffered a climate disaster.

Algorithms identify prospective zones by analyzing complex data sets that demonstrate the potential of communities to recover with the infusion of immigrant workers. These data sets include everything from natural and economic resources to social media analysis of "immigrant-readiness"—a measure of a community's attitudes toward immigrants. The talent-matched immigrants must agree to live and work in their algorithmically assigned communities for three years, at which time they receive green cards and are free to live anywhere in the United States. However, many choose to remain where they are.
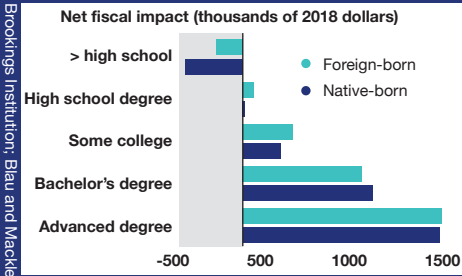
DIGITAL TAGS
Immigrant value maps and media

The new geography of America is mapped by innovative measures that show the value generated by immigrants in communities throughout the country. Algorithms assess the meta tags in massive data sets collected by government and private business alike to identify successful community profiles and the role that immigrants play in creating their distinctive successes.

These maps inspire new media programming for news and entertainment that reinforces the "good immigrant" narrative. Local programming seeks to build community pride for successful immigrant integration and community restoration. Reality shows compete with AI-driven plots and animations that follow the inspirational journeys of immigrants. Meanwhile, across the nation and even the world, immigrants win millions of followers as they track their progress toward their own American dreams.

DATA SANCTUARIES
Alternate path to assimilation

Even in the highly algorithmic society of 2030, algorithmic immigration has its detractors. They object not so much to the growing population of immigrants as to the ever-growing collections of social data that underlie the system and the potential for explosive gaming of the data. Some cities even describe themselves as data sanctuaries, regulating the collection and use of data from immigrants and citizens alike.

Amid sometimes pitched battles with security-minded federal agencies, these cities are creating an alternative experience of immigration that more closely resembles historical patterns of family and village migration. With less directed settlement in large cosmopolitan cities, these communities sometimes struggle with a more diverse—and sometimes divergent—population of immigrants. Nevertheless, the national narrative of the "good immigrant" gives cover to this diversity, and sanctuary cities, while often contentious, are known for their more creative and innovative cultures.

TODAY: Three-quarters of millennials believe that immigrants make us stronger

According to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, 75% of all millennials believe that immigrants strengthen the United States—more than any other previous generation.

Millennial 1981-1996
Gen X 1965-1980
Boomer 1946-1964
Silent 1928-1945

Pew Research Center

EFFECTIVE TAX RATE

Undocumented | Undocumented if legalized | Top 1% of taxpayers

ITF-based tax data from Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy

TODAY: Immigrants contribute to federal, state, and local taxes

Immigrants contribute more than $223 billion in federal taxes and more than $104 billion in state and local taxes. Undocumented immigrants contribute an estimated $11.74 billion per year in state and local taxes. If they were legalized, their state and local tax contributions would go up by $2.1 billion per year.

% of U.S. population

White / Black / Hispanic / Asian / Other

1965
2015 with 1965-2015 immigration
2015 without 1965-2015 immigration

Pew Research Center based on adjusted census data

TODAY: Immigrants reduce the white majority

Immigrants reduced the white majority in the period from 1965 to 2015 by 13% of the total population, hastening the projected 2045 date when white Americans will lose their majority status.

Net fiscal impact (thousands of 2018 dollars)

> high school
High school degree
Some college
Bachelor's degree
Advanced degree

Foreign-born / Native-born

-500 | 500 | 1000 | 1500

Brookings Institution; Blau and Mackie

TODAY: Immigrants have a positive impact on the economy

Immigrants and their descendants tend to have a more positive impact on the economy than native-born and their descendants. Their contribution varies with education, but even less educated immigrants have less negative impact than the native-born. This chart compares the per capita contribution of each additional native or foreign-born resident.

Immigrants make us stronger in a world of economic growth

Immigrants are welcome here

Rewriting the immigration narrative in the face of climate catastrophe

With growing climate disasters, the U.S. government pursues a proactive path to build a new "resilience workforce" that needs more workers—both native-born and immigrant. In the process, the country not only addresses income and wealth inequality. It also redefines the basic concepts of citizens, refugees, and even borders. Result: the immigration system is reformed, decriminalized, and streamlined.

historical precedents

1864: Act to Encourage Immigration addresses labor shortages due to Civil War and appoints the first commissioner of immigration

1952: Immigration and Nationality Act formally removes race and ancestry as the bases for exclusion from immigration and naturalization

1953: Refugee Relief Act authorizes special non-quota visas and allows refugees to become permanent citizens

1986: Immigration Reform and Control Act establishes a pathway to permanent residency for unauthorized immigrant workers in recognized job categories

future drivers

CLIMATE: Extreme weather events disrupt human habitats worldwide

POLITICAL ECONOMY: The United States buoys its economy by tackling inequality

DEMOGRAPHICS: Millennials ascend to leadership with the support of a majority of non-white Americans

TECHNOLOGY: Innovation focuses on green infrastructure and habitat restoration

MEDIA & CULTURE: K-12 and college education focus on building deep critical thinking and citizenship skills

Climate Refugees
Climate events create a new class of protected asylum seekers, recognized worldwide. The special protected status opens U.S. doors to millions of refugees from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

Global Compact for Migration

UN officially recognizes climate refugees

WHAT: In December 2018, the United Nations officially recognized climate refugees as a protected class of migrants with the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration.

SO WHAT: As the first international agreement to provide "safe, orderly, and regular" migration, the non-binding compact lays the groundwork for countries to confer special protected status on a new class of climate refugees.

Resilience Workforce
A suite of policies designed to grow a "resilience workforce" leverages immigrants for both disaster recovery and new green infrastructure creation.

Green energy jobs pay more

Mean hourly wages by clean energy economy sector, 2016
- Clean energy production
- Energy efficient
- Environmental management
- National average $23.86
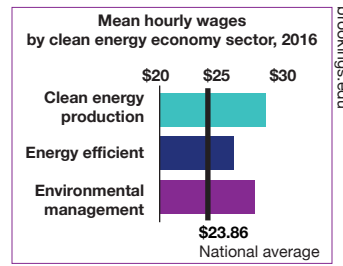
WHAT: A report by the Brookings Institution shows that both low-end and average hourly wages in green energy sectors are well above the national wage average today and are also accessible to less educated workers.

SO WHAT: The growth of a resilient climate-focused workforce could be the foundation for a new thriving middle class of both immigrants and native-born Americans.

Millennial New Deal
With a coalition of non-white Americans, a new millennial leadership builds support for immigration reform by addressing intersecting issues of race, gender, and ethnicity—and even tackling issues of reparations to descendants of slaves.

"Borders are immoral"
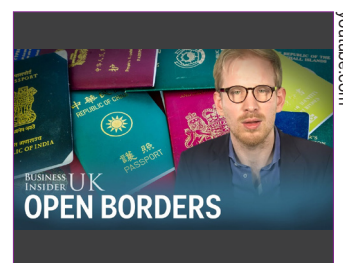
OPEN BORDERS

WHAT: Rutger Bregman, economist and author of *Utopia for Realists*, argues that borders are both the greatest source of global inequality and a detriment to economic prosperity.

SO WHAT: In a world of intersectional justice, an open-borders policy could become the most powerful tool for addressing poverty, inequality, and the systemic basis of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination.

Immigrants make us weaker in a world of economic growth

We want your labor, but not you

Exploiting immigrant labor while placating nativists

As a strong but unequal domestic economy combines with the aging population to drive a resurgence of social welfare programs and low-wage caregiving jobs, the country needs a stronger tax base as well as more low-wage workers. Immigrants fit the bill for both, but they create a discomfiting bottom rung in an economy with deep economic inequalities. The result: an effort to contain immigrants with a second-class "guest worker" status.

historical precedents

1790: Naturalization Act establishes residency and race requirements—white only—for naturalization

1917: Asiatic Barred Zone Act bars immigration from most Asian countries and sets skills requirement for immigrants

1921: Emergency Quota Act is the first U.S. law to create immigration caps and quotas based on national origin

1965: Hart-Celler Act replaces national origins quota system with seven preferences, favoring family- and skills-based immigration

1990: Immigration Act increases annual cap on immigrants to 700,000 and creates distinct visa categories for highly skilled temp workers (H-1B visa) and seasonal, non-agricultural workers (H-2B)

future drivers

CLIMATE: Climate disaster response drives big "climate war" budgets

POLITICAL ECONOMY: Climate profiteering exacerbates economic inequalities

DEMOGRAPHICS: An aging population relies on immigrant workers as sources of labor and tax revenues

TECHNOLOGY: Surveillance tools create high-resolution profiles of everyone

MEDIA & CULTURE: Computational propaganda goes local, powered by user-generated deep fakes, often used to reinforce negative immigrant stereotypes

Immigrant Tax Solution
In a growth economy with systemic inequality, the significant tax contributions of immigrants depend on a carefully crafted policy of wage controls and immigrant taxation.

Immigrants pay billions in U.S. taxes

- State/local Taxes
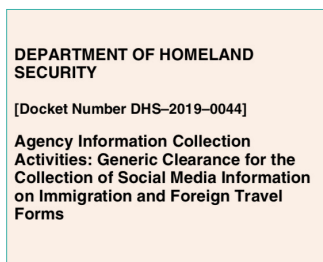- Federal Taxes
- Spending Power $926.6 Billion
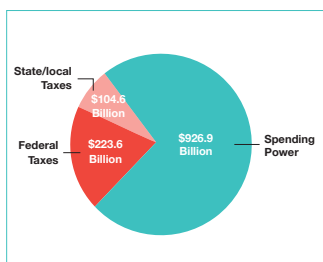
WHAT: Immigrant households contribute significantly to the U.S. economy, both in spending and taxes—with annual tax revenues equal to more than 15% of real U.S. GDP.

SO WHAT: As older workers leave the workforce, immigrant workers could expand the tax base needed to provide safety net services.

Digital Internment
Guest workers, with no pathways to citizenship or family reunification, are required to submit to near-constant, high-tech surveillance designed to assure that they don't overstay their visas.

DHS expands social media data monitoring of immigrants

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
[Docket Number DHS-2019-0044]
Agency Information Collection Activities: Generic Clearance for the Collection of Social Media Information on Immigration and Foreign Travel Forms

WHAT: The U.S. DHS posted a notice in September 2019 that it would now require social media identifiers for immigrants on 19 platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter, and Youtube.

SO WHAT: Widespread digital surveillance of immigrants is already underway and is likely to use ever more sophisticated analysis tools to track specific attitudes and behaviors deemed undesirable among immigrants.

Rights for Sale
To meet demand for high-skilled labor, employers in some sectors offer guest workers generous benefits and wages, as well as citizen-like protections—provided they pay filing fees and prove they are making defined investments in the economy.
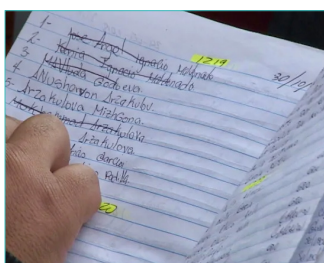
Immigrants pay bribes for positions on "La Lista"

WHAT: "La Lista" is a list of approved immigrants maintained by Mexican officials in cooperation with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency to meter immigrants at border crossings.

SO WHAT: With current restrictions for immigrants at U.S. southern border crossings set at 30–100 per day, officials are reported to accept bribes to improve individuals' positions on the list of more than 5000 names—pointing to the potential for bribery and other forms of payment for U.S. entry rights.

## Immigrants make us stronger in a world of economic stagnation

In algorithms we trust

Using AI to cherry-pick the "good immigrants"

As stagnating economic growth and climate disasters hollow out entire communities across the country, a "good immigrant" narrative emerges, and Americans turn to algorithms to make the best decisions about finding and funneling these good immigrants into communities in need of new talent or just capable, caring neighbors. The result: a merit-based immigration system that algorithmically settles immigrants in "good fit" communities.

historical precedents

1921: Emergency Quota Act creates quotas for immigration based on nationality

1962: Migration and Refugee Assistance Act codifies medical care, financial aid, education, and child welfare for Cuban refugees

1975: Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act funds resettlement for refugees fleeing Communist regimes in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos

1990: Immigration Act creates 55,000 "diversity immigrant" visas annually and offers temporary protected status to refugees from armed conflicts and natural disasters

2019: American Dream and Promise Act of 2019 grants legal status to Dreamers who meet certain requirements after 10 years

future drivers

CLIMATE: Permanent post-disaster migration and local post-carbon economic crashes create "climate ghost towns"

POLITICAL ECONOMY: Wealth inequality continues to grow as the country struggles to maintain the techno-economic growth of the past decades

DEMOGRAPHICS: Spectrum demographics replace simple categories of age, race, ethnicity, and gender

TECHNOLOGY: AI-driven algorithmic decision-making is adopted across all sectors

MEDIA & CULTURE: Culturally diverse media channels drive "digital tourism" and greater appreciation of diverse cultures

AI Immigration
Under the new merit-based immigration system, special visas are issued in near real time to immigrants who can fill immediate geographic needs for productive skills and community building.
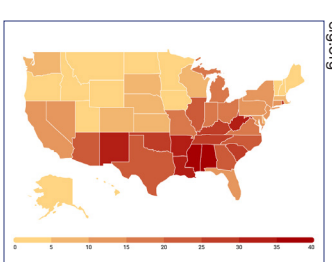
Proposal advocates "heartland visas" for immigrants

WHAT: Presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg is advocating the use of so-called "heartland visas" to direct immigrants to the most distressed areas of the country to rebuild vital populations.

SO WHAT: While Buttigieg has focused on rural population decline, AI-driven place-based visas could use dynamic analysis of "zip code distress"—assessing such factors as educational attainment, housing vacancy, and shifts in number of business establishments.

Digital Tags
Digital metatags track the contributions of immigrants to communities, creating new "value maps" of American geography and reinforcing the "good immigrant" narrative.

AI promises targeted analysis of talent

RESTLESS BANDIT
Talent Rediscovery

WHAT: Restless Bandit uses machine learning and artificial intelligence, combined with cross-industry databases, to algorithmically source candidates that match diverse organizational and industry goals.

SO WHAT: AI services like Restless Bandit could be used to provide high-resolution tracking of immigrants, not only to demonstrate their value to their communities but, in combination with facial recognition technology, to analyze their every move.

Data Sanctuaries
The cities and states that provided sanctuary for immigrants in the 2010s now set their own immigrant policies and protect immigrants from tagging and digital profiling, creating a constellation of more diverse cosmopolitan centers.

San Francisco bans government facial recognition
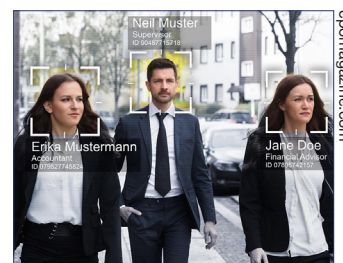
WHAT: In 2019, San Francisco, an immigrant sanctuary city since 1989, banned the use of facial recognition by all its government agencies, including the police department.

SO WHAT: As facial recognition systems are already being built to enforce immigration policies, cities that have declared themselves sanctuary cities are likely to create more extensive data sanctuary policies, such as banning facial recognition, for immigrants and citizens alike.

Immigrants make us weaker in a world of economic stagnation

We will not be replaced

Making the white supremacist agenda a reality

As carbon assets lose their value and stock markets wobble, large swaths of the population suffer economic pain. The declining quality of life leads to a hardening of anti-immigrant attitudes—and the growth of white supremacist policies. But distressed migrants risk their lives to subvert harshly restrictive immigration laws, driving vigilantism and discrimination against all people of color. Result: white Americans turn to DNA-based quotas and even de-naturalization to "re-whiten" America.

historical precedents

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act bans Chinese laborers from immigrating and naturalizing

1924: National Origins Quota Act establishes U.S. Border Patrol to combat illegal immigration

1952: Immigration and Nationality Act sets quotas based on ancestry rather than nationality or birthplace

1996: Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act establishes worksite enforcement measures and mandates fences at high-incident areas of the border

2002: Homeland Security Act consolidates CPB, ICE, and CIS under the Department of Homeland Security

2017: Executive orders limit travel and immigration from six majority Muslim countries

future drivers

CLIMATE: Cascading climate disasters, chronic drought, and flooding drive distress migration patterns

POLITICAL ECONOMY: Collapse of the carbon economy exacerbates kleptocratic government and corporate practices

DEMOGRAPHICS: White Americans lose their majority status

TECHNOLOGY: As advances in genetic science grow, DNA testing becomes a widespread practice, often required for enrollment in educational institutions

MEDIA & CULTURE: "Fake realities" are normalized, driving the collapse of a consensus of truth

Citizen Jobs
In a struggling and unequal economy, immigrants continue to be the scapegoats, driving legislation to put American citizens—and especially white citizens—at the top of the hiring list.

**"Buy American" order takes aim at "outsiders"**

WHAT: President Trump signed a "Buy American and Hire American" executive order, requiring all Federal government agencies to use American firms for the half-trillion dollars worth of business those agencies conduct.

SO WHAT: The executive order lays a foundation for the broader platform of securing America against "the theft of our prosperity" by outsiders.

Climate Servitude
Under pressure from other nations, the United States accepts climate refugees, but asylum camps function much like late 19th and early 20th century Chinese work camps as refugees are put to work on post-disaster cleanup and other climate-related tasks.

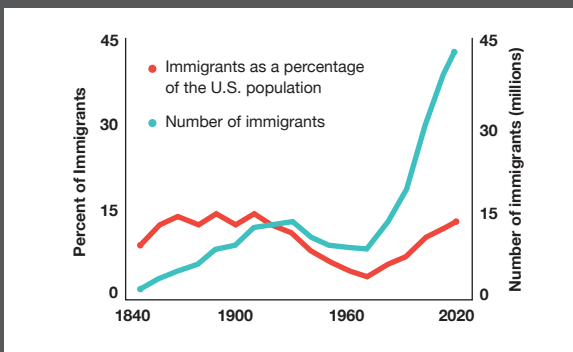**Refugee children are "sheltered" in for-profit tent facility**
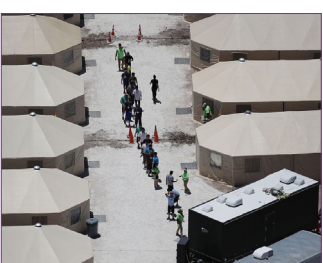
WHAT: In Clint, Texas, the U.S. Border Patrol hired local private prison operators to set up tent facilities for the children of detained refugees, with reports of "inhumane conditions" from lawyers who toured the facilities.

SO WHAT: As money from the private prison lobby grows (by 70% from 2017 to 2018), so will incentives for legislators to create new kinds of detention camps, with immigrants being the most likely targets.

Genetic Rights
Long-time advocates for the genetic preservation of white culture, white supremacists attempt to use compulsory DNA testing as a litmus test for citizenship and de-naturalization, with a goal of "re-whitening" the country.
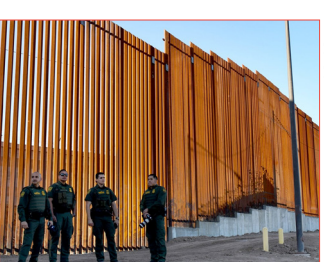
United States begins DNA testing of immigrants at the border

WHAT: In 2019, CBP and ICE began a pilot program to use new rapid DNA technology in detention centers to create genetic profiles of immigrants and test claims of family relationships.

SO WHAT: The pilot program could normalize genetic testing as a condition for entry into the country and establish broader DNA-based requirements for immigrants.
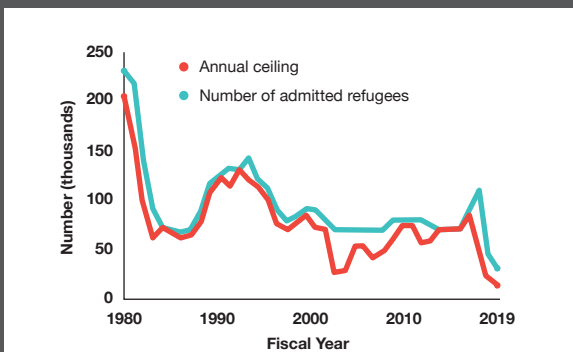

BY THE NUMBERS
a statistical summary of American immigration today

Number of immigrants and their share of the U.S. population
While the number of immigrants has grown steeply since 1970, their percentage of the overall population has grown more slowly and is comparable to historical patterns before 1920.
- Immigrants as a percentage of the U.S. population
- Number of immigrants

Number of refugees and asylees granted permanent residence
Since 1990, the number of refugees and asylees granted permanent residence in the United States has dropped by nearly 90%, as has the ceiling for permanent immigrant residents.
- Annual ceiling
- Number of admitted refugees
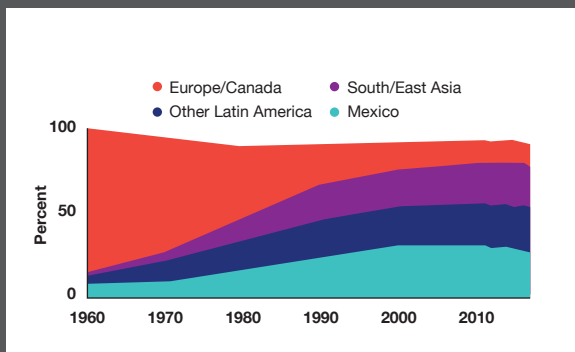
Origins of U.S. immigrant population
Prior to 1960, the vast majority of immigrants came from Europe. Over the past six decades, growing proportions have come from Latin America, Mexico, and South and East Asia.
- Europe/Canada
- Other Latin America
- South/East Asia
- Mexico
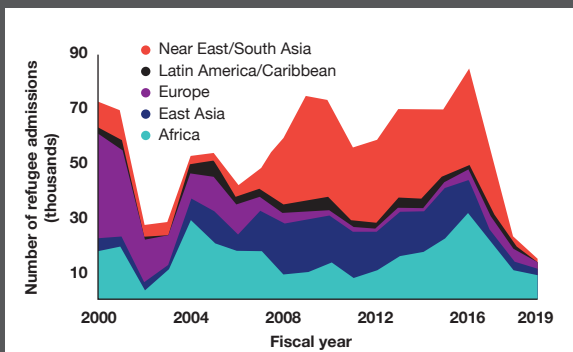
Refugee arrivals by nationality
Refugees—those fleeing their countries for fear of persecution—have come primarily from the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and Africa in the past decade. Latin Americans and Europeans make up a small minority of recent refugees.
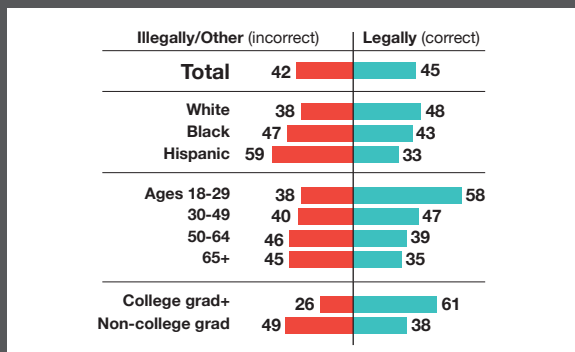- Near East/South Asia
- Latin America/Caribbean
- Europe
- East Asia
- Africa
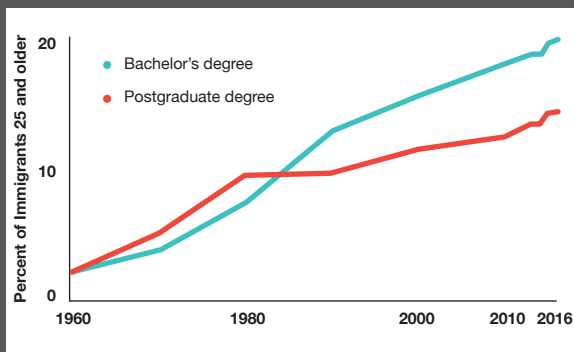
Growth of college-educated U.S. immigrants (1960-2017)
The percentage of immigrants with bachelor's and post-graduate degrees has grown steadily since 1960, reflecting an emphasis on high-skilled immigrants in U.S. policy.
- Bachelor's degree
- Postgraduate degree
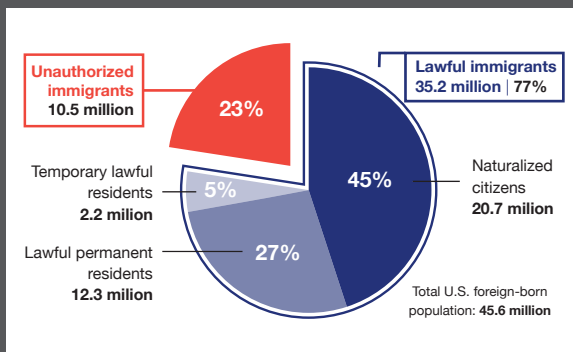
Percentage of unauthorized immigrants
Unauthorized immigrants constitute nearly one-quarter of the U.S. foreign-born population, while nearly three-quarters are either naturalized citizens or lawful permanent residents.
- Unauthorized immigrants 10.5 million 23%
- Lawful immigrants 35.2 million 77%
- Temporary lawful residents 2.2 million
- Naturalized citizens 20.7 million 45%
- Lawful permanent residents 12.3 million 27%
- Total U.S. foreign-born population: 45.6 million

Percentage who think most immigrants in the United States are here illegally
Nearly half of Americans in 2018 believed incorrectly that most immigrants are living in the United States illegally.

	Illegally/Other (incorrect)	Legally (correct)
Total	42	45
White	38	48
Black	47	43
Hispanic	59	33
Ages 18–29	38	58
30–49	40	47
50–64	46	39
65+	45	35
College grad+	26	61
Non-college grad	49	38

How to shape future experiences of immigration

This map is a conversation starter. It launches the discussion with four stories: four possible paths as migration grows worldwide over the coming decade. Here are some ways to continue the conversation with people at work, home, and in your community:

PICK A STORY AND BUILD IT OUT

Think of each of the scenarios as the prologue of a story and then add your own details:

› How might local businesses contribute to the scenario or resist it?

› How could housing and transportation or teaching and learning change?

› How will media support or undermine the scenario narrative?

› How might conversations at your holiday dinners be different?

To answer these questions, play the improv story game where each person adds a new sentence to the story. Then ask yourself how you feel about this story: Would you like to live in this future?

PICK A ROLE TO PLAY

Who are you in each of these stories?

You can imagine your own future in these scenarios. Then try out a different role for yourself:

› An immigrant child who doesn't speak English or a skilled immigrant doctor

› An agent in the Customs and Border Protection agency as it goes through the transitions in each of the scenarios

› A parent whose child asks, "What's an immigrant?"

Put yourself as fully into each scenario as possible to understand how it will feel to live this world.

GET SERIOUS ABOUT LEVERAGE POINTS

Most of the scenarios make assumptions about big forces that are shaping the future.

It may seem impossible to move the needle on these forces. It's true that economic equality is one of the big levers in these scenarios, and it's a big lift. But if you look, you'll find other, perhaps more tractable levers embedded in every scenario.

For example:

› Policies to protect personal DNA information

› Strong wages for climate workers

› Guidelines for creating a fair climate economy

› Transparency and anti-corruption practices in immigration agencies

› Redirection of immigration agencies

› Designs for community spaces that give immigrants leadership

› New definitions of citizenship

Make a list of all the leverage points you see in each scenario—to support it or resist it. Decide where you can make a difference.

The futures of immigration aren't cast in stone. Help make future experiences of immigration a touchstone for communities around the world.

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE