

United States Immigration Bills: The Effect of Immigration Bills on African Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

Immigration has been a hot-button topic for the United States since almost the founding of the country. There seemed to be a huge increase in African immigrants in the United States since the late 1900s. Looking at this phenomenon is interesting because what could the catalyst be for this increase? Previous research has examined immigration bills and the effects these bills have had on immigration. One limitation of such previous research is that many focus only on one or two bills and their effects. This limited approach gives minimal context to the holistic nature of immigration. In contrast, this thesis takes a comprehensive look at immigration bills in the 1900s, and how such bills have influenced the number of African immigrants in the United States. Looking across multiple laws over a century as such allows for a fuller portrait of U.S. African immigration, and provides a fuller picture of the effects of bills on immigration. The central proposition of the thesis is that immigration bills affect the flow of immigrants in unique and uneven ways that require the type of comprehensive analysis provided in this thesis. The data source that is used for this study is the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, and the specific data used covered the period of 1911-2022. The thesis uses three approaches to estimate the impacts of immigration laws on African immigrants. One approach focuses on the type of African country from which immigrants are coming (the top ten African countries from 1999 through 2022 in the new millennium). The second approach focuses on the immigration

categories of immigrants, e.g., family-based or employment-based. The third focuses on how immigration bills have affected the size of the immigrant population, using a one-way ANOVA test. First, analysis show that between 1999 and 2022, a limited number of countries consistently act as sending countries. For example, Nigeria and Ethiopia are shown to have the highest and most consistent number of immigrants coming into the United States between 1999 and 2022. West African countries were the most represented in the data examined, while Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Egypt were the top 3 countries consistently. Another interesting finding is that every top sending country takes a dip in their immigration numbers in the year 2012. This type of decline is also shown to have occurred in 2020, when the immigration numbers of all countries plummeted below 10,000. Family-based immigration was the largest immigrant category, while employment-based immigration was the lowest. Finally, results of one-way ANOVA analysis show that most of the bills examined here have had some type of effect on the size of the African immigrant population in the U.S.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There are more than 47.8 million foreign-born people are living in the United States (Batalova 2024). Today, the number of immigrants from Africa to the United States is increasing at the fastest rate, steadily rising since 2000 (Elo et al. 2015; Kent 2007; Corra 2022). According to Elo et al. (2015) for the first time in America's history, among all foreign-born migrants, those born in Africa are growing at the fastest rate. This shows a shift in recent immigration patterns when it pertains to African immigrants. “Since the 1950s, the number of foreign-born who have become legal permanent residents has quadrupled, but the number from Africa has increased nearly 60-fold—a rate of growth more than twice that for migrants from Asia, the next-fastest growing source of new Americans.” (Elo et. al. 2015:1514).

With so many African immigrants living in the United States today, an important question is how these immigrants enter the U.S. This thesis will specifically address the question: How have varying U.S. immigration laws affected patterns of African immigration to the United States? I begin with this introduction by providing a review of key immigration laws and how each of these laws shaped immigration language and policy in the United States, such as removing quota laws, making it easier for immigrant families to enter the United States, and expanding worker visas. Patterns of immigration that can be inferred from them are discussed. The section introduces institutional theory, and how it can be used to explain the impact and movement of these bills. Specific hypotheses about expected patterns of African immigration to the U.S. are drawn, based on the different laws, such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Refugee Act of 1980, and the Immigration Act of 1990. These were a few key laws that were developed that I will seek to investigate with the proposed thesis. I conclude by introducing the data and methods that will be used to conduct the study.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The flow of African immigration to the United States has fluctuated throughout the years. Two of the biggest reasons are economic and political forces that continue to influence the migration patterns of African immigrants to the U.S. “The strong U.S. economy and the United States’ long history as an immigrant country were among the factors attracting additional newcomers from these regions” (Kent 2007:4). The strong economy of the United States has led to a need for more workers. This need for workers could have been one of the main reasons immigration bills became more inclusive than they were previously. These bills have allowed more immigrants to enter through work and other visas. One of these other visas is the diversity visa discussed below. The diversity visa has led the most educated and wealthy immigrants to immigrate to the U.S. A push factor leading to many African immigrants moving to the United States is the political unrest: “others who had returned home ended up leaving again due to economic and political development failures in Africa” (Wilson and Habecker 2008:14). With these political unrests happening all over Africa, the United States refugee bill has allowed many immigrants to flow through the system. Some studies focus on how immigration can be affected depending on the presidential administration in charge; as Pierce and Bolter (2020) report, the Trump presidency has seen many restrictions on immigration law, which has been shown to have a negative effect on immigration and could negatively affect African immigration into the United States. The reason these policies could impact African immigrants is that a policy that may target one type of immigrant could have the latent consequence of affecting many more. A few studies have examined specific U.S. Immigration bills and their effects on African immigration, such as Corra (2022), which focused on Legal Permanent Residence due to the Immigration and Nationality Act, and Logan and Thomas (2012), which focused on the diversity visa. Qushim,

Guan, and Roka (2018) examined the H-2A, specifically focusing on how the bill has helped the agricultural sector of the United States. This can be shown by the type of work the H-2A bill provides such as plant harvesting, cultivation, and livestock herding and care. A study done by Hatton (2015) focuses on the intended and unintended consequences of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The Hatton paper shows how a bill that the U.S. government designed to help one group of immigrants can have the unintended consequence of helping another immigrant group. Benson (2016) studied how neo-liberalization affected the immigration bill of 1980, causing it to look like a “welfare bill”. Martino, Hartley, and Kontz (2023). focused on how the U.S. government uses immigration to encourage inventions in the United States. A crucial addition to the literature is a comprehensive look at U.S. immigration laws and how each law has (or has not) affected patterns of African immigration. The aim of the proposed thesis is to make this addition by directly examining how each law has (or has not) influenced patterns of immigration flows of Africans to the United States. The next section briefly outlines key U.S. immigration laws that will be examined in the proposed thesis. It also notes expected patterns of African immigration from each law.

U.S. IMMIGRATION BILLS

The United States has passed many immigration bills over the years. Some have increased the number of immigrants allowed into the country, while others have restricted the number. U.S. immigration bills have also stipulated the type of immigrants permitted to enter the country. Table 1 provides a list of key U.S. immigration bills discussed in this section (provided on page 25).

Emergency Quota Act of 1921

An early bill in U.S. history almost shut down Immigration from several origin countries around the world completely. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 was passed shortly after World War I (this bill differs from the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was implemented in 1882). Based on the 1910 census, only three percent of immigrants from a specific country could migrate to the U.S. depending on how many of their people were already in the United States (Sixty-Seventh Congress 1921). Table 2 shows the number of people from each continent during the 1910 census. When Congress passed this bill, a country like Britain, for example, could get more immigrants into the United States compared to China. The disparity in immigration has to do with how many immigrants were already in the United States when the bill passed. Since there were already more British immigrants than Chinese immigrants, Britain's three percent was higher than China's, allowing more British immigrants to be accepted. Another part of this law that put a stranglehold on immigration (at least from some parts of the world) is the clause that the "Immigration from the Western Hemisphere was uncapped" (Chishti and Gelatt, 2024:3). The clause meant that while the western hemisphere had no ceiling, all the eastern hemispheres did, capping at 358,000 people annually. While this law was considered extremely restrictive, another law three years later made immigration even more stringent. The United States government did this by shrinking the percentage of the national origin quota. The national origins quota allowed only two percent of people from each group into the United States based on the 1890 census (Sixty-Eighth Congress 1924:159). It would take another forty years before a bill that the United States enacted accepted many immigrants worldwide. For African immigration, this law is expected to completely halt immigration to the U.S.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act

While immigration has been going on since the start of the United States, in 1965, immigration from various regions increased significantly through a bill called the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was an updated version of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (Bennet 1966), with the historical context of the world moving forward towards globalization and the United States passing bills because of the civil rights movement. One of the key ideas of the civil rights movement was equality for all, which is why " discriminatory quotas against certain Europeans and prohibitions on African and Asian immigration came to be seen as intolerably racist and were duly repealed by Congress in 1965" (Massey et al. 2012:2). One of the ways that the U.S. implemented the idea of eliminating such practices was to get rid of the national-origins quota (Hatton 2015). The Immigration and Nationality Act implemented a system that allowed highly skilled immigrants an easier path to immigrate into the United States. The immigration pool and the quotas of quota should terminate June 30, 1968 (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965. Title 1, Section 201). This clause eliminated the national-origin quota that excluded many potential immigrants worldwide. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 also included a clause about family reunification, which many immigrants used to be able to immigrate to the United States. The heavy focus on family reunification can be seen throughout the bill with clauses such as section 203, which breaks down exactly how the visas will be given out based on a percentage: 74 percent based on things that pertain to family reunification, 20 percent on immigration focused on economics, and six percent based on immigrants escaping persecution (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965, title 1, section 203). This section of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 created a distinct classification of what type of immigrants would be allowed into the United States and how many. This bill was a significant cog in the immigration system, and because of its different

classifications, it served various functions in the system. One clause focused on providing a stronger family base for immigrants, another focused on the workforce of the United States, and the third concerned refugees. For African immigration, The expected effect of this bill is to increase the number of African immigrants in the United States a lot.

The Refugee Act of 1980

Another bill that came to fruition had more of a focus on refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 redefined what it meant to be a refugee in the United States. This act also increased the number of refugees entering the United States and implemented a uniform definition for refugees, making it a humanitarian issue. The new definition of the Refugee Act of 1980 " any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (Refugee Act of 1980, Title 2, Section 201). This broader definition of the Refugee Act allowed more immigrants to migrate to the United States. The previous definition of refugees could be said to have focused too much on communist refugees, and the verbiage couldn't be used anymore for a world that was becoming more global. The narrowing of the United States' refugee language was not sustainable anymore because of world events like the Vietnam War, which led to more refugees needing a country to resettle in. Not only did this law increase the number of refugees that could be in the United States, but the Refugee Act also created a committee to help with the flow of immigration. It also established how many immigrants this committee would admit into the United States. The newly constituted committee examined six

key factors: first, the refugee situation and condition of the refugee's home country and the number of refugees already admitted. A second focus is how these refugees will affect the United States, starting with the social, economic, and demographic impact the immigrants will have. A third focus is the amount it will cost to resettle and where precisely an immigrant will resettle. A fourth aspect is what other countries will assist with refugee resettlement. The last criterion is the ramifications of U.S. foreign policy by admitting a refugee. These six criteria form a comprehensive list that the United States uses when admitting a refugee. Directly focusing on refugee immigration helped strengthen the immigration system by allowing more refugees into the United States and setting up a system that would streamline refugee admission. Immigration economic and worker problems were growing in the United States, which led to the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act. For African immigration, the 1980 bill is expected to increase immigration to the United States based on refugee status.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act helped shift how immigrants could work in the United States. The main intention of the Immigration Reform and Control Act was to strengthen the laws when it came to hiring illegal immigrants (Baker 2014). During this time, the United States government made a solid push to control the illegal immigrant population. The Immigration Reform and Control Act created the I-9. The I-9 document explicitly notes a worker's citizenship by requiring an identification document. Documents such as passports, social security cards, birth certificates, or alien documentation work as identification papers. The immigration employment verification is another important factor: a worker must show that they are a citizen or a legal immigrant who can work in the United States. Another significant document created by this law was the H-2A, which separated temporary agricultural immigrant

workers from other temporary immigrant workers and was later codified in the H-2B visa, which includes temporary professional workers. The requirement for an employer is: "there are not sufficient workers who are able, willing, and qualified, and who will be available at the time and place needed, to perform the labor or services involved in the petition" (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Title 3, Section 216). This clause meant that if the surrounding population of U.S. citizens in a given area is not available to be employed in a specific occupation, the business owners could supplement their workforce with immigrants. To protect U.S. citizens, the citizen's wages and work conditions could not be negatively affected. However, if a strike occurs within the work area, the H-2A can be denied. This Immigration Reform and Control Act also helped legalize immigrants already in the United States. One of the ways the Reform Act did this was by allowing for the legalization of immigrants who applied for legalization in the last eighteen months. Also, undocumented immigrants must prove they were in the United States before 1982. Undocumented immigrants must also prove they were unlawfully in the United States. Another way for legalization through the immigration reform and control act was performing "90-man days of seasonal agricultural services" (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Title 3, Section 304). This was used to avoid deportation and become naturalized. The Immigration Reform and Control Act gave the government more control over what employers can do with immigrant workers. One of the biggest reasons for the immigration system is to get more workers into the United States. This bill strengthened not only the immigration workforce in the United States but also increased the flow of workers to the United States. For African immigration, the expected effect of this law is to increase immigration based on employment.

The Immigration Act of 1990

One of the most noteworthy laws that greatly impacted the flow of immigration into the U.S. this millennium is the Immigration Act of 1990.

The Immigration Act of 1990 strengthened the language and stipulations of the three categories of immigrants set in the 1965 Act. The three main categories of immigrants are family-related immigrants, employment-based immigrants, and diversity immigrants. The first important section of the Immigration Act of 1990 is the preference of what type of immigrants get admitted into the United States. The first clause is the “unmarried sons and daughters of citizens, Qualified immigrants who are the unmarried sons or daughters of citizens of the United States shall be allocated visas in a number not to exceed 23,400” (Immigrant Act, 1990, Title 1, Section 111). This clause gave children whose parents were in the United States a higher priority than other immigrants seeking admission. The next prominent part of the bill is the employment clause of the act. The first preference is for immigrants with excellent abilities and skills, such as professionals and researchers. The last two qualifications are not as straightforward as the first two clauses. The first one allows admission to immigrants who can create several new jobs. This clause means that immigrants with the capital to develop businesses in the United States were permitted priority admission. The third part of the immigration bill is the diversity of immigrants. This program allowed up to 55,000 immigrants to enter the U.S. from countries that have low rates of immigration to the United States. The diversity program allowed an integral migration channel to open up for African immigrants (Imoagene 2017:172). With this clause being an essential part of the immigration system, it allowed countries that may not have gotten the chance for immigration to have a more significant role in the immigration system to the United States. For African immigration, the expected effects of the Immigration Act of 1990 are (1) a

dramatic increase in immigration to the United States; and (2) a noticeable increase in family-based immigration.

Following the above discussion, the goal of this thesis is to provide a systematic analysis of how these varying U.S. immigration laws have influenced patterns of African immigration to the United States. As mentioned above, previous studies have examined specific U.S. Immigration bills and their effects on African immigration. Benson (2016) studied how neo-liberalization affected the immigration bill of 1980, causing it to look like a welfare bill. Martino, Hartley, and Kontz (2023) focused on how the U.S. government uses immigration to further push inventions in the United States. A key contribution to the literature is a comprehensive look at key U.S. immigration laws and how each law has affected patterns of African immigration.

The key contribution of the proposed thesis is to provide a systematic analysis of how each of the above laws has (or has not) influenced patterns of immigration flows of Africans to the United States. I specifically propose the following hypotheses to investigate:

H1: The effect of the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 on the flow of African immigration to the United States is minimal. That is to say, it theoretically completely halted immigration from Africa, which was already negligible.

H2: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 led to a dramatic increase in African immigration to the United States.

H3: The Refugee Act of 1980 led to a consistent increase of African immigration based on refugee status.

H4: The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 led to a dramatic increase in immigration from Africa based on employment.

H5: The Immigration Act of 1990 also led to a dramatic increase in African immigration to the United States, but to a noticeably greater degree than the increase caused by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

H6: The immigration act of 1990 also resulted in a noticeable shift of African immigration toward family-related immigration.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the theoretical framework that will guide this research. That theory is Institutional theory (Bhasin 2017). This theory looks at the role of institutions, including formal laws and informal norms, in shaping the behavior of individuals and the organization of society (Bhasin 2017). Institutional theory hypothesizes that: processes that come from the institutions of society directly influence the behavior of individuals in specific situations.

In the case of immigration, this theory points to how institutional processes like the passage of laws can either promote or hinder immigration in general, or the flow of specific types of immigrants (Posner 2013). As an example, consider the 1990 Immigration Act. The language of this law intently emphasized the favoring of economic immigration, with economic immigrants being one of the three major categories in the bill. Immigration laws can also influence the incorporation of specific groups of immigrants within a host country, (thereby directly or indirectly affecting patterns of immigration for those groups (Massey, Aragno, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor 1993). Another key aspect of institutional theory as it pertains to immigration policy is through family reunification, which helps promote migrant networks (Massey et al. 1993). Through the establishment of migration networks it can be easier for immigrants to migrate.

A third example is how institutional arrangements affect refugees, because “Political and military interventions by governments of capitalist countries to protect investments abroad and to support foreign governments sympathetic to the expansion of the global market, when they fail, produce refugee movements directed to particular core countries, constituting another form of international migration” (Massey et al. 1993:448). While this does not explain all refugee movements, it does explain why some migrants move when countries engage in proxy wars.

These proxy wars can be used to protect the financial interests of the foreign government. This can expand the ideals of capitalism. With capitalism dominating the world market, companies have a lot of say in what is said in policies.

CHAPTER 3: DATA AND METHODS

Data

This thesis will use the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics to examine the hypotheses given above (<https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook>). The Yearbook of Immigration Statistics is a comprehensive data set that delineates Immigrants who have entered the United States in a given fiscal year. This includes lawful permanent residents, temporary visitors, refugees and asylum seekers, and those based on naturalization.

This immigration data is collected by the Department of Homeland Security, which is the governmental body that oversees all immigration in and out of the United States. After the fiscal year's collection, the Department of Homeland Security publishes the data points on its governmental website for public viewing (<https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook>). The data points about the immigrants and their immigration process are also presented in an Excel spreadsheet for the public to download and use. The data goes back to 1892.

Many variables about immigrants are included as specific data points in the spreadsheet. These variables include what country the immigrant is from, whether the immigrant is in the U.S. legally or illegally, and the state/city the immigrant initially settled. This thesis will only focus on a few variables in the dataset.

Methods

There are three different methods for three different measures in this thesis. One method focuses on the type of African country the immigrant comes from. The second method focuses on the immigration category of immigrants. The third method focuses on how immigration bills affected the immigrant population. The dataset is split into multiple spreadsheets that are

combined into one spreadsheet for each method. Starting with the first method, this thesis looked at the top ten African countries from 1999 through 2022. The reason for this period was to focus on the new millennium, a period of notable immigration from Africa to the U.S. (Kent 2007; Corra 2022, 2023). This period of twenty-three years also gives an ample amount of time to be able to see trends and patterns on top sending immigration countries. The data will only show every country that was in the top ten in a given year. Breaks in the line graphs presented below indicate specific countries that are not in the top ten in a given year. The only data points that will be counted are lawful permanent residents, categorized by the country in which immigrants were born

The second method will focus on how different immigrant populations are separated by how the immigrants were classified when they were admitted to the United States.¹ The period for this method will be from 1999 through 2022. The reason for the selection of this period is the same as the first method. The available categories are combined to create four groupings for analysis. Family-sponsored preferences combined with immediate relatives as one category are called Family Related (abbreviated hereafter as FR). Employment-based preferences (abbreviated as EB) are another category. Diversity Visas (abbreviated as DV) are the third

¹ The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides several broad classes of admission for foreign nationals to gain legal permanent residency (LPR) status in the United States. These include : “Family-sponsored preferences,” “Employment-Based Preferences,” “Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens,” “Refugees and asylees,” and “Diversity.” Those classified as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens include spouses, children, and parents of U.S. citizens age 21 and older. Those admitted based on family-based preferences include relatives/Family members not included in the immediate relatives class of admission, e.g., married, or unmarried adult sons/daughters of U.S. citizens, brothers/sisters of such citizens, etc. Admissions based on employment are given to those seeking to provide needed skills in the U.S. workforce or invest in new U.S. jobs, along with their dependents. Refuge is granted to two sets of immigrants who have been persecuted or have a “well-founded” fear of persecution, refugees and asylees. Refugees are those admitted outside the United States with their immediate relatives, while asylum is given to those seeking refuge, but are already inside the United States, and their immediate relatives. Finally, those gaining LPR based on the Diversity program come from countries with relatively low levels of immigration to the United States (For a fuller description of these classifications, see descriptions at the DHS site <<https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/lawful-permanent-residents/ImmigrantCOA>>) and Corra (2022).

category. Finally, Refugees and asylees (RA) are the last category. The data points that will be counted for this method will be lawfully permanent residents. The immigration pattern in the new millennium broken down into groups are shown as line graphs.

For the third method, the separate datasets in Excel files are combined and exported into Stata for statistical analyses. That analysis begins with the total number of immigrants in a given ten year time period in the yearbook of immigration statistics. That number will then be divided by 10. This will be the average number of immigrants each year. For example, 1911-1920 had 8443 immigrants in total at that given time. The average number would be 844.3 for each year between 1911 and 1920. This will be for time periods where the number of immigrants isn't broken down by year. Starting in 1994 the yearbook began to break down the exact number of immigrants by year. After obtaining the averages, the Excel sheet was transferred over to Stata where the one-way ANOVA analysis is used for further statistical analysis. The first thing that had to happen was categorizing the years into before and after the bill was passed. To make this happened a new variable called year was created, and the exact year the bill passed (for example Year65 for the 1965 bill). To be able to get this variable used for data analysis the values 1 and 2 are used. For statistical analysis, 1 represented ten years before the bill was passed, and 2 represented ten years after the bill was passed. An example of this is looking at the Year65 variable which takes into account the 1965 bill, ten years before is 1955 and ten years after is 1975. The year 1965 was omitted from the variable because of the nature of the bills and when exactly the bills were passed and put into effect in that given year. It would be difficult to pinpoint exactly how much of an effect on immigration the bill has on that one single year. There are some variables that do not have the ten-year period after because another bill was passed within that ten-year window. These bills are the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Immigration

Reform and Control Act of 1986. To be able to differentiate the main effect of each of these bills, the Refugee Act grouping stops in 1985 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act stops in 1989. This means that for the 1980 bill the years that will matter are 1970-1985, while for the 1986 bill the years that will matter are 1976-1989. The averages are analyzed through ANOVA tests to see the effects (or not) of these bills on patterns of African immigration to the United States. The results of these tests are shown through tables.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

New Millennium Immigration Broken Down by Country

By using the three different methods for this thesis, three different results are presented. First, focusing on immigration by country, there are a few things to consider. These data points are taken from 1999 to 2022 which emphasizes the new millennium. The only countries that were in the top ten in these given years are considered. The top ten countries were split into regions: West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, and South and Central Africa. The numbers being examined are the total number of immigrants from each given country, while using the legal permanent residence category.

Graph 1 shows every country that was in the top ten sending countries from 1999 to 2022. The graph shows which countries were in the top ten based on the total number of immigrants in each given year.

As can be seen in that graph, Nigeria and Ethiopia seem to have the highest and most consistent number of immigrants coming into the United States during this time period. Another interesting point depicted in the graph is every country takes a dip in their immigration numbers in the year 2012. This type of decline is also shown to have occurred in 2020, when the immigration numbers of countries plummeted below 10,000.

Moving on to regional characteristics, Table 3 shows how many countries from each region are in the top ten. The regions are separated into four categories. Top sending countries in West Africa include Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, and Ghana. East Africa contains Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania. North Africa consists of Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan. South and Central Africa encompasses South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The series of graphs 2-5 display regional patterns. Graph 2 focuses on West African countries. From that graph, Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia have the highest number of immigrants migrating to the United States from West Africa.

Graph 3 shows East African countries. While the West African countries are more stable with their immigration patterns, East African countries seem to be less so. The two countries that have sent most immigrants from East Africa are Somalia and Ethiopia. Graph 4 displays the three northern African countries in depth. Egypt looks like the consistently largest sending in this region, while Sudan sporadically appears and Morocco is constantly under 6000 immigrants per year. While there may be other characteristics that may affect these numbers the main focus is on immigration laws.

The last Graph for this section is graph 5, which focuses on central and southern Africa, again including only South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo. While South Africa occasionally shows up in the top ten it leaves the top ten in 2012 and reenters in 2020. The Democratic Republic of Congo entered the top ten in 2013, peaking out at 10,000. The next set of graphs depict the breakdown of African immigrants split into their respective categories of immigration status.

New Millennium Immigration Broken Down by Immigration Category

Graph 6 shows the total number of immigrants by category in each given year. From that graph, family-related immigration (designated as FR) has by far the most immigrants and has consistently increased throughout the years. Family-related peaked at 65,037 in 2017. There was a decline in 2020 and since then, it has been increasing again.

Refugee and asylum immigration (designated as RA) peaked at 45,315 in 2009, then declined sharply in 2010 to 22,634. Refugee and asylum immigration remained under 30,000 until 2018, when it increased to 34,222, and started a steady decline after that.

The Diversity Visa immigration (designated as DV) has consistently been under 30,000, peaking at 24,122 in 2009. Immigration based on this category dropped below 10,000 in 2021. The peak years for the diversity visas were from 2009 to 2012.

Employment-based immigration has consistently been under 10,000, with its highest peak being 11,694 when the line finally broke past 10,000 in 2022.

One-way ANOVA Analysis

This section focuses on the crux of the thesis, which is seeing how immigration bills affect the population flow of African immigrants in the U.S. One-way ANOVA test is used to determine if there is a statistical significance between two groups based on the independent variable. Here, the two “groups” being compared are the before and after passage of a bill that was noted above. The tables to follow report within-groups and between groups measures. Within groups are the two groups without the test. Between groups is the section with the test involved. The one-way ANOVA in this specific thesis compares how the independent variable (The immigration bills) interacts with the dependent variable which is the population of African immigrants in the U.S.

In the tables below, SS refers to the sum of square which shows the variability between groups and within groups. DF refers to degree of freedom, which shows how many independent measurements are in the given ANOVA test. MS refers to means squared, which shows the average estimated variance within groups and between groups. Mean squares are found by taking the sum of squares and dividing it by degree of freedom. The F statistic shows the

variance between within group and between group. The larger the F value the greater the variance. One of the most important parts of the one-way ANOVA is the p-value. The p-value indicates whether the ANOVA test shows statistical significance. By tradition in the social sciences, the main numbers that are used to indicate significance of p-values are .05, .01, and .001 (Corra 2022).

Looking at one-way ANOVA results presented in the tables show that most of the bills examined here have had some type of effect on the African immigrant population in the U.S. For example, consider the analysis results of the Emergency Quota Act. This is shown in Table 4. The years that were used were 1911 to 1931 ten years before and ten years after omitting 1921. The key values in that table are the F value and p-value measuring statistical significance. The F value is 33.12 meaning there is ample shift in the population after the 1921 bill. The p-value is .000 which means that this shift is extremely significant.

Table 5 analyzes the years 1955 to 1975 omitting the year 1965. The F value is 15.07 while it's not as high as the 1921 shift, this indicates a shift. The p-value is .0011 which means that the shift after the 1965 bill was extremely significant.

Table 6 focuses on the years 1970 to 1985, with the cutoff point for the latter due to another bill that was passed a year later, the Reform and Control Act of 1986. As shown in Table 6, the F value shift is the biggest one out of all the analyses with a number of 183.95. This is a large number which means that the passage of this bill is associated with a significant shift in the number of immigrants that came to the United States. The p-value is .000 which means this shift is extremely significant.

Table 7 focuses on the year 1976-1989, the reason for this is because of the 1990 bill that happened 4 years after. Here, the f-value is 2.54, which is the smallest shift in the analysis. The p-value is 0.1394, which means that this shift is not significant.

Table 8 focuses on the 1990 bill , which encompasses the years 1980 to 1999. Here, the f value is 35.71 which means this bill had around the same shift as 1921. The p-value is .000 which means this shift is extremely significant.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Today, the number of immigrants from Africa to the United States is increasing at the fastest rate, steadily rising since 2000 (Elo et al. 2015; Kent 2007; Corra 2022). This thesis takes a comprehensive look at immigration bills in the 1900s, and their effects on African immigration to the United States. African immigration patterns in the new millenniums shows notable regional differences. As the data indicates West and East Africa dominate immigration flows in the United States with Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, and Somalia consistently ranking among the top-sending countries. As noted by Corra (2023), “Immigrants from north and south Africa have been decreasing while west, east, and central Africa have been increasing”. Educational attainment is one of the key pull factors for why these immigrants move to the United States: “Nearly 56,800 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled in U.S. graduate or undergraduate degree programs during the 2023-24 academic year, according to the Institute of International Education, making up 5 percent of the 1.1 million international students in the country overall” (Rutland and Batalova 2025:7). Through the institutional lens the passing of a bill where education, especially higher education (could be seen as another institution), creates a situation where immigrants seeking higher education come to the United States. Another important pull factor that has led to the increase in immigration in the U.S. from the sub-Saharan region has been the employment opportunities in the United States: “Sub-Saharan African immigrants had a civilian labor force participation rate of 77 percent in 2024” (Rutland and Batalova 2025:7). This number is higher than that of other foreign-born individuals, which is at 68 percent, and U.S.-born individuals, which is at 63 percent. The high civilian participation rate in the workforce can show how significant an economic pull factor is for immigrant populations from sub-Saharan Africa in the United States. The institutional perspective shows that the

emphasis put on the economic side of the bill helps incentivize circumstances for more economically based immigrants to look at the U.S. as a viable option.

Examining the different categories of immigrants shows which type of immigration dominates African immigration to the United States. When looking at the difference between family-based Immigration compared to employment-based immigration, there is a stark difference. Data reviewed in this thesis has shown that family-based immigration is still the dominant immigration category for immigrants from Africa. One reason for this is because of “low-skill-transferability immigrants invest more in human capital—and hence experience higher earnings growth—than high-skill-transferability immigrants (employment-based immigrants)” (Duleep, Regets, and Canto 2018:7). From the viewpoint of institutional theory, the percentage allocations of the 1990 and 1965 immigration bills, where 75 percent of immigrants admitted are family-based immigrants, are notable. Compared to employment-based immigrants who are only sought after depending on the prevailing job on the market. Another reason why family-based immigration is large and consistent is because of the emphasis that has been placed on it. By implementing the 1990 Immigration and Nationality Act which allowed for different categories of immigrant family members such as spouses, minor children, siblings, and parents to immigrate to the U.S. This wide range has allowed for many immigrants to get into the U.S through this entry point. Inspecting the trajectory of refugee immigrants into the U.S. shows that there has been a sharp decline in the number of refugees admitted. Comparing the late 2000s to the 2010s shows this. The factors that contributed to the high refugee numbers could be increased conflict within the region and the public and private policies that help with refugees (Capps, McCabe, and Fix 2012). All these factors combine to have fluctuated the number of refugees that have been admitted to the United States. Through the institutional theory the

change of language of the law by making it more inclusive could lead to more immigrants being accepted in that category. Diversity Visas have been shown to bring in more immigrants than employment-based visas. As one study shows Diversity Visas are “successful in that part of its mandate, which is to increase African immigration to the U.S.” (Logan and Thomas 2012:14). Diversity Visas have shown to be an important category in African immigration to the United States. The institutional theory lens shows how the expansion of a bill in creating a new category can lead to more immigrants. Taking the focus from the new millennium and focusing on the old millennium there are some key findings.

The Anova test can only show that there is a shift and if that shift is significant. These tests can not specify whether it is the law bill having this effect or if there are other factors at play, especially dealing with historical events. The institutional theory can be used to explain how these bills have had an influence on immigrants. Starting with the Emergency Quota Act. Nativism was becoming a growing belief in America around 1921. It was an idea built on excluding the new immigrant population from entering the United States. This led to studies being done to push the native agenda. Where they could then take the findings of those studies and twist the narrative in order to fit their native agenda (Young 2017). This agenda shows how policies created by institutions are designed to control the immigrant population. These ideals held strong in the U.S. for a very long time. After years of consistently suppressing immigration, the U.S decided to expand immigration. Through the institutional theory the active wording of denying immigrants from non-European countries directly impacted the immigration flow of these countries. Globalization became the prevailing train of thought in the world, because the world was becoming interconnected and more money was being moved through the world. This train of thought can be shown through the “pressures emanating from the growing number of

independent Asian, African, and Latin American countries” (Fitzgerald and Cock-Martin 2015:2). Data reviewed in this thesis shows this through the increase in the mean averages between the years. The increase of immigrants through the 1965 bill there was a bigger push for more immigrants in the United States. This was done through globalization focusing on what it means to be a refugee. Another way this was done was through trans capital changing the language on what it means to be an immigrant worker. It can be seen by how “Northern states have pushed through the adoption of a network of international instruments that seek to remove 'national' impediments to the entry, establishment and operation of transnational capital” (Chimni 2000:246). By establishing this transnational capital for businesses it helped increase the immigrant population pertaining to worker immigrants. The way this is done is because now businesses have more access to immigrants from across the world which may influence the immigrant to come to the U.S. to work for these companies. The immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 expanded on globalization and transnational capital. These ideas can be evident in the data by the drastic increase in immigrant numbers. The United States expanded the globalization aspect by adding diversity visas which allowed for more countries to enter through that avenue. Transnational capital is shown by the expansion of employment-based visas that were also put into the bill. External globalization factors such as higher pay, education, safety, and new opportunities can lead to higher immigration levels. Through globalization and transnational capital, the increase of immigration can be seen over the years as one of the driving forces. While institutions use the immigration bills to push these themes through. In institutional theory it can be seen how multiple aspects including immigration bills, can affect immigration patterns.

CONCLUSION

Immigration bills have been a hot topic for the United States government. Whether that be on who exactly should be allowed into the United States or how many people should be allowed into the United States. Through the years immigration bills have tackled many things such as refugees, employment immigration, and family immigration. When looking at the top ten countries coming from Africa, it shows how different African countries interact with immigration bills. The immigrant categories reveal the main target of these bills. Some immigration bills were statistically significant when it came to the changes in immigration numbers. With the institutional theory which includes transnational capitalism and globalization. This thesis can give some insight into how key factors surrounding the immigration bill may affect the immigrant population.

TABLES AND GRAPHS

Table 1 Overview of the Laws

Immigration Law	Key Points
Emergency Quota Law	Capped immigration from countries not on the western hemisphere Capped immigration to be only 3 percent of the total population from that country based on the 1910 census
Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965	Got rid of the national origin quota Increased Employment based immigration Increase family immigration
Refugee Act of 1980	Redefined what it meant to be a refugee in the United States States a person unwilling to return to their country because of race religion and public opinion Created a committee to decide who gets admitted as a refugee Six different criteria's
Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986	Led to the creation of the I-9 expanded on the H-2A visa agricultural expanded on the H-2B visa nonagricultural Legalize immigrants already living in the country
Immigration Act of 1990	Created three different visas Employment based Family based Diversity base

Table 1 shows the immigration laws discussed in the U.S. immigration bills section and provides brief bullet points describing them.

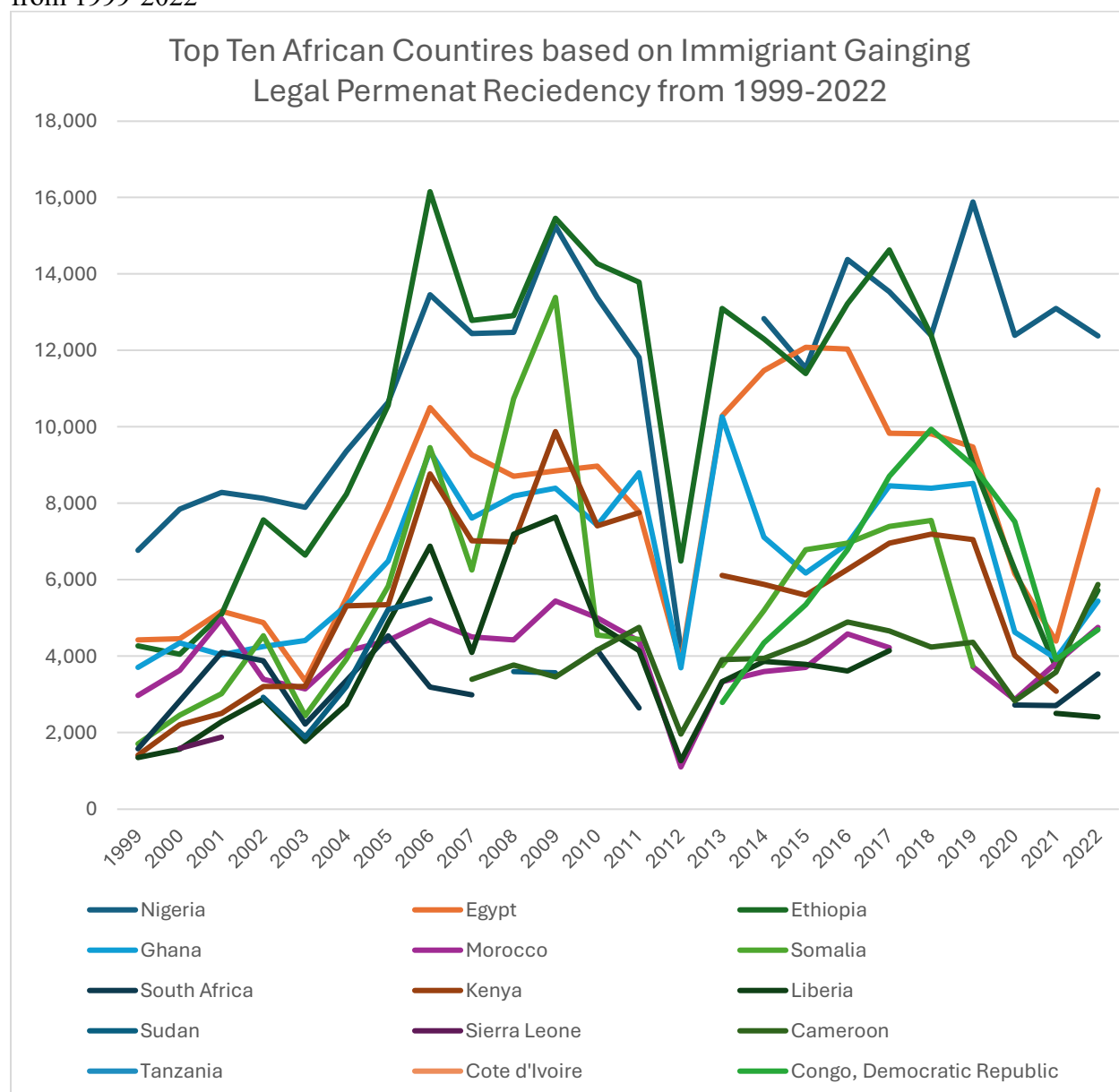
Table 2 Population of foreign-born people living in the U.S. as of the 1910 Census

Continents	Population
Africa	3,992
Asia	191, 484
Australia	9,035
Europe	11, 791, 841
America (both north and south other than the U.S.)	1, 489, 231

Table 2 shows how many foreign-born people lived in the United States during the 1910 census, breaking the population down by continents.

Source: U.S Census Bureau 1910 Census: Volume 1. Population, General Report and Analysis

Graph 1 Top Ten African Countries based on Immigrants Gaining Legal Permanent Residency from 1999-2022



Graph 1 shows all the countries that have been in the top ten each year from 1999 to 2022

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

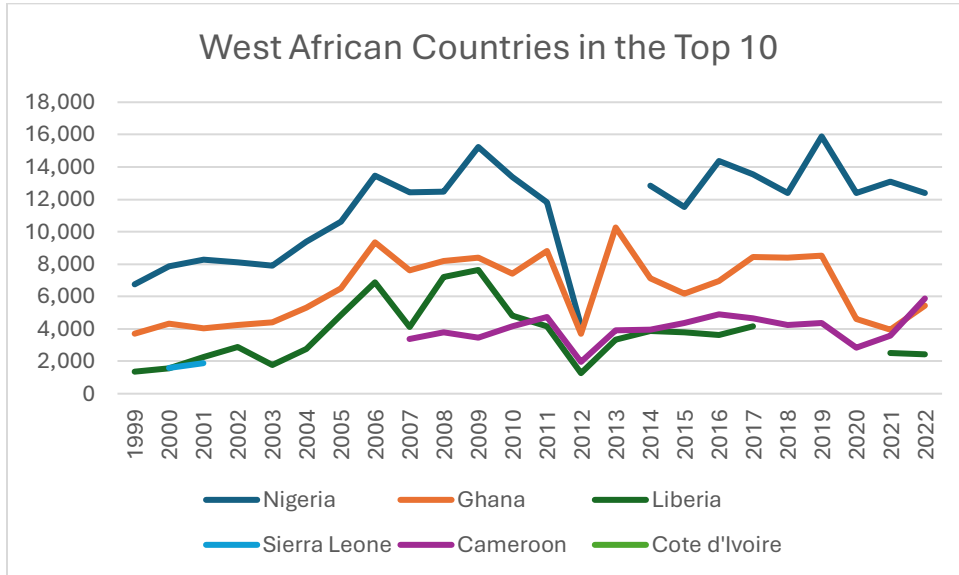
Table 3 Number of countries in each region

Region	Number of Countries
West Africa	6
North Africa	4
East Africa	3
South and Central Africa	2

Table 3 shows the number of countries in each region and the number of countries that are in each region.

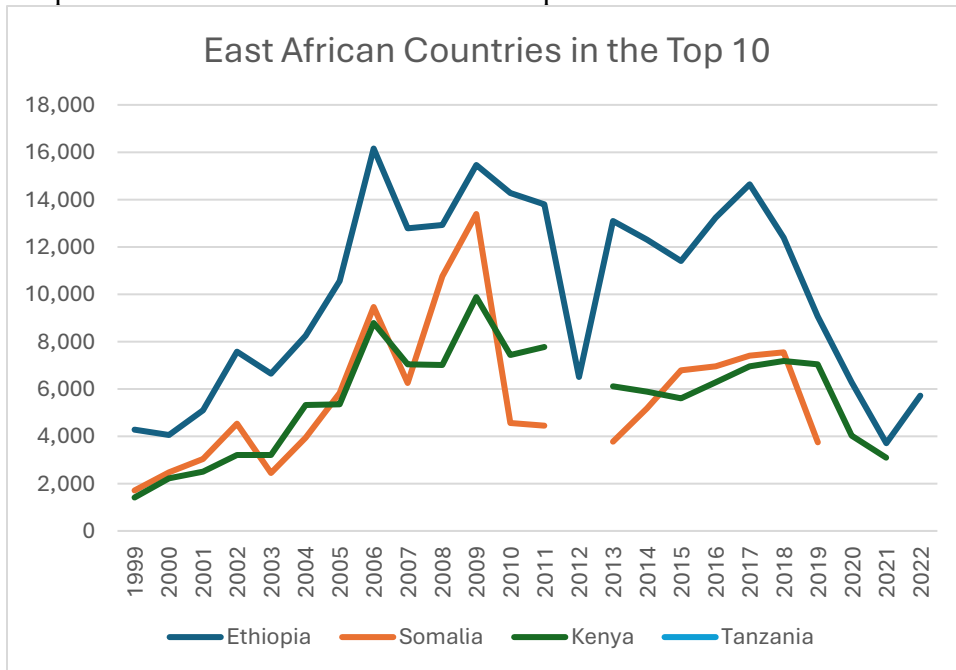
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

Graph 2 West African Countries in the Top Ten



Graph 2 shows the six African countries in West Africa that are in the top ten from 1999 to 2022
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

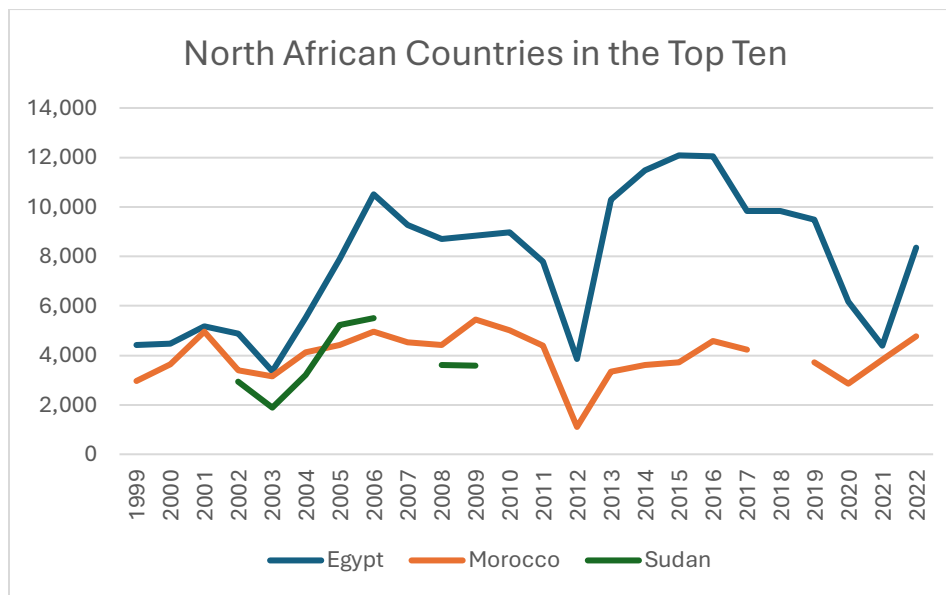
Graph 3 East African Countries in the Top Ten



Graph 3 shows the four African countries in East Africa that are in the top ten from 1999 to 2022

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

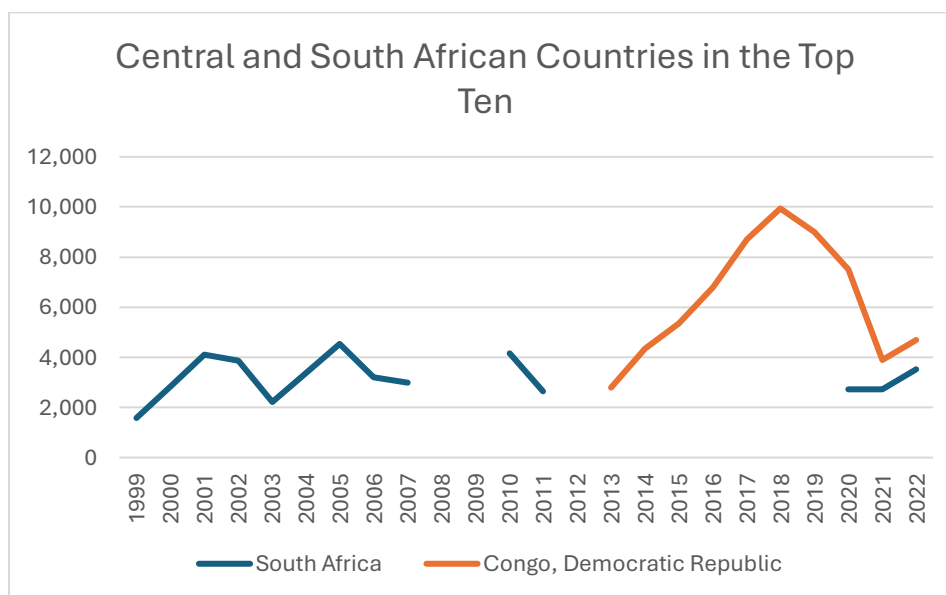
Graph 4 North African Countries in the Top Ten



Graph 4 shows the three African countries in East Africa that are in the top ten from 1999 to 2022

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

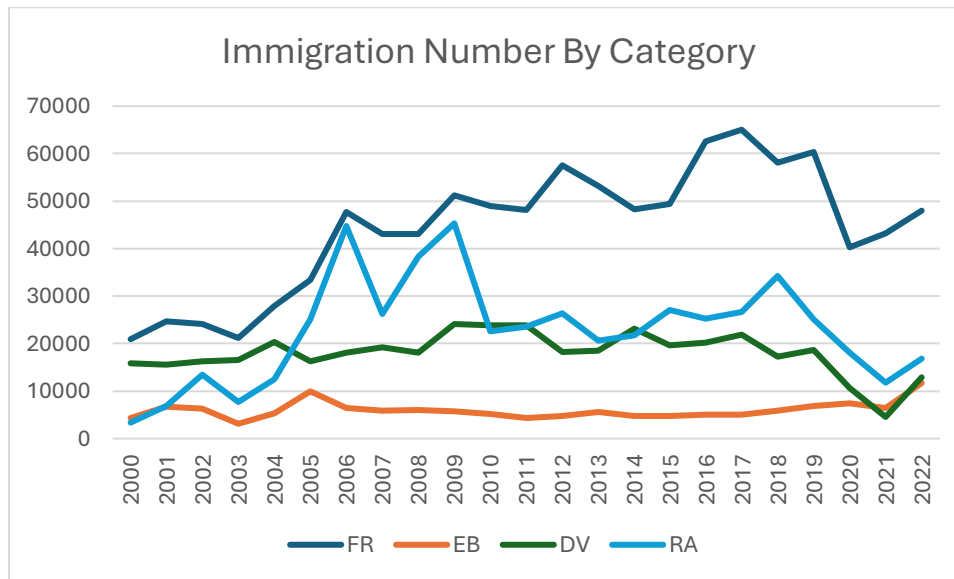
Graph 5 Central and South African Countries in the Top Ten



Graph 5 shows the two African countries in North and Central Africa that are in the top ten from 1999 to 2022

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1999-2022

Graph 6 Immigration Number By Category



Graph 6 shows the number of immigrants in a given year by category

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2000-2022

Table 4: One-Way Anova Analysis for the Emergency Quota Act of 1921

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	Prob > F
Between Groups	340761.618	1	340761.618	33.12	0.0000
Within Groups	185177.664	18	10287.648		
Total	525939.282	19	27681.0148		

Table 4 shows the one-way ANOVA analysis of the Emergency Quota Act of 1921

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1911-1931

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Analysis for the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	Prob > F
Between Groups	60655400.1	1	60655400.1	15.07	0.0011
Within Groups	72446862.7	18	4024825.7		
Total	133102263	19	7005382.25		

Table 5 shows the one-way ANOVA analysis of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1955-1975

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Analysis for the Refugee Act of 1980

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	Prob > F
Between Groups	342032697	1	342032697	183.95	0.000
Within Groups	24172475.6	13	1859421.2		
Total	366205173	14	26157512.3		

Table 6 shows the one-way ANOVA analysis of the Refugee Act of 1980

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1970-1985

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA Analysis for the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	Prob > F
Between Groups	53295582.7	1	53295582.7	2.54	0.1394
Within Groups	230947525	11	20995229.5		
Total	284243108	12	23686925.6		

Table 7 shows the one-way ANOVA analysis of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1986-1989

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA Analysis for the Immigration Act of 1990

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	Prob > F
Between Groups	1.5011e+09	1	1.5011e+09	35.71	0.000
Within Groups	672614290	16	42038393.1		
Total	2.1737e+09	17	127866292		

Table 8 shows the one-way ANOVA analysis of the Immigration Act of 1990

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1980-2000

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