

# DATA PROFILES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS

Demographics

Economic Opportunity

Education

Health

Housing

This is part of a data series on immigrants in the District of Columbia to help the Mayor's Office and its partners better understand and serve DC's immigrant community. The city's immigrant population has grown steadily, from 33,600 to 95,400 people between 1970 and 2012–16 estimates. Today, immigrants make up 15 percent of DC's population and have contributed to the demographic, economic, and cultural growth of our nation's capital. The series highlights four major groups, Latinos, Asians and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), Africans, and Caribbean Islanders, who collectively represent 3 out of 4 immigrants living in DC.

The main sources of data used in these fact sheets were microdata from the 2000 Decennial Census long form and 2012–16 American Community Survey, obtained from IPUMS-USA.<sup>1</sup> Immigrants are defined as people who were born outside of the US, excluding people born overseas to parents who were US citizens and people born in most US territories. Populations included in the analysis were determined by the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs according to places of origin that the offices felt aligned best with the populations they served. African immigrants refer to foreign-born individuals from the continent of Africa.

<sup>1</sup> Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0 [dataset]* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

DECEMBER 2018

African immigrants in DC hailed from all over the continent, but 42 percent, or 6,300 people, in 2012–16 were born in Ethiopia.

- The number of immigrants from Ethiopia more than doubled since 2000.
- The second-highest country of origin for African immigrants was Nigeria, followed by Cameroon and Ghana.
- The share of African immigrants from Morocco, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Egypt all decreased since 2000.

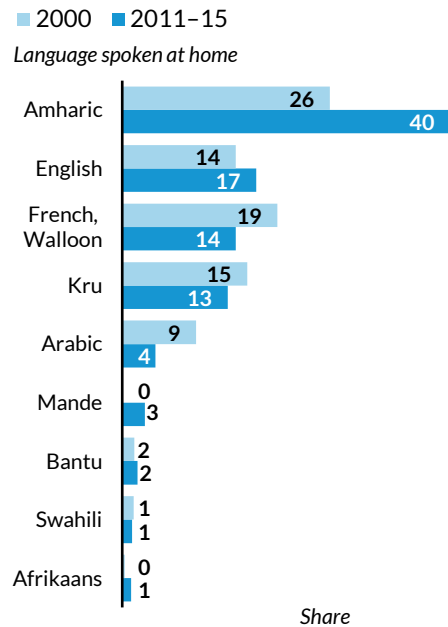
African immigrants were evenly distributed among age groups between 25 and 54 years old in 2012–16. Seniors age 65 and older represented a growing share of DC’s African immigrant population, having risen from 2 to 8 percent, or from 190 to 1,100 people.

---

DC’s African immigrant population grew from 9,500 to 14,800, an increase of 56 percent between 2000 and 2016.

---

## Four in Ten African Immigrants Speak Amharic at Home



Most African immigrants in DC (65 percent) said that they spoke English very well or that they speak only English, a share that was similar to that in 2000.

35 percent of African immigrants are limited English proficient, meaning they report not speaking English, speaking English but not well, or speaking English well.

About a fifth of African immigrants (20 percent) live in linguistically isolated households, in which no one age 14 or older in the home speaks English at least very well. People in linguistically isolated households may face significant challenges accessing essential services and resources in their communities, without additional language support.

# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

DECEMBER 2018

African immigrants made up 10,600 of the 381,500 members of DC’s labor force in 2012–16. The labor force participation rate for African immigrants ages 16 and older was 77 percent, up from 73 percent in 2000. Of African immigrants in the labor force, 9.9 percent were unemployed in 2012–16, higher than the overall DC unemployment rate of 8.7 percent.

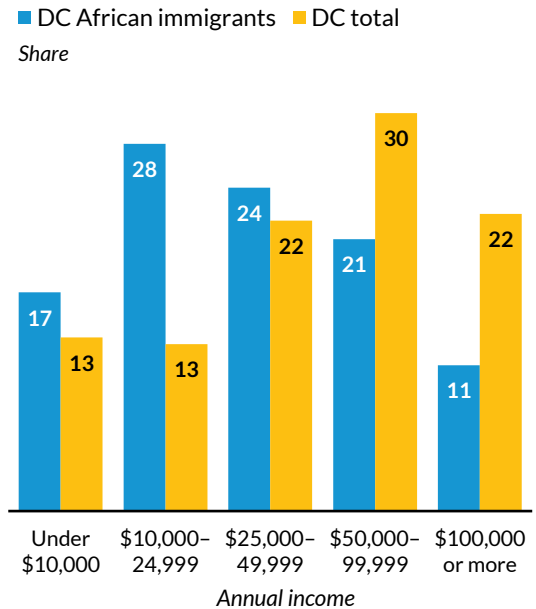
Nearly 70 percent of African workers earned less than \$50,000 a year in 2012–16, compared with 48 percent of DC workers overall. However, the share of African workers earning more than \$50,000 increased from 26 to 32 percent between 2000 and 2012–16.

Among the top occupations for African immigrants in 2012–16, the most frequently held jobs were in transportation and material moving (14 percent of workers).

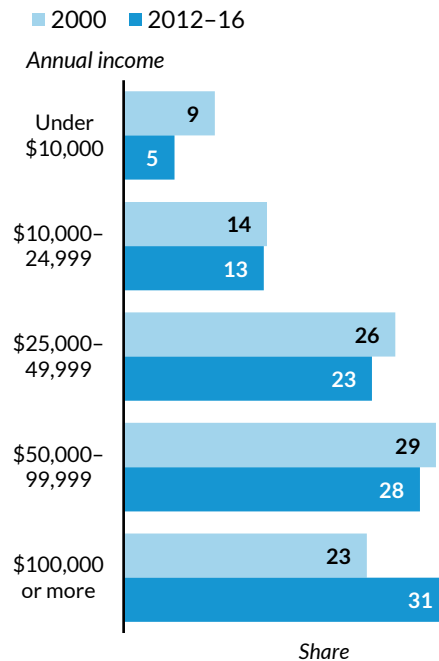
- 12 percent of African workers were in sales and sales related jobs.
- 8 percent were in office and administrative support.
- 8 percent were in management, business, science, and arts.

Nearly 60 percent of African immigrants lived in households with annual incomes of more than \$50,000, including 30 percent in households with incomes more than \$100,000.

## Wages for African Immigrant Workers Tended to Be Lower than DC Workers Overall



## 30 Percent of African Immigrants Have Household Incomes of \$100,000 or More



### DATA PROFILES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

This is part of a data series on immigrants in the District of Columbia. The data used are microdata from the 2000 Decennial Census long form and 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, obtained from IPUMS-USA.

For more information, visit <https://www.urban.org/stateofdcimmigrants>.

# EDUCATION

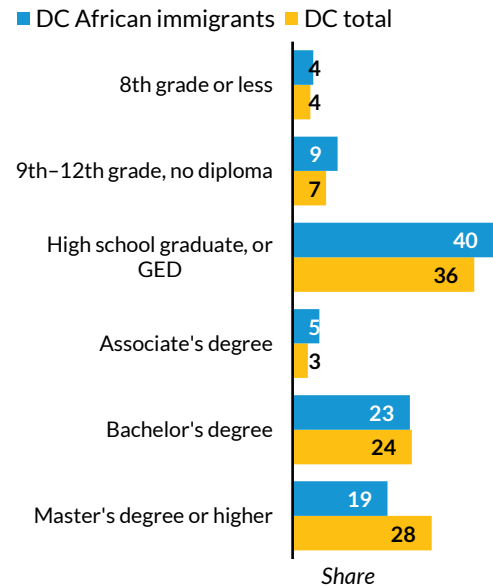
DECEMBER 2018

The Washington region is one of the most highly educated in the country, and many well-paying jobs with good benefits require a level of education beyond a high school diploma.

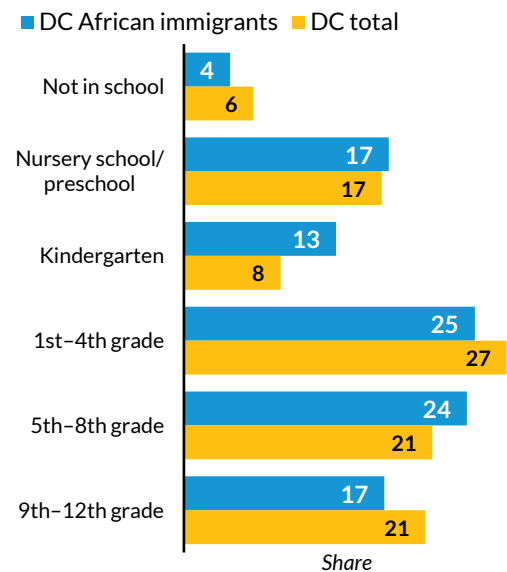
- 42 percent of African immigrants had at least a four-year college education, slightly lower than the 51 percent of all of DC with a four-year college education or more. Higher-education attainment of African immigrants has been relatively steady between 2000 and 2012–16.
- Nevertheless, 40 percent of African adult immigrants had only a high school diploma and 13 percent had not completed high school.

Children 3 to 17 years old born in Africa and children 3 to 17 years old born to and living with African immigrant parents were more represented in later years of schooling than in younger grades. Only 4 percent of school-age African immigrant children were not in school, however, 72 percent of them were school age.

## Almost Half of African Adult Immigrants Had More than a High School Diploma



## Over Half of School-Age African Immigrants and African Children of Immigrants Are in Middle and High School Grades



**Note:** Includes native-born children of African immigrants ages 3 through 17 who live with their parents.

### DATA PROFILES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

This is part of a data series on immigrants in the District of Columbia. The data used are microdata from the 2000 Decennial Census long form and 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, obtained from IPUMS-USA.

For more information, visit <https://www.urban.org/stateofdcimmigrants>.

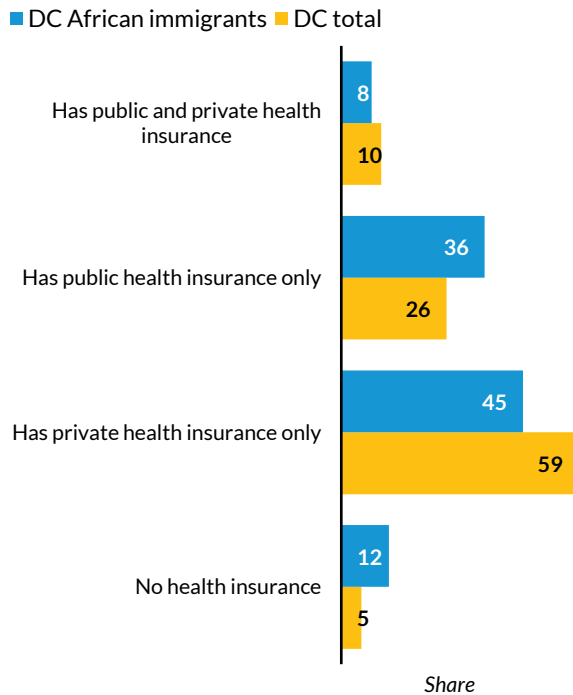
# HEALTH

DECEMBER 2018

DC’s health insurance marketplace, DC Health Link, has helped increase the rates of health insurance coverage for the city’s residents. Eighty-eight percent of African immigrants had some form of health insurance in 2012–16.

The most common source was private insurance, which 45 percent of African immigrants held. Another 36 percent had public insurance, and 8 percent had some combination of public and private coverage. Nevertheless, 12 percent of African immigrants had no health insurance at all, more than double the rate in DC overall, where only 5 percent of people lack coverage.

## Most Common Insurance Source for African Immigrants Was Private Insurance in 2012–16



## 88 percent of African immigrants had some form of health insurance

Health insurance coverage is not evenly distributed across demographics and socioeconomic status.

- Language barriers tend to be associated with health insurance status, with 44 percent of African immigrants who do not speak English lacking health insurance, compared with 12 percent of African immigrants overall.
- 91 percent of female African immigrants had health insurance coverage, compared with 87 percent of males.

### DATA PROFILES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

This is part of a data series on immigrants in the District of Columbia. The data used are microdata from the 2000 Decennial Census long form and 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, obtained from IPUMS-USA.

For more information, visit <https://www.urban.org/stateofdcimmigrants>.

# HOUSING

DECEMBER 2018

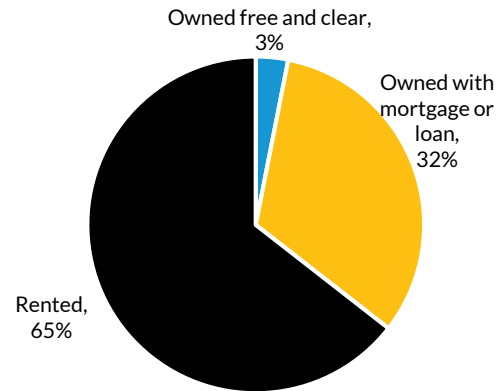
In 2012–16, two-thirds of African immigrants rented, and one-third owned their home and were paying a mortgage. More African immigrants are renters compared with the city average; citywide, approximately 57 percent of households rent.

- Of the 35 percent who owned their home, only 3 percent owned their home without a loan or mortgage.
- Rates of homeownership increased between 2000 and 2012–16. In 2000, 24 percent owned their own home compared with 35 percent in 2012–16.

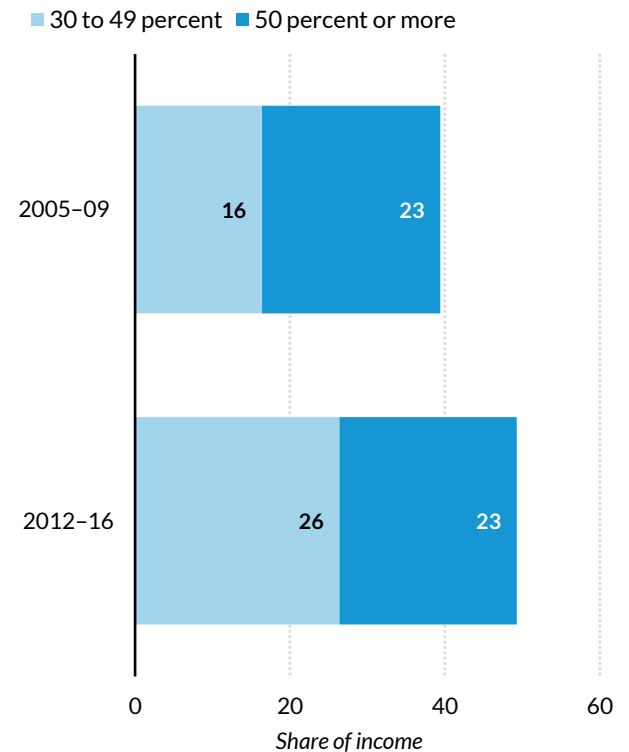
In 2012–16, half of African immigrant renters were rent burdened (spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing), up from 39 percent in year 2005–09. Twenty-three percent spent more than half of their income on housing, compared with 2005–09.

However, the rates of rent burden for African immigrants in 2012–16 were similar to the rates for DC residents overall. Forty-six percent of DC residents spent 30 percent or more of their income on rent, and 25 percent spent 50 percent or more.

Nearly Two-Thirds of African Immigrants Were Renters in 2012–16



Rent Burden for African Immigrants Increased between 2005–09 and 2012–16



DATA PROFILES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

This is part of a data series on immigrants in the District of Columbia. The data used are microdata from the 2000 Decennial Census long form and 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, obtained from IPUMS-USA. For more information, visit <https://www.urban.org/stateofdcimmigrants>.