

Report of the Task Force on Black Immigrants

December, 2025



Executive Summary

The Task Force on Black Immigrants was convened in response to a Joint Resolution of the Illinois House of Representatives, with the charge of “studying the state of Black immigrants in Illinois and providing recommendations on how to assist them.” The Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) organized and provided administrative support to the Task Force, which met quarterly during the year 2025. Task Force members considered multiple topics related to the lives of Black immigrants in Illinois, provided detailed interviews to IDHR staff, and examined other data and information on Black immigrants.

Following is a summary of key points from the Task Force report:

Community Characteristics

The Black immigrant population is large and growing in Illinois.

- Approximately 85,000 Black immigrants reside in Illinois, according to the American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the years 2019-2023. It is likely that the true number is higher, given the tendency of surveys to undercount immigrants of all immigration statuses and communities of color.

The Black immigrant population in Illinois has diverse national origins.

- Nigeria represents the largest population, with almost 25,000 persons, followed by Jamaica (8,000) and Ghana (6,700). Of the most numerous groups, 11 come from Africa, two from the Caribbean (Jamaica and Haiti), and one from Central America (Belize). The country of Mexico is among the largest countries of origin, with 1,100 Black immigrants in Illinois.

Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens in Illinois live with Black immigrants.

- 117,000 Illinois residents live with a Black immigrant householder. Another 12,000 are in other living arrangements. Together, these 129,000 individuals represent more than one percent of the state’s population.
- Black immigrant households include 44,000 native-born U.S. citizens, most of whom are children.

Black immigrants reside in communities across the state.

- Black immigrants are found throughout Illinois, primarily in community areas across Chicago, but also in the suburbs of metro Chicago in suburban Cook, DuPage and Will counties. Peoria, Rock Island, St. Clair and Winnebago counties also have sizable Black immigrant populations.

Key Themes Identified by the Task Force

Making services accessible to persons who do not speak English well.

- Language access, meaning the ability of an individual to receive government and other services in a language that they understand, emerged as the most frequently cited issue in interviews with community members. The need for linguistically accessible services permeates all areas of the

Black immigrant experience—from healthcare and mental health services to community building, policing, education, and housing. The challenge is particularly acute for Africans, who come from one of the most language-rich continents in the world.

There are many unmet needs in healthcare and mental health

- Black immigrants are overrepresented in Illinois' refugee population.¹ Many Black immigrants come to the United States after experiencing significant stress and trauma—whether from conflict, displacement, economic hardship, or personal loss. Once here, the opportunity to heal from these experiences is limited. Healthcare is often unaffordable and/or inaccessible.

Quality housing is hard to obtain.

- Across our interviews, participants highlighted housing access and affordability as substantial challenges for the Black immigrant community.

¹ For example, less than five percent of all Illinois immigrants are Black, compared to 28 percent of refugees resettled in the state as recently as 2022, according to the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Recommendations of the Task Force

Ensure that Black immigrants have the ability to communicate with government and human service agencies in their own language.

- The Task Force is concerned about the lack of translated and culturally appropriate human services for immigrants interacting with government and human service agencies.

Raise awareness of unique challenges faced by Black immigrants in finding affordable housing. Create opportunities for Black immigrants to overcome barriers. Support navigation and education resources.

- Quality housing is hard to find and consumes inordinate amounts of household income. Newer immigrants lack credit histories to aid in their housing search.

Create or expand access to healthcare and especially mental health services.

- Healthcare is overly expensive and access is diminishing. Mental health is increasingly recognized as a serious need, yet there are few providers. There is stigma related to mental health treatment.

Sensitize state agencies and non-profit organizations to the needs of Black immigrants.

- Illinois government agencies need to become aware of the growing Black immigrant community and its needs such as language access, affordable housing, and legal services.

Raise awareness of problems that Black immigrants can have when interacting with the police and with immigration enforcement.

- Law enforcement interactions are fraught for Black immigrants. There is consternation over whether local law enforcement agents respect the rights of immigrants. Separately, Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) has treated immigrants brutally and without respect for democratic norms, such as due process.

Recognize the rights and dignity of queer persons and persons with disabilities

- Discrimination against and disrespect for LGBTQ+ and persons with disabilities needs to end. The Black immigrant community itself needs to reckon with its own negative attitudes.

Institute disaggregated data collection on Black Immigrants

- Data is a powerful tool to assess a community's needs and access to resources. The State should assess opportunities to collect and report disaggregated data on Black immigrants' race and ethnicity and identify opportunities to better assess and report out data on the use of State government services by the Black Immigrant community.
-

December, 2025

Dear Governor Pritzker and Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly:

Nearly 85,000 Black immigrants call Illinois home. They are students, employers, parents, neighbors, and an essential part of the diverse fabric that allows our state to thrive. As leaders of the Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Governor's Office of New Americans, we are pleased to share this final report of the Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants recognizing both the impact and needs of Black immigrants in Illinois. The Task Force was first established by joint resolution of the 103rd General Assembly and charged with studying the state of Black immigrants in Illinois and providing recommendations on how State government can be more responsive to the growing population.

We are grateful for the dedication and contributions of Task Force members, who graciously shared their personal stories, considered data and information presented to them and provided invaluable feedback and recommendations captured in this report. Members came from a diversity of backgrounds, many as members of or with close ties to the Black immigrant community. We had representation across a broad array of leaders from immigrant service providers and advocates to mental health practitioners to academic researchers and more.

We are in a moment where immigrants of all backgrounds are facing tremendous challenges and an environment of heightened hostility and fear created in great part by the relentless vilification from the current federal administration. Black immigrants in particular face this moment with intersectional identities that often place them in the crosshairs of both anti-immigrant and anti-Black sentiment. Illinois is a state with longstanding welcoming values and policy, and this report reflects our commitment as State government to serve all residents of our state with dignity. It is critical that State agencies and the general public understand the Black immigrant community's need for government services that are linguistically accessible; for social, human, and legal services that are culturally responsive; and for the right to due process and equitable treatment by law enforcement.

Black immigrant communities are vital to our state, and we share this report recognizing our common humanity and the need for consistent and decisive action to ensure their prosperity.

Sincerely,



Jim Bennett, Executive Director, Illinois Department of Human Rights

Isabella Hurtado, Director of the Illinois Office of New Americans

Dear Colleagues, and Fellow Residents of Illinois,

It is with profound commitment and deep honor that I present the inaugural findings and recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants, which was created through House Joint Resolution 18 (HJR 18). We were charged with the critical mission of studying the state of Black immigrants in Illinois and providing recommendations on how to best assist them.

My commitment stems from my own life experience: I am married to an immigrant. I have experienced firsthand the persistent difficulties that Black immigrants face, where navigating the system often feels like an impossible gauntlet and the rules are applied unfairly. We see how systemic injustices affect real families.

Black immigrants, like Black Americans, are unjustly targeted in the criminal justice system and disproportionately affected by the immigration enforcement system. These disparities in policy and law concerning Black immigrants are rooted in racism and unjustly target them at all stages of the process.

In the United States, the Black immigrant population has tripled over the last twenty years to 2 million immigrants, primarily migrating from African and Caribbean countries. Here in Illinois, we are home to approximately 85,000 Black immigrants. This population is diverse, with Nigeria, Jamaica, and Ghana representing some of the largest origin groups.

The data confirms the need for immediate action:

- Black immigrants face higher rates of detention and deportation than other immigrant populations.
- An AFSC study found that Black immigrants in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention were six times more likely to be sent to solitary confinement.
- Even while comprising less than six percent of the undocumented population between 2003 and 2015, they represented over ten percent of immigrants in removal proceedings during that time.
- Further, Black immigrants are denied asylum at a higher rate than other people.

Through the work of the Task Force, we have identified key themes that require our state's focus, including urgent needs that must be met. The findings highlight substantial systemic issues that must be immediately addressed:

- **Linguistic Accessibility is the Primary Barrier:** The Task Force identified language access as the most frequently cited issue, threading through healthcare, mental health, policing, education, and housing experiences. The linguistic diversity, including speakers of languages like French, Swahili, Amharic, and Niger-Congo languages, makes effective communication with government and human service agencies challenging.
 - **The Socioeconomic Paradox:** Despite Black immigrants being more highly educated (42% have a college degree) and having higher labor force participation (75%) than other Illinois residents, their median household income is lower (\$70,793) compared to \$78,785 for non-Black immigrants.
-

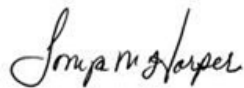
-
- **Unique Challenges in Health and Housing:** Many Black immigrants arrive after experiencing significant stress and trauma. Access to affordable healthcare and mental health services is limited by cost, availability and cultural stigma. Furthermore, obtaining quality and affordable housing remains a substantial challenge, often exacerbated by a lack of credit history.
 - **Dual Discrimination:** The report underscores that Black immigrants face prejudice related to the intersection of being both Black and an immigrant. Interviewees shared how law enforcement often “see a Black person” rather than an immigrant, leading to discrimination. They are also disproportionately affected by the immigration enforcement system, facing “double-time” discrimination.

Furthermore, divisions within the broader Black community were not accidental but were engineered through policy and reinforced through institutions. For generations, U.S. government policy, law, and public institutions shaped narratives that portrayed African Americans as dangerous, deficient, or undeserving, distortions that were transmitted globally and often encountered by Black immigrants before they ever arrived. Policies like housing redlining labeled Black neighborhoods as hazardous, while immigration classification systems categorized all people of African descent into stigmatized groups, collectively manufacturing distance within the African diaspora. We must dismantle the structures that divided us and invest in policies that recognize our shared humanity and shared destiny.

The Task Force has provided several recommendations for action, including ensuring linguistic accessibility, raising awareness of housing barriers, expanding culturally responsive healthcare and mental health services, sensitizing state agencies to the community’s needs, and raising awareness of problems with police and immigration enforcement.

Illinois has welcoming values, and this report provides a clear pathway for our State government to become more responsive to this growing and vital population. I urge you to study these recommendations closely and commit to the necessary action through policy, programming and funding to ensure the prosperity and equitable treatment of Black immigrants in Illinois.

Sincerely,



State Representative Sonya Marie Harper, 6th District
Co-Chair, Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants

Table of Content

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Background and Introduction to the Task Force | 2 |
| Members | 3 |
| Meetings of the Task Force | 3 |
| Collecting Information on Black Immigrants | 3 |
| Task Force Administration | 4 |
| Who Are the Black Immigrants in Illinois? | 5 |
| Size of the Population and Top Countries of Birth | 5 |
| Black Immigrant Households | 6 |
| Immigration Status of Black Immigrants | 7 |
| Change over Time | 7 |
| Geographic Location | 8 |
| Socioeconomic Status | 9 |
| Discussion of Population and Socioeconomic Data | 12 |
| Interview Highlights and Key Themes | 13 |
| How would you describe the Black immigrant community in Illinois? | 13 |
| What is the diversity like within the Black immigrant community in Illinois? | 13 |
| How do Black immigrants build social networks and support systems in Illinois? | 13 |
| What challenges do Black immigrant families face in Illinois? | 14 |
| Aspirations for the Community | 15 |
| Discussion of Key Themes from the Interviews | 15 |
| Recommendations of the Task Force | 17 |
| Profiles of Black Immigrants in Illinois | 20 |
| Appendices | 35 |
| Black Immigrant Task Force Interview Guide | 35 |
| Text of the Illinois House Joint Resolution | 36 |

Background and Introduction to the Task Force

Black immigrants are persons who self-describe their race as Black or African American and who were born outside of the United States. This community has a large and growing presence within Illinois' immigrant population, with their number rising from about 62,000 persons in 2013 to almost 85,000 in 2023, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Changing patterns of international migration have driven the increase in Black immigration to Illinois. Black immigrants living in Illinois hail from places across the globe, such as Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and elsewhere. In Illinois, significant numbers of Black immigrants and their families live in Chicago community areas, metropolitan Chicago suburbs, and in cities and counties across the state.

Black immigrants are a large share of workers in key health-related jobs in Illinois. For example, Black immigrants are four percent of all nurse practitioners, three percent of all physicians and three percent of personal care aides, even though Black immigrants are less than one percent of all workers statewide.

Black immigrants face strong headwinds in today's climate. Federal immigration enforcement has reached extreme limits, and immigrants of all races fear unjust detention and treatment without the due process they are entitled to under the U.S. Constitution. Federal safety net programs providing access to health, nutrition, housing and other

supports are losing funding and tightening eligibility requirements based on immigration status. All the while, macroeconomic change involving artificial intelligence, trade policy, climate change and other trends roil the environment in which immigrants struggle to work and care for their families.

Given the growing importance of Black immigrants, in spring of 2024, the Illinois General Assembly passed a resolution calling for an Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants. The resolution noted that Black immigrants are often unjustly targeted by criminal and immigration-related law enforcement actions that often reflect racial bias. The General Assembly called for the task force to study the state of Black immigrants in Illinois and provide recommendations on how to assist them.

Based on the General Assembly resolution, the Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Governor's Office of New Americans convened a group of community leaders and experts over the course of calendar year 2025 to discuss the Black immigrant population. The group's membership reflected the diversity within the Black immigrant population and allies in terms of national origin, place of birth, place of residence in Illinois, occupation and other characteristics.

Table 1: Black Immigrants' Share of Selected Health-Related Occupations: Illinois, 2019-2023

| Countries | Number |
|---|--------|
| Other healthcare support workers | 5% |
| Nursing assistants | 4% |
| Nurse practitioners, and nurse midwives | 3% |
| Physicians | 3% |
| Personal care aides | 3% |
| Home health aides | 2% |
| Pharmacists | 2% |
| Registered nurses | 2% |

Source: American Community Survey

Members

The members of the Task Force include:

- Hon. Sonya Harper, Illinois State Representative, Task Force Co-Chair
- Hon. Mattie Hunter, Illinois State Senator, Task Force Co-Chair
- Fasika Alem, Programs Director at United African Organization
- Michèle Alexandre, Dean and Professor of Law at Loyola University, Chicago School of Law
- Vilna Bashi, Professor, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University
- Lawrence Benito, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights
- Oral Bennett, Chief Litigation Attorney/Supervising Attorney at Illinois Department of Human Rights
- Nixon Camilien, Adjunct Faculty, DePaul University
- Lisa Chun, Senior Attorney at the Detention Project at National Immigrant Justice Center
- Johannes Favi, Director of Program Housing, Bridge Communities
- Aline Lauture, Program Director | Interim Executive Director, Haitian Congress. Member of the Coalition of Haitian American Organizations in the Chicagoland Area
- Nneka Obasi, Chicago Mayor's Office of Immigrant Migrant and Refugee Rights
- Moshood Olanrewaju, Assistant Professor, Adler University
- Adal Regis, Director of Strategy at Elevate, an Affiliate of the Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Michael Stewart, Principal of Passages Charter School

Meetings of the Task Force

The Task Force convened in person and via remote access. Meetings took place on four occasions, in March, June, September and December of 2025.

Collecting Information on Black Immigrants

The Task Force gathered information on the Black immigrant community in several ways. At Task Force meetings, members reacted to suggested topics such as emerging issues and challenges facing the community, the current political climate (e.g., the impact of changing federal policy), and barriers and opportunities to successful integration. They also independently raised their own concerns. The group also heard presentations from Ahlam Jbarra, Chief of Staff for the Illinois Department of Human Services Family and Community Services Division, and Fasika Alem, Programs Director of the United African Organization. Rob Paral of the Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois Chicago provided new data discussing the socioeconomic characteristics of Black immigrants in Illinois.

Outside of meetings, Task Force members gave one-on-one interviews to staff of the Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Governor's Office. Staff also used a survey of the Task Force members to ask for their recommendations on public policies related to Black immigrants.



Task Force Administration

The Task Force was staffed and administered by:

- Jim Bennett, Director, Illinois Department of Human Rights
- Isabella Hurtado, Director, Governor's Office of New Americans
- Rob Paral, Senior Analyst, Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois Chicago
- Xavier A. Potts, Executive Assistant to the Director, Illinois Department of Human Rights
- Francheska Tchatchoua, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Illinois Governor's Office
- Cynthia Maduka, Former Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Illinois Governor's Office

The Great Cities Institute (GCI) of the University of Illinois Chicago provided data analysis and other support to the Task Force. This report was written by Rob Paral of GCI, and GCI designed the final report.

Who Are the Black Immigrants in Illinois? A Profile of the Black Immigrant Community

The following demographic facts shed light on the size and characteristics of the Black immigrant population in Illinois.

Size of the Population and Top Countries of Birth

Approximately 85,000 Black immigrants reside in Illinois, according to the American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the years 2019-2023. It is likely that the true number is higher, given the tendency of surveys to undercount immigrants and communities of color.

In terms of the country of birth of Black immigrants, Nigeria represents the largest population, with almost 25,000 persons, followed by Jamaica (8,000) and Ghana (6,700). Of the largest populations, 11 are located in Africa, two in the Caribbean (Jamaica and Haiti), one in Central America (Belize), and one in North America (Mexico), with a population of 1,100 Black immigrants in Illinois.

Figure 1: Top African Countries of Black Immigrants in Illinois: 2019-2023

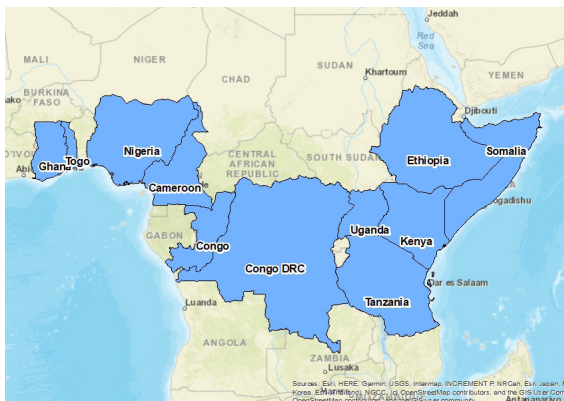


Figure 2: Top Caribbean and Latin American Countries of Black Immigrants in Illinois: 2019-2023



Table 2: Black Immigrant Countries in Illinois 2019-2023

| Countries | Number |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Nigeria | 24,633 |
| Jamaica | 7,947 |
| Ghana | 6,681 |
| DR Congo | 4,743 |
| Ethiopia | 4,552 |
| Haiti | 4,061 |
| Togo | 2,238 |
| Cameroon | 2,089 |
| Belize/British Honduras | 1,522 |
| Congo | 1,482 |
| Kenya | 1,462 |
| Tanzania | 1,172 |
| Mexico | 1,114 |
| Uganda | 1,096 |
| Somalia | 1,029 |
| Other | 14,342 |
| Total | 84,704 |

Source: American Community Survey

Black Immigrant Households

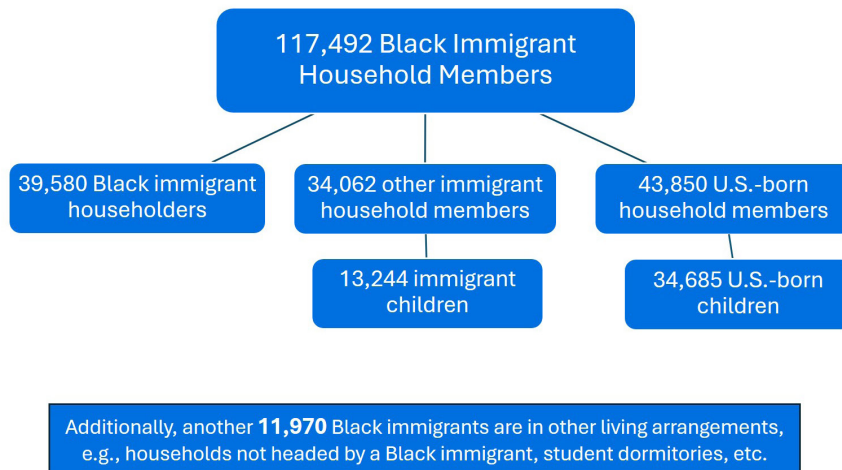
Black immigrants arrive to the U.S. for many reasons and can have any of a number of immigration statuses once they are here. Immigrants can be part of family reunification processes in which a relative in the U.S. petitions for someone to be admitted. Alternatively, they may have come as refugees. Still others first arrived at universities with student visas that they later converted to permanent residence. Some immigrants do not have a formal status and are among the undocumented population in the state.

These multiple pathways often lead to Black immigrant households having a mixed immigration status. A household might include a naturalized citizen, a legal permanent resident, a person on a temporary visa and/or a person without status.

No matter their race or country of birth, immigrant households often include children. Some minors may be immigrants themselves but more commonly they have been born in the U.S. and are U.S. citizens.

About 117,000 individuals live in Black immigrant households in Illinois. These include about 40,000 Black immigrant householders. The households include 34,000 other immigrants and 44,000 native-born U.S. citizens. Many of the U.S.-born household members are children.

Figure 3: Black Immigrants and Black Immigrant Households in Illinois: 2019-2023



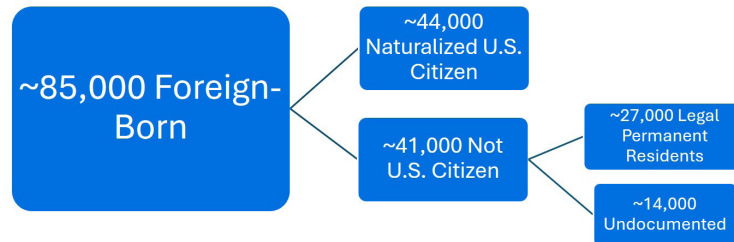
Additionally, another 12,000 Black immigrants live outside of Black immigrant households. These persons may live in households not headed by a Black immigrant, in student dormitories, in group quarters or in other living arrangements.

The 117,000 persons in Black immigrant households along with the 12,000 Black immigrants who are not in Black immigrant households total 129,000 individuals. They represent more than one percent of the entire Illinois population.

Immigration Status of Black Immigrants

There are approximately 85,000 Black immigrants in Illinois. About 44,000 of them are naturalized U.S. citizens. The remaining 41,000 fall into two broad categories, including 27,000 legal permanent residents and 14,000 undocumented immigrants.²

Figure 4: Immigration Status of Black Immigrants in Illinois: 2019-2023



Change over Time

The growth of major Black immigrant groups is happening at very different rates. Over the past decade, numerous groups have had substantial population increases in Illinois. Persons from DR Congo grew tenfold (1042%), and other populations rose notably, such as individuals from Congo (419%), Tanzania (321%) and Cameroon (311%). At the same time, the Haitian population is reported to have fallen, as have the numbers of Black immigrants from Belize and Mexico.

Table 3: Change in Selected Countries/Regions of Black Immigrants in Illinois: 2013-2023

| | 2009-2013 | 2019-2023 | # Change | % Change |
|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Nigeria | 12,041 | 24,633 | 12,592 | 205% |
| Jamaica | 7,342 | 7,947 | 605 | 108% |
| Ghana | 6,243 | 6,681 | 438 | 107% |
| DR Congo | 455 | 4,743 | 4,288 | 1042% |
| Ethiopia | 3,027 | 4,552 | 1,525 | 150% |
| Haiti | 5,371 | 4,061 | -1,310 | -24% |
| Togo | 796 | 2,238 | 1,442 | 281% |
| Cameroon | 671 | 2,089 | 1,418 | 311% |
| Belize | 2,031 | 1,522 | -509 | -25% |
| Congo | 354 | 1,482 | 1,128 | 419% |
| Kenya | 872 | 1,462 | 590 | 168% |
| Tanzania | 365 | 1,172 | 807 | 321% |
| Mexico | 2,474 | 1,114 | -1,360 | -55% |
| Uganda | 574 | 1,096 | 522 | 191% |
| Somalia | 575 | 1,029 | 454 | 179% |

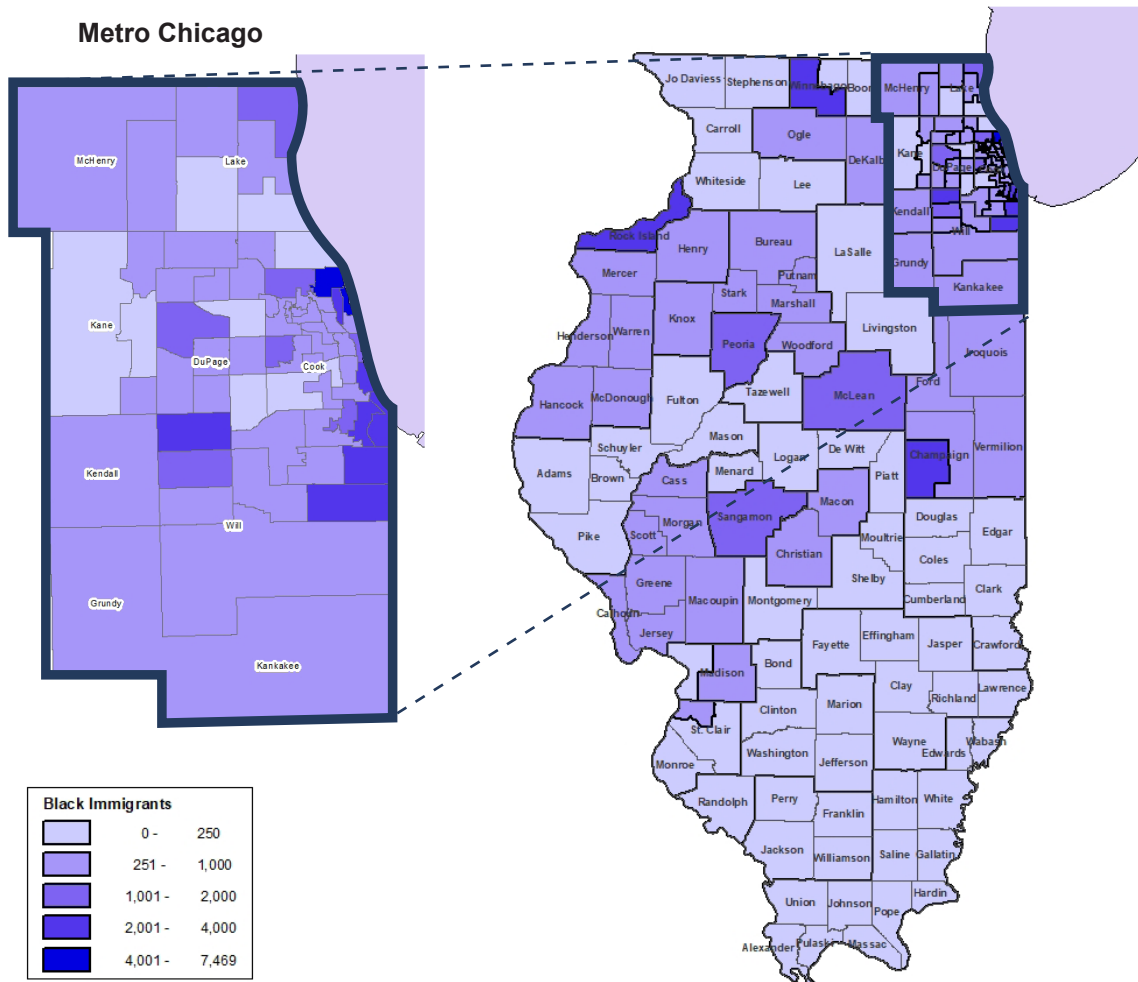
Source: American Community Survey

² The estimate of 14,000 undocumented Black immigrants is from the respected [Center for Migration Studies of New York](#). No estimates are available of Black immigrants in Illinois with temporary visas to work or study.

Geographic Location

Black immigrants are found throughout Illinois. As seen in these maps, Black immigrants are found in significant numbers across many Chicago neighborhoods, but also in the suburbs of metro Chicago in suburban Cook, DuPage and Will counties.³ Peoria, Rock Island, St. Clair and Winnebago counties also contain notable Black immigrant populations. (An Appendix provides information on where the largest groups are most likely to live in Illinois.)

Figure 5: Black Immigrants in Illinois Counties: 2019-2023



The units of geography in these maps are Public Use Microdata Areas, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. They may contain multiple counties, may equal a county, or may represent part of a county.

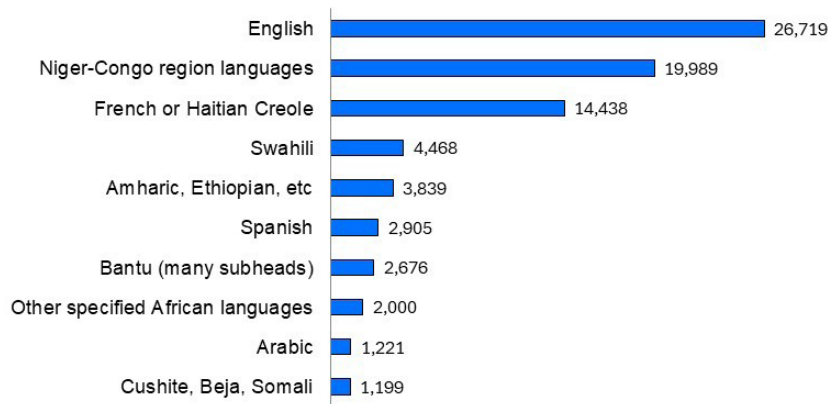
³ Numbers of persons who report being of Black race and foreign born are not available for small geographies. These maps are based on persons born in countries with a majority Black population.

Socioeconomic Status

Languages Spoken and English Ability

English is the most common language spoken at home by Black immigrants, with almost 27,000 speakers, according to the American Community Survey. The other languages or language groups with at least 10,000 speakers are languages of the Niger-Congo region⁴ (20,000 speakers) and French or Haitian Creole (14,000 speakers). More than 3,000 persons speak Swahili, Amharic/Ethiopian, Bantu or Spanish.

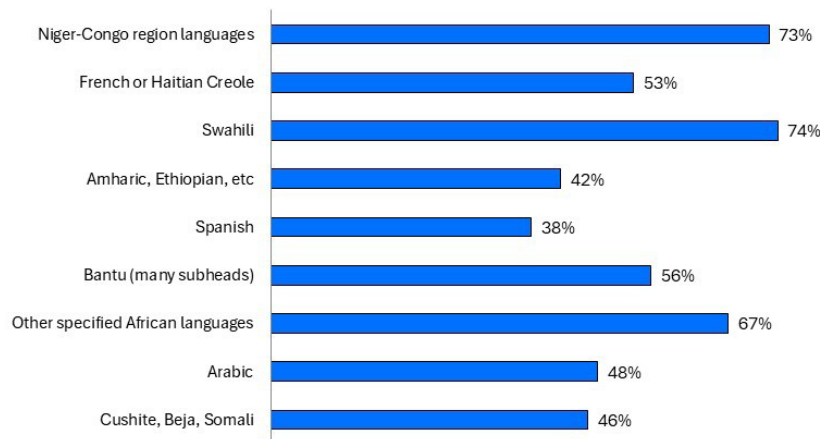
Figure 6: Top Languages Spoken by Black Immigrants



Some Black immigrant language groups in Illinois include large numbers of persons with a high level of English fluency. About three-quarters of persons who speak one of the languages of the Niger-Congo region or who speak Swahili, for example, report speaking English “very well.”

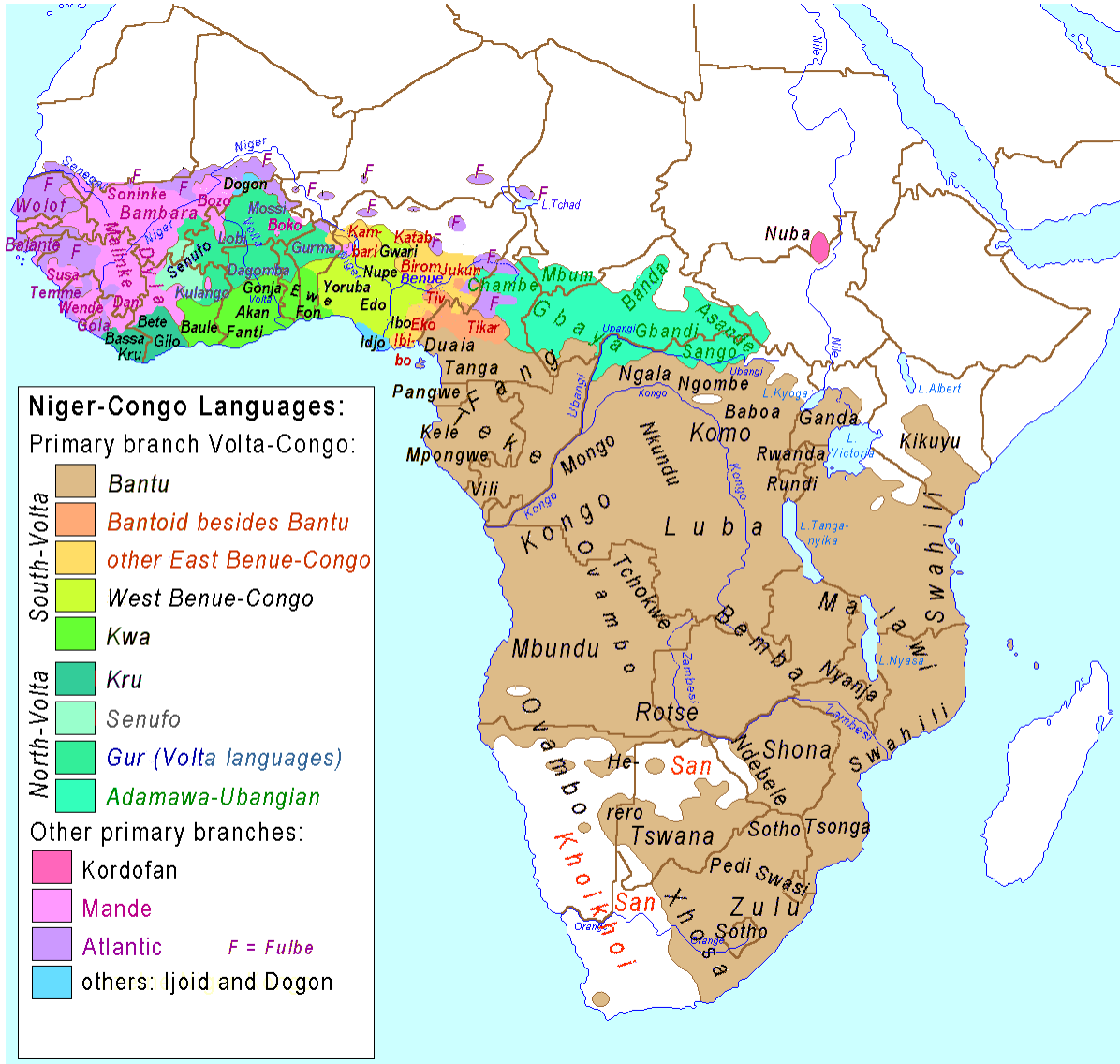
But substantial portions of all language groups include persons who do not report speaking English “very well.” In fact, for most groups, less than two-thirds of persons report this level of English ability.

Figure 7: % Speak English “Very Well” by Language Spoken at Home



4 [The Niger-Congo language family](#) is one of the largest language families in the world, with more than 1,400 languages and 181 million speakers. The U.S. Census Bureau does not provide detailed information on specific languages within this category.

Figure 8: Languages of the Niger-Congo Region



Source: Wikimedia Commons at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/Niger-Congo_map.png

Education, Labor Force Participation and Income

Several key metrics show that Black immigrants in general are well prepared for and highly engaged in the labor force. Black immigrants are more likely (79 percent) than other Illinois residents (61 percent) to be in their adult working years (18-64).

Table 4: Age of Black Immigrants and Other Illinois Residents: 2019-2023

| | Black Immigrants | Other Illinoisans |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 100% | 100% |
| 0-17 Years | 12% | 22% |
| 18-64 Years | 79% | 61% |
| 65+ Years | 8% | 17% |

Source: American Community Survey

In terms of educational levels, Black immigrants are more likely (42 percent) to have a college degree than other Illinois residents (37 percent).

Table 5: Educational Attainment of Black Immigrants and Other Illinois Residents: 2019-2023

| | Black Immigrants | Other Illinoisans |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 100% | 100% |
| No HS degree | 10% | 10% |
| HS only | 16% | 22% |
| Some college, no degree | 21% | 23% |
| Associates degree, no BA | 11% | 8% |
| BA or higher | 42% | 37% |

Source: American Community Survey

In terms of their role in the labor force, Black immigrants are more likely (75 percent) than the remainder of the state (65 percent) to be in the labor force.⁵ Black immigrants also have a higher rate of employment (70 percent) than other workers in Illinois (61 percent).

Figure 9: Black Immigrants in the Illinois Labor Force: 2019-2023

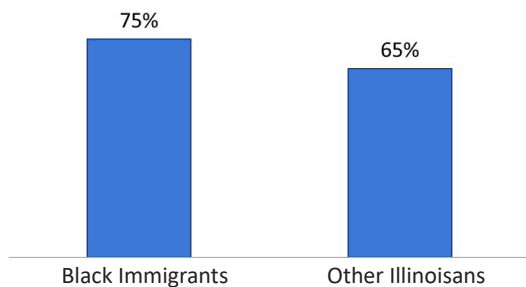
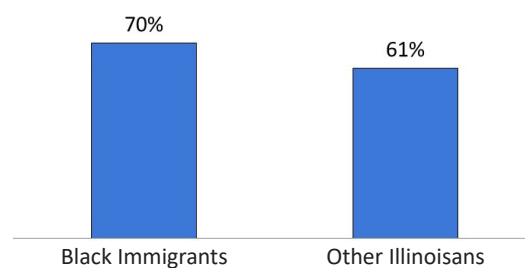



Figure 10: Black Immigrant Employment Rate in Illinois: 2019-2023



Despite their comparatively higher education and labor force status, Black immigrants have lower incomes than the rest of the state's population. The median household income of Black immigrants is \$70,793 while for persons in Illinois who are not Black immigrants the median household income is about \$78,785.

Black immigrants, despite their attachment to the labor force, experience underemployment in terms of

⁵ To be in the labor force means to be either employed or actively seeking employment.



relatively low wages. This is true when adjusting for educational level. For example, Black immigrants with less than a high school education have personal income that is only 80 percent of other Illinois workers with comparable education. Black immigrant workers with high school degrees earn 87 percent of similarly educated other Illinois workers. For persons with an associate's degree, Black immigrants earn 72 percent of what their peers earn. For college graduates, Black immigrants earn 71 percent of what comparably educated other persons earn.

Discussion of Population and Socioeconomic Data

A number of observations can be made about the implications of the data presented here.

A Significantly Large Population

- The substantial size of the Black immigrant population means that state and local policymakers, philanthropic funders, human service providers and other entities need to address the unique characteristics of the Black immigrant population when considering needs of the immigrant population at large.
- Over the past century, Illinois has seen the rise of large immigrant groups from Europe, Latin America and Asia, all of whom have contributed to our state's proud identity. Today we witness the rise of another major component of our state's fabric: Black immigrants. As with earlier arrivals and long-established groups, the positive impact of Black immigrants can be fully realized with mindful investments and support.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

- Black immigrants are exceedingly diverse. The sub-Saharan countries of Africa alone contain hundreds of native and colonial languages along with widely varying cultures and local histories. The Black immigrants from the Western Hemisphere similarly represent widely varying linguistic and cultural features.
- This diversity calls on the Illinois state government to understand the most appropriate languages to use in serving and communicating with Black immigrants

Presence Across the State

- Black immigrants live in communities across the state of Illinois, including beyond the Chicago metropolitan area. In general, there are fewer immigrant-serving and human service organizations located outside of metro Chicago. This impacts the ability of Black immigrants to assistance when needed.

Interview Highlights and Key Themes

Members of the Task Force provided in-depth interviews about their perceptions and experiences of issues that are especially important for Black immigrants. The interviews were guided by a standardized rubric and took place in spring and summer of 2025.⁶

The structured interviews were based on five themes: 1) understanding the Black immigrant community in Illinois, 2) identifying community strengths and supports, 3) identifying community challenges and needs, specifically regarding employment, housing, mental health, health care, and education, 4) assessing state services and policies through a Black immigrant lens, and 5) future aspirations that Task Force members had for the community. Recordings and transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to identify highlights and themes.

How would you describe the Black immigrant community in Illinois?

This question elicited descriptions of the resourcefulness and motivation of Black immigrants. **“To travel so far from the Caribbean or from Africa,”** said one person, **“to take the trip speaks to the fact that the person is resilient and wants to make the most of the opportunities available to them.”** Another interviewee said Black immigrants were **“hard working and have dreams of bigger things and they seek better living conditions.”** Said another, **“Black immigrants are concerned about education for their children.”** One commenter described some of the innate challenges faced by the immigrants in Illinois given their population size and residential patterns: **“They are small in number compared to other immigrant communities and their population is dispersed in Illinois. This makes it hard for them to be reached.”**

What is the diversity like within the Black immigrant community in Illinois?

Respondents spoke about the nature of Illinois society, and their relationship to other groups here. **“Illinois is segregated,”** said one. **“Black immigrants are the minority of the minority,”** said one interviewee. Another commenter noted that **“There is a lack of focus on the Black Latin population.”**

Respondents added that **“There is a wide range of origin countries [in Illinois]: the Caribbean, the African continent, and Europe.”** And yet **“Black immigrants tend to live in groups by ethnicities or nationalities.”**

How do Black immigrants build social networks and support systems in Illinois?

To build social networks and support systems, for Black immigrants **“Number one is family, if they have a family. Number two is churches or houses of worship, where people go to pray and find hope to sustain themselves and find network action to plug into jobs and housing. Thirdly, at work, because we meet people through work.”**

⁶ A copy of the interview questions is included in an appendix.

Other respondents largely reiterated this sentiment, citing “Places of worship,” “Community organizations,” “Family,” “(Through) employment,” and “Neighbors.”

What challenges do Black immigrant families face in Illinois?

Language barriers

The topic of language barriers raised multiple examples of concerns. “You don’t speak the language well,” said one person, describing their experiences. “You don’t understand ‘do this.’ So, a lot of times it’s minimal service, and the most critical place where it happens is in healthcare. My mom used to go to the hospital quite often. And if I was not there on so many different occasions, it would have been tragically different.”

Other commentors noted that “Language diversity [among Black immigrants, who speak many languages] makes it difficult to reach people [to provide information or services].” “When you add language access it adds another issue [to what people are facing]” said another interviewee.

The situation of Black immigrant children in school was highlighted by one individual: “The children... first of all, they have to have someone they can communicate with, that they can trust, right? That understands them. You have to have that bridge, in order for the kids to be successful, to be understood.”

Healthcare and Mental Health

The healthcare challenges that many Americans face are especially acute for Black immigrants, according to our interviews. One person stated “[If people get] injured they are in trouble unless the community carries them on their back.” Said another: “Regarding healthcare, everyone understands that you cannot risk getting sick.”

On the topic of mental health, according to one interview, “There’s a lot of mental health challenges that people who have fled their home countries due to persecution face... [then there is] criminalization of people who have mental health challenges.” Another interviewee said about mental health that “The system doesn’t adequately address their mental health challenges [of migrants and refugees].” A respondent noted that “Many migrants that come from our part of the world are dealing with trauma that has not been addressed at all. So, no matter what you do, if those are not addressed, it’s like you’re building a fortress without a solid foundation.”

Housing

Interviews recorded a number of comments about the lack of quality and affordable housing. Said one person, “[It is so difficult] I don’t know how they [Black immigrants] navigate housing.” Another described how upon arrival in the U.S. “Black immigrants do not know the best places to live in [and often end up in unsafe areas].” One interviewee explained how a community had to step in for new arrivals: “When Senegalese migrants were coming across the border, a handful ended up in shelters, but the others were cared for by one mosque and the community.”

Employment

On the topic of employment, interviewees described experiences that many Black migrants have with finding a good job. “[Immigrants can be] paid under the table. Sometimes they get exploited by their employer,” said one respondent. “[Even when immigrants find jobs] there is still an issue of being gainfully employed [making a living wage],” said another. One commenter noted that “Black migrants are often hired by temp agencies... they are often not provided with as many protections.”

Many Black immigrants have high levels of education. Nevertheless, according to an interviewee, **“People who come with professional licenses have a hard time translating that to work here.”**

Policing/Legal system

Interviewees described experiences of being an immigrant and Black within the legal system. **“The police officer is not going to say ‘You’re an immigrant.’ They see a Black person,”** said one person. Other comments related that **“[When I was detained by immigration enforcement] I found myself in a minority of the minority... and I really understood that, you know, Black immigrants are discriminated double-time,”** and **“Most people that were Black immigrants while I was in immigration detention were just, you know, discriminated in a different way that I could not explain.”** One person noted the potential severity of the immigration legal system by saying **“[In the immigration enforcement scenario] the government... can violate due process rights without being held accountable.”**

Education

Comments on Black immigrants within the educational system included **“[Black immigrant parents] want the best education for their children,”** but also **“There were things that I learned and sometimes later on, of how much the teachers were downers on our children... on our Afro-descendant children.”** One comment about college admission related that **“[Immigrant parents] might not know how to get scholarships and loans (for their children to go to college).”**

Aspirations for the Community

When asked about their aspirations for the community, persons interviewed said that they hoped for the **“Creation of a system that discourages discrimination at all levels,”** and that **“[we can maintain] diversity while embracing harmony: the ‘salad’ rather than the ‘melting pot’ idea.”** They mentioned economic opportunity with comments hoping for better employment opportunities and for the **“uplifting of Black immigrant businesses.”**

Discussion of Key Themes from the Interviews

Language Access


Language access, meaning the ability of an individual to receive government and other services in a language that they understand, emerged as the most frequently cited issue in our interviews. It permeates all areas of the Black immigrant experience—from healthcare and mental health services to community building, policing, education, and housing. The challenge is particularly acute for African immigrants, who come from one of the most language-rich continents in the world.

Africa alone is home to over 1,500 languages, which makes it difficult for service providers (including even Black immigrant-focused organizations) to offer adequate interpretation and translation support. Inadequate language access creates communication barriers which can limit participation in programs to which persons may be entitled.

Healthcare and Mental Health

Many immigrants come to the United States after experiencing significant stress and trauma. Once here, the opportunity to process and heal from these experiences can be limited.

Cultural stigmas around mental health can discourage discussions about trauma. Additionally, the economic struggle to make ends meet can leave little time, energy, or resources to spend on treatment, even when it is available.



Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge for Black immigrants, many of whom lack access to health insurance. Furthermore, some subsidized health programs have lost or are under threat of losing government funding.

For many immigrants, it is extremely difficult to find a provider that speaks their language. This reality further limits access to treatment.

Housing Access and Housing Affordability

Participants in our interviews highlighted housing access and affordability as substantial challenges for the Black immigrant community. When affordable housing is available, it can be substandard. Inadequate or unstable housing can affect the ability of children to focus in school, and can create ongoing stress for immigrant families.

Recommendations of the Task Force

Through analysis of Task Force members' interview data and robust discussion, the Task Force has developed the following recommendations:

1.

Ensure that Black immigrants have the ability to communicate with government and human services agencies in their own language

State services should be made accessible to immigrants who do not speak English, and should accommodate the linguistic diversity of the Black immigrant population.

- “[There is a] lack of language services for Black migrants, which makes it hard for them to receive services.”
- “Due to the language barrier, [there is a] lack of knowledge around rights, immigration status.”
- “Language diversity makes it difficult to reach people.”
- “When you add language access it adds another issue.”
- “Federal efforts to make English the official language will make it more difficult to get assistance.”
- “Non-African organizations often don’t reject African people, but because they don’t have the language access, they are de facto excluding.”

2.

Raise awareness of unique challenges faced by Black immigrants in finding affordable housing and create opportunities to help them overcome barriers. Support navigation and education resources.

Affordable housing is a critical need.

- “We know that African immigrants are being priced out of housing just like everybody else. It’s not unique to them, but they’re hit harder because they have less generational wealth.”
- “[There is a] lack of credit history, making it difficult to obtain housing.”
- “With the basic safety net being cut for all Americans... immigrants will suffer, especially with the lack of Section 8 Housing.”
- “Even when affordable housing is available, it can be substandard.”
- “(Black immigrants) might not know where (safe neighborhoods) are.”

3.

Create or expand access to healthcare and especially mental health services.

Culturally responsive access and education around all types of healthcare including mental health services should be expanded.

- “Healthcare—if [Black immigrants] get injured, they are in trouble unless the community carries them.”
- “Many people don’t have good healthcare or lack health insurance.”
- “Existing programs of health insurance are diminishing.”
- “30,000 immigrants are about to lose their health insurance.”
- “Trauma is a huge issue for all immigrants, and it is often not addressed since immigrants must focus on surviving... This survival adds more trauma, and people often don’t realize that they are traumatized until they breakdown.”
- “Many immigrants come with stress and trauma.”
- “Trauma often goes unaddressed. This compounds over time.”
- “There is stigma attached to mental health. Also, people don’t have time or resources for it.”
- “Seniors especially who are Black immigrants often do not have a support system, which leads to mental challenges.”
- “Mental healthcare—people, including (or especially) Black immigrants have only recently become aware of mental healthcare as a need.”
- “It is hard [for individuals] to put mental healthcare on the to-do list when there are so many survival needs.”
- “(Black immigrants) might not know where (safe neighborhoods) are.”

4.

Sensitize state agencies and non-profit organizations to the needs of Black immigrants.

Government agencies need to become aware of the growing and diverse Black immigrant community.

- “Hope Illinois can continue course rather than conform to higher-level demands...”
- “One connection can change someone’s life, realizing there is a community that could relate to them and connect them with the right resources.”
- “[There are] limited funding streams focused on Black immigrants, which leads to a lack of community services and resources [especially legal services].”
- “Even those who have documentation are hesitant to participate in programs.”
- “There is a narrative issue being stirred up around immigrants that is being reflected in policy, which needs to be combatted.”

- “A lot of other ethnicities have pockets throughout the city and state, but the Black immigrant diaspora in Illinois is very spread out.”
- “Maybe we need program reporting on who is getting the services.”
- “Would like to see more Black immigrants employed in agencies that serve immigrants.”
- “[We need to see] accountability in funding that is given to immigrant organizations. Tracking of who they are serving... Access has to be a focus.”

5.

Raise awareness of problems that Black immigrants can have when interacting with the police and with immigration enforcement.

Police interactions are fraught, and awareness should be brought to the dual discrimination or challenges Black immigrants may face due to race and nationality.

- “Black immigrants are discriminated double time.”
- “The government... can violate due process rights without being held accountable.”
- “The police officer is not going to say you’re an immigrant: they see a Black person.”
- Following are quotes about ICE:
- “[With] expansion of detention and deportation, the ending of temporary status programs, suspension of refugee program, etc. huge amounts of black immigrants will be facing deportation, and lose their ability to work.”
 - “We’re seeing a large scale of ICE enforcement [such as] when people show up for check-in appointments [with the Department of Homeland Security]. A travel ban has been put into place. There are reports of expansion of the travel ban.”
 - “We should be careful when saying “ICE enforcement” because they are not enforcing the law. They are breaking the law. They are acting without warrants. We should resist efforts to normalize this.”
 - “The unlawfulness of ICE behavior... A lot of what we are seeing is arrests at immigration court hearings. [People] are getting put into summary removal proceedings. It’s being applied to people to whom it should not be applied. The problem is there is very little review available at the federal district court. Often the actions of ICE are not reviewable by a federal district court. They seem to know it’s unlawful, but they are banking on a statute that says no one can review what they are doing. It is scary.

6.

Address challenges for Black immigrants who hold Intersectional identities

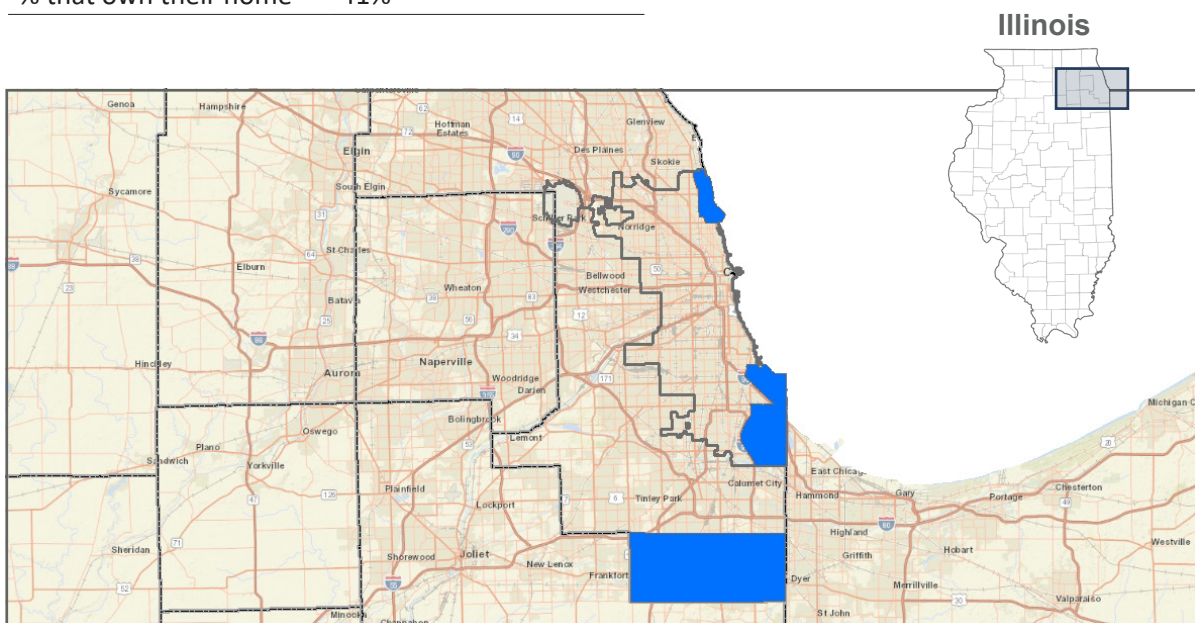
There is a need to shed light and attention on needs of particular communities such as LGBTQ+ persons and persons with disabilities.

- “We also need to make space for LGBTQ+ Black immigrants who face discrimination not only from the wider society but even from their own cultural communities.”
- “There’s not enough space in our programs to talk about people with disabilities or those who are queer. It’s like we’re invisible within an already invisible group.”

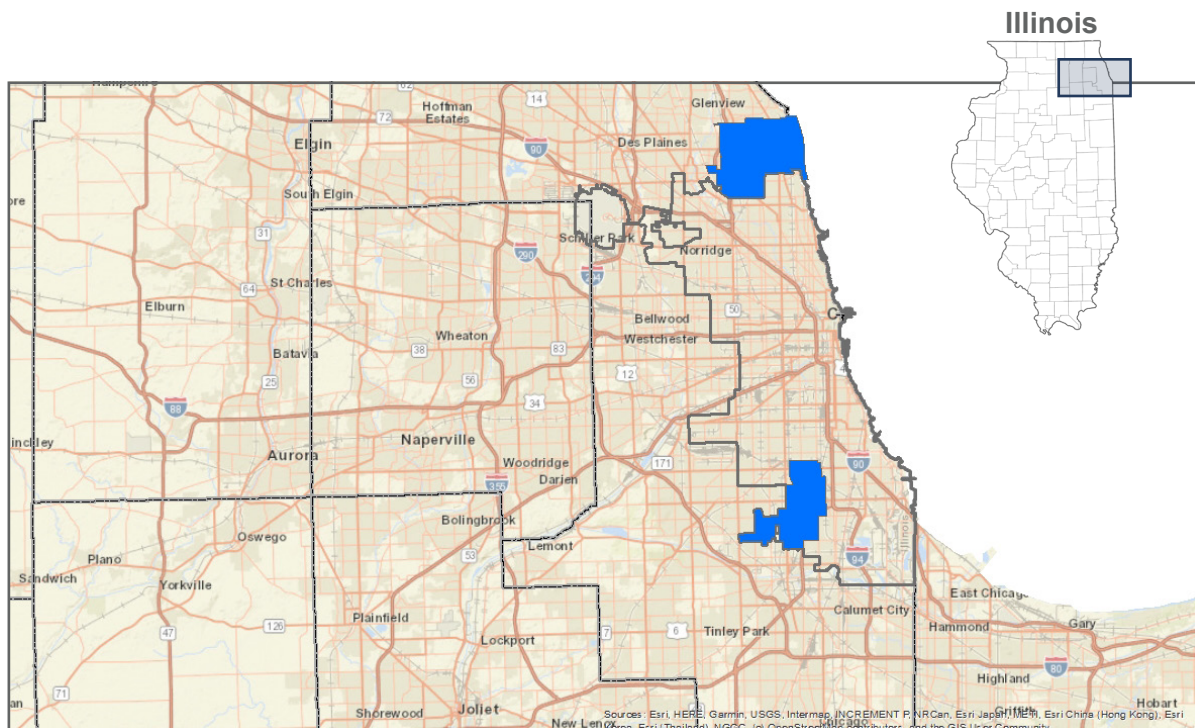
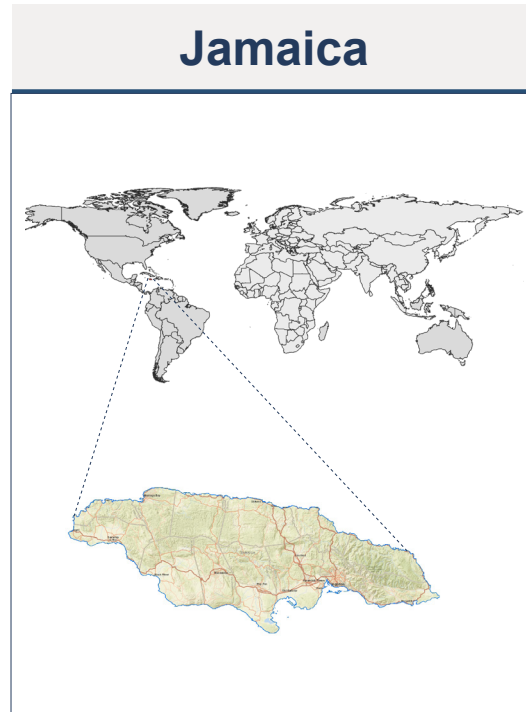
Profiles of Black Immigrants in Illinois

The following pages provide demographic profiles of the largest Black immigrant groups in Illinois. Populations included are those with at least 1,000 persons in the state. The source of information is the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau.

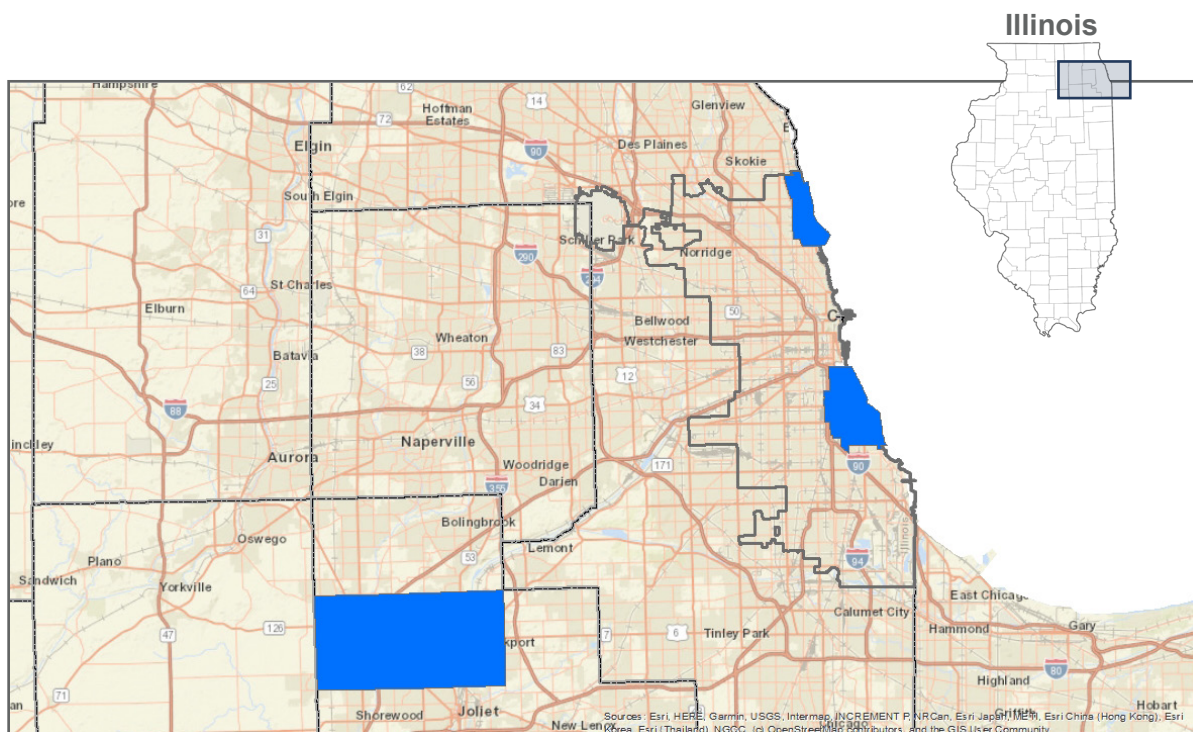
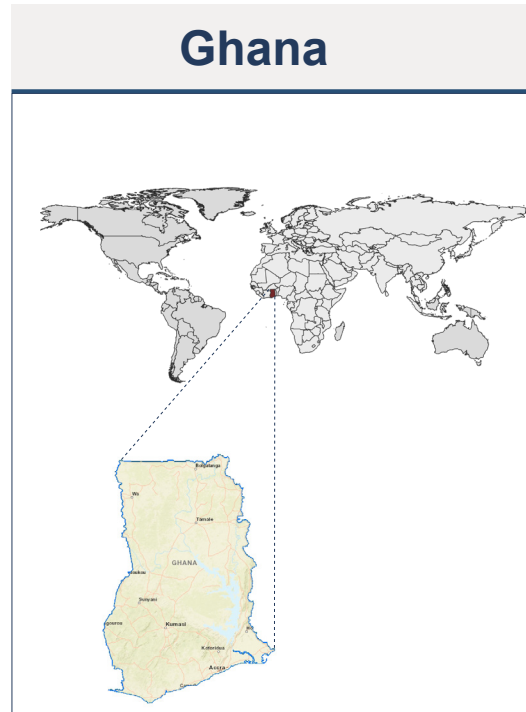
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Population | 24,633 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 11,927 |
| | Not a Citizen | 12,706 |
| %-Bachelor + | 62% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 82% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 15% |
| | 18-64 | 78% |
| | 65+ | 7% |
| % in Labor Force | 76% | |
| % Employed | 95% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Niger-Congo regions | |
| | 54% | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 47% | |
| % that own their home | 41% | |



| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Population | 7,947 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 4,443 |
| | Not a Citizen | 3,504 |
| %-Bachelor + | 33% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 96% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 11% |
| | 18-64 | 74% |
| | 65+ | 16% |
| % in Labor Force | 73% | |
| % Employed | 97% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | English | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 25% | |
| % that own their home | 55% | |

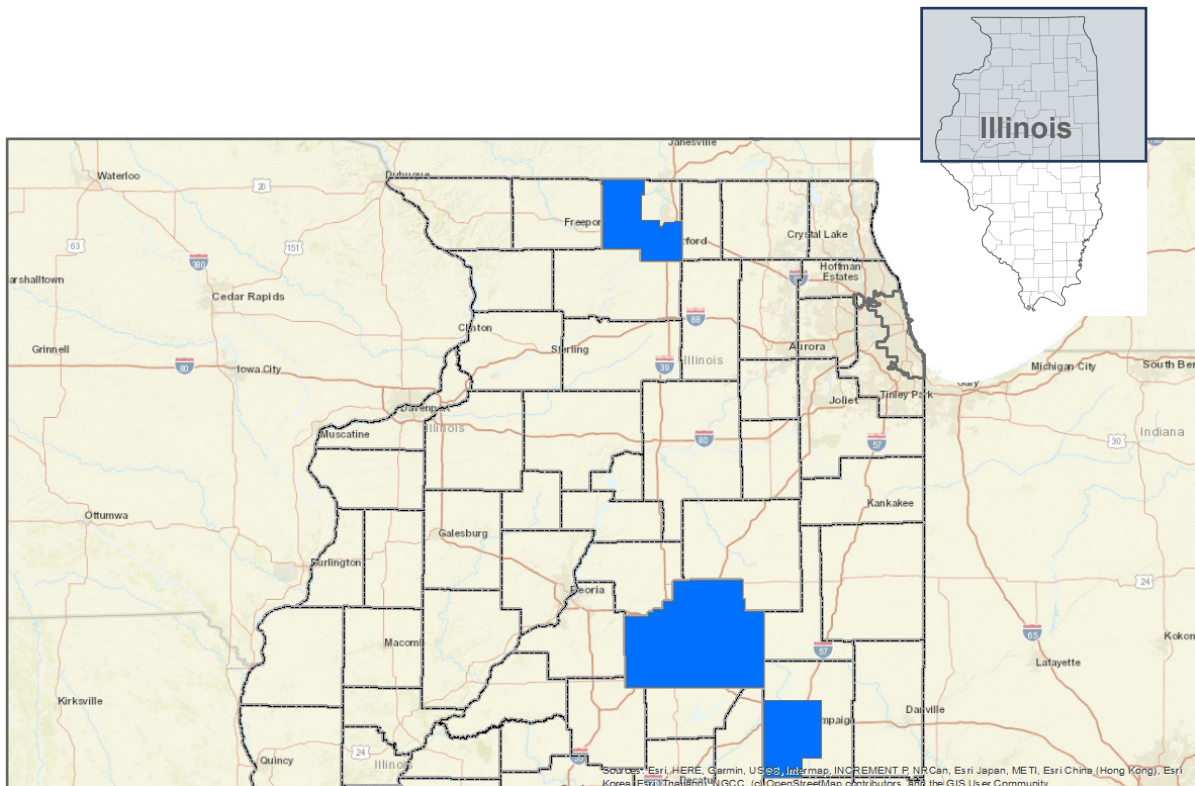
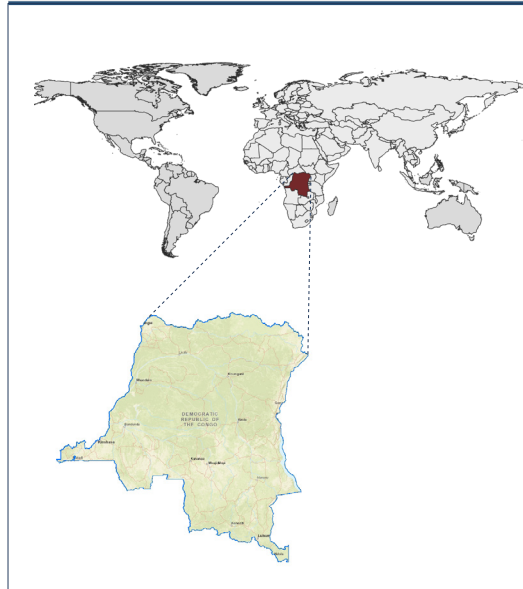


| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Population | 6,681 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 4,225 |
| | Not a Citizen | 2,456 |
| %-Bachelor + | 40% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 80% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 5% |
| | 18-64 | 83% |
| | 65+ | 12% |
| % in Labor Force | 78% | |
| % Employed | 93% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Niger-Congo regions | |
| | 74% | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 29% | |
| % that own their home | 48% | |

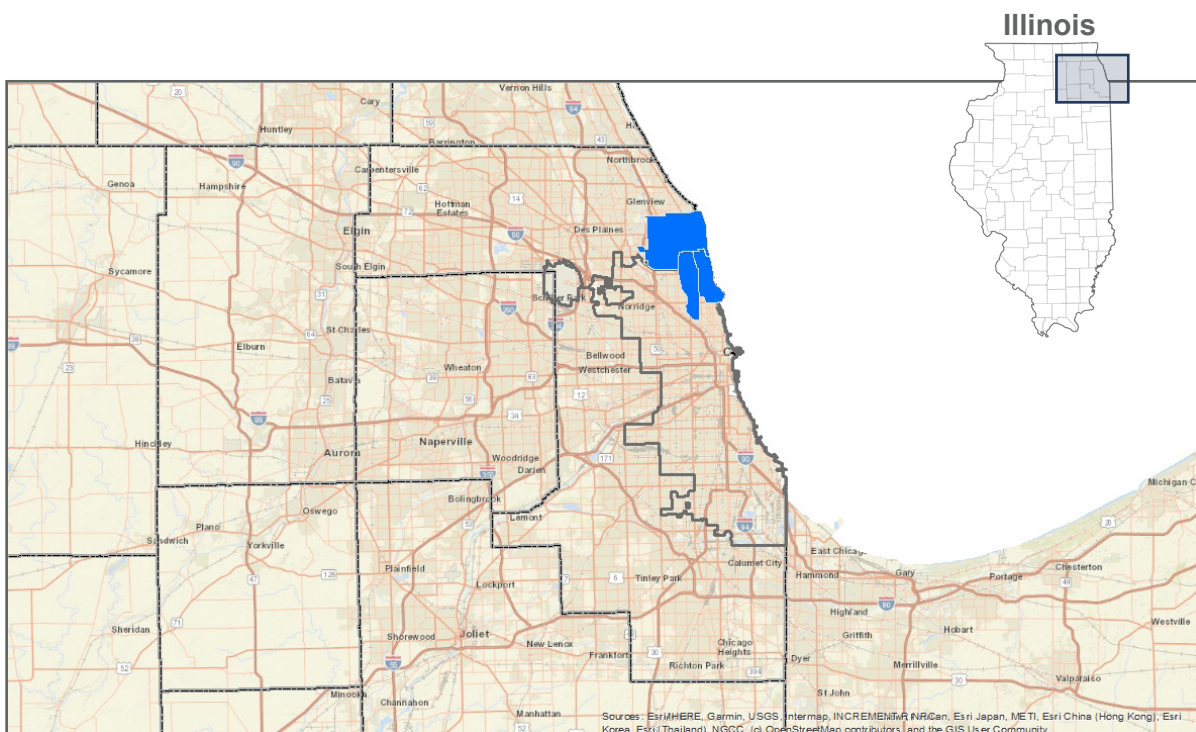
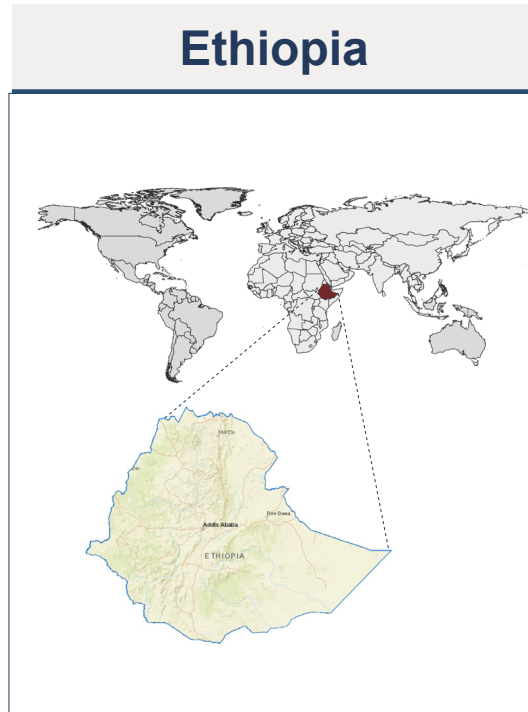


| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Population | 4,743 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 1,784 |
| | Not a Citizen | 2,959 |
| %-Bachelor + | 21% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 54% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 12% |
| | 18-64 | 87% |
| | 65+ | 1% |
| % in Labor Force | 84% | |
| % Employed | 84% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | French | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 56% | |
| % that own their home | 27% | |

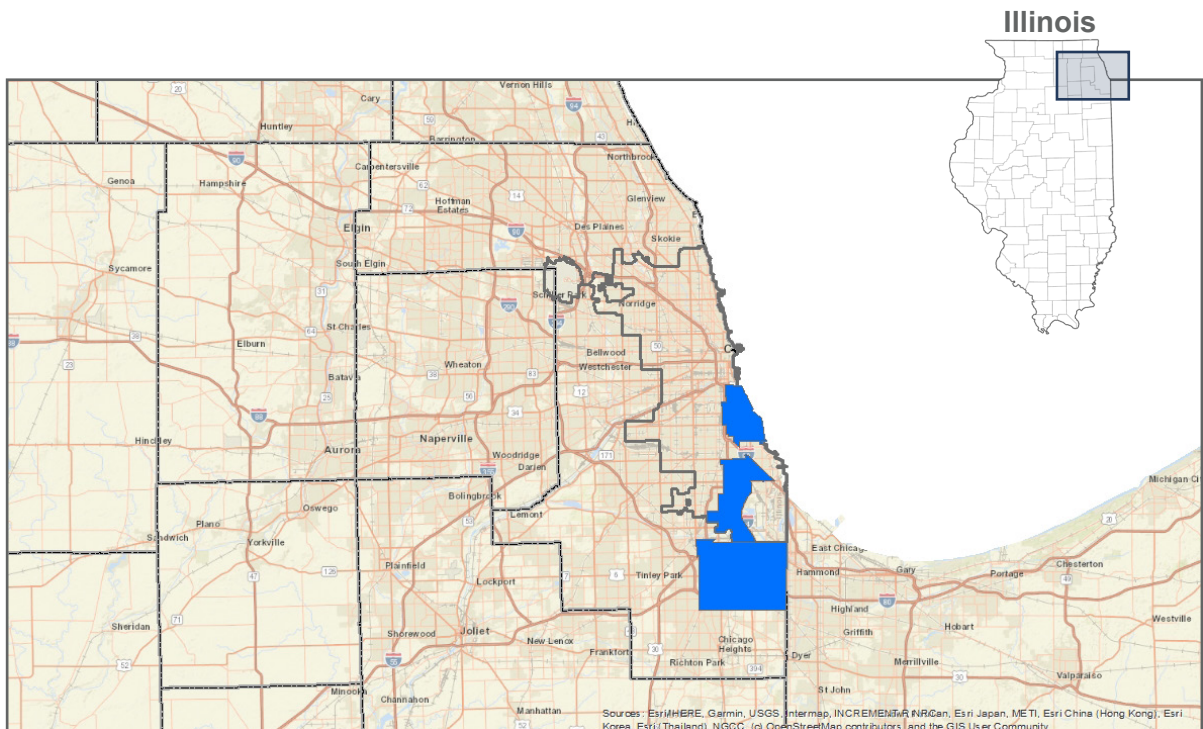
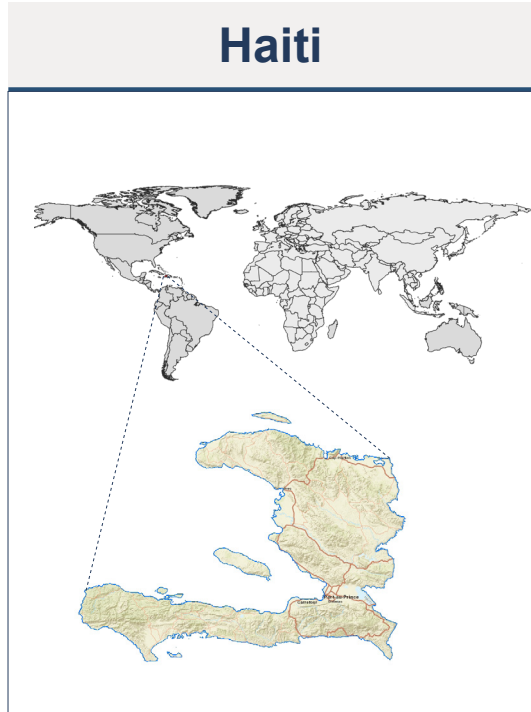
Democratic Republic of the Congo



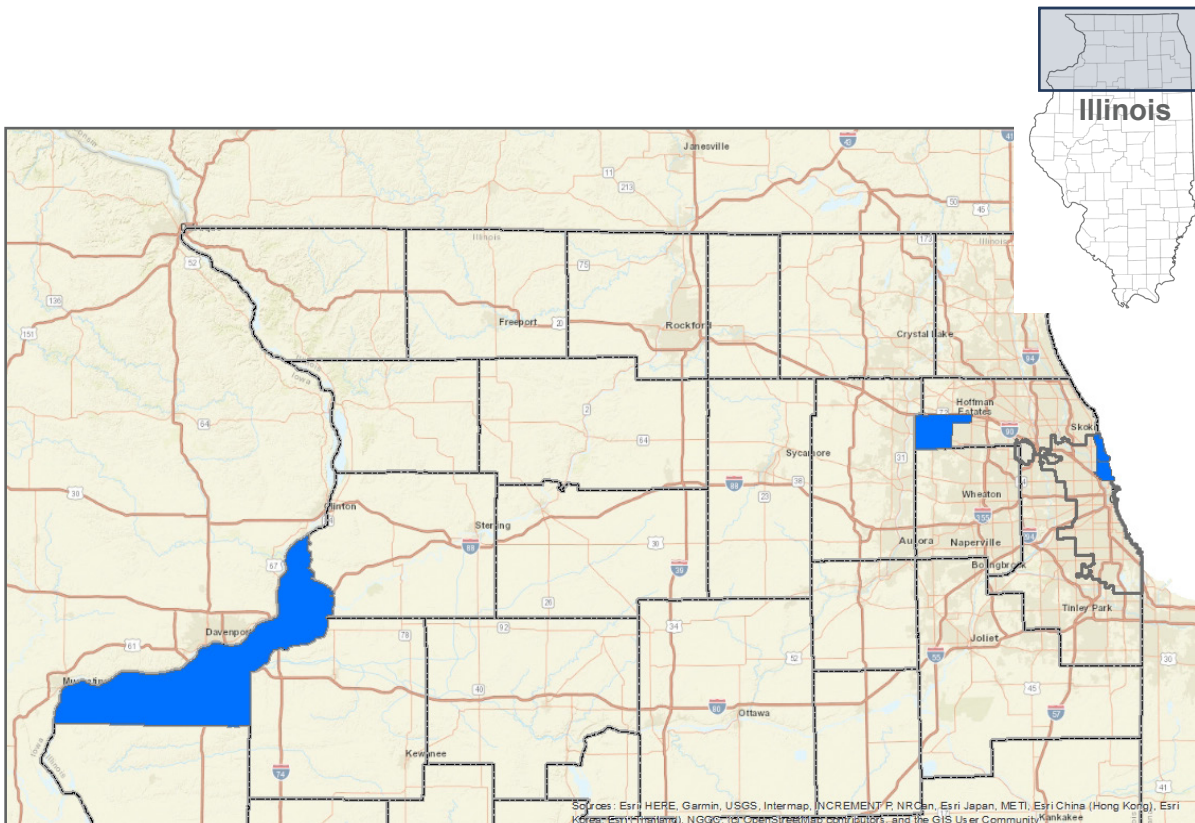
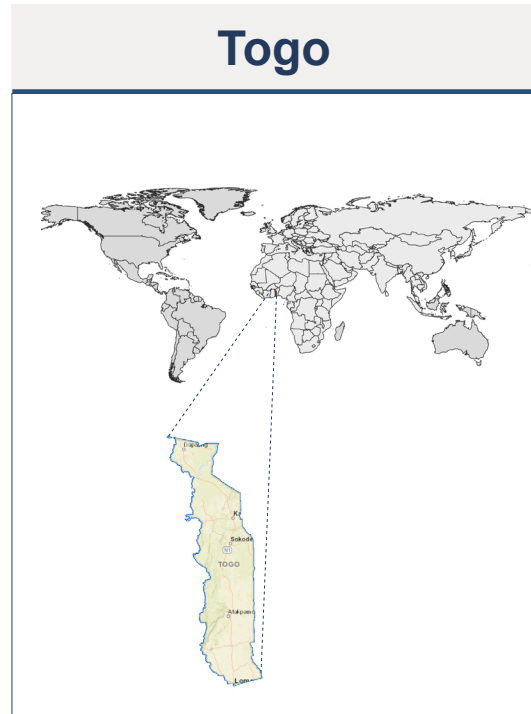
| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Population | 4,552 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 2,993 |
| | Not a Citizen | 1,559 |
| %-Bachelor + | 43% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 53% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 16% |
| | 18-64 | 80% |
| | 65+ | 5% |
| % in Labor Force | 86% | |
| % Employed | 90% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Amharic, Ethiopian, etc. | |
| | 68% | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 44% | |
| % that own their home | 35% | |



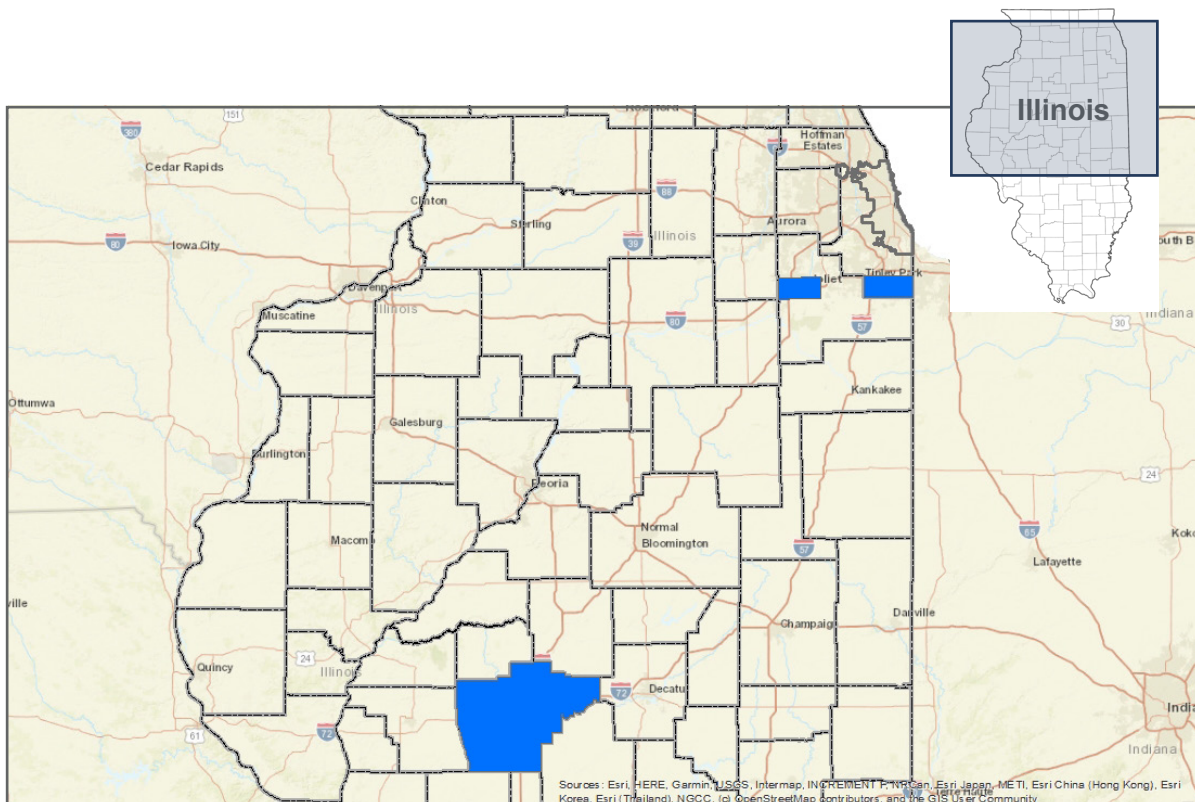
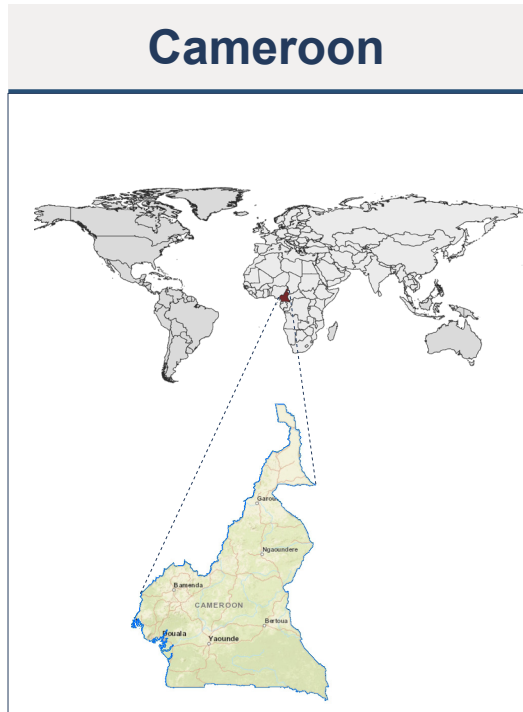
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Population | 4,061 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 2,615 |
| | Not a Citizen | 1,446 |
| %-Bachelor + | 30% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 63% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 3% |
| | 18-64 | 77% |
| | 65+ | 20% |
| % in Labor Force | 63% | |
| % Employed | 88% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | French | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 24% | |
| % that own their home | 49% | |



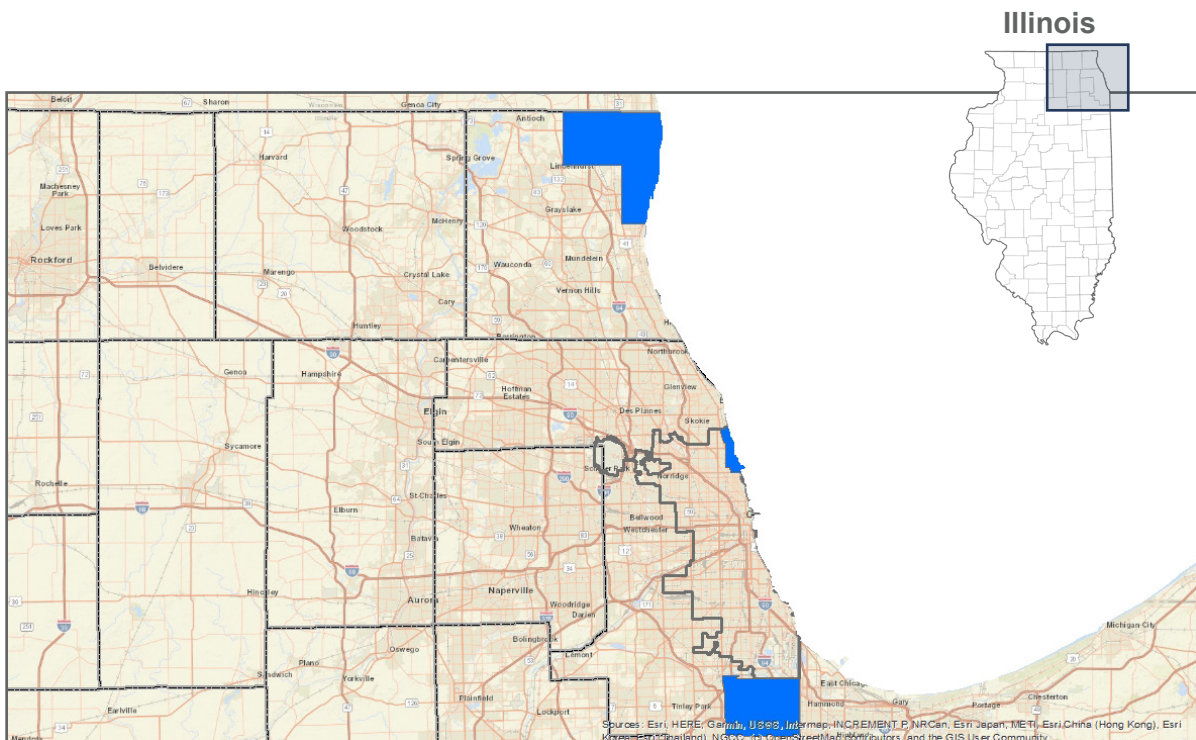
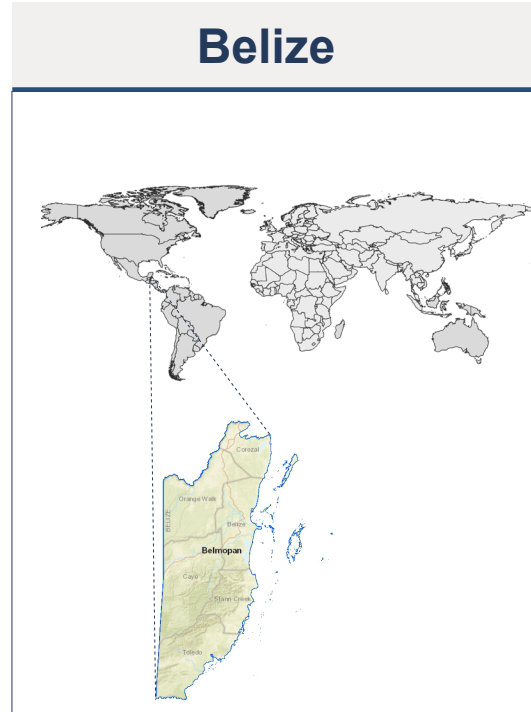
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Population | 2,238 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 1,409 |
| | Not a Citizen | 829 |
| %-Bachelor + | 22% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 44% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 18% |
| | 18-64 | 82% |
| | 65+ | 0% |
| % in Labor Force | 71% | |
| % Employed | 96% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | French | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 40% | |
| % that own their home | 44% | |



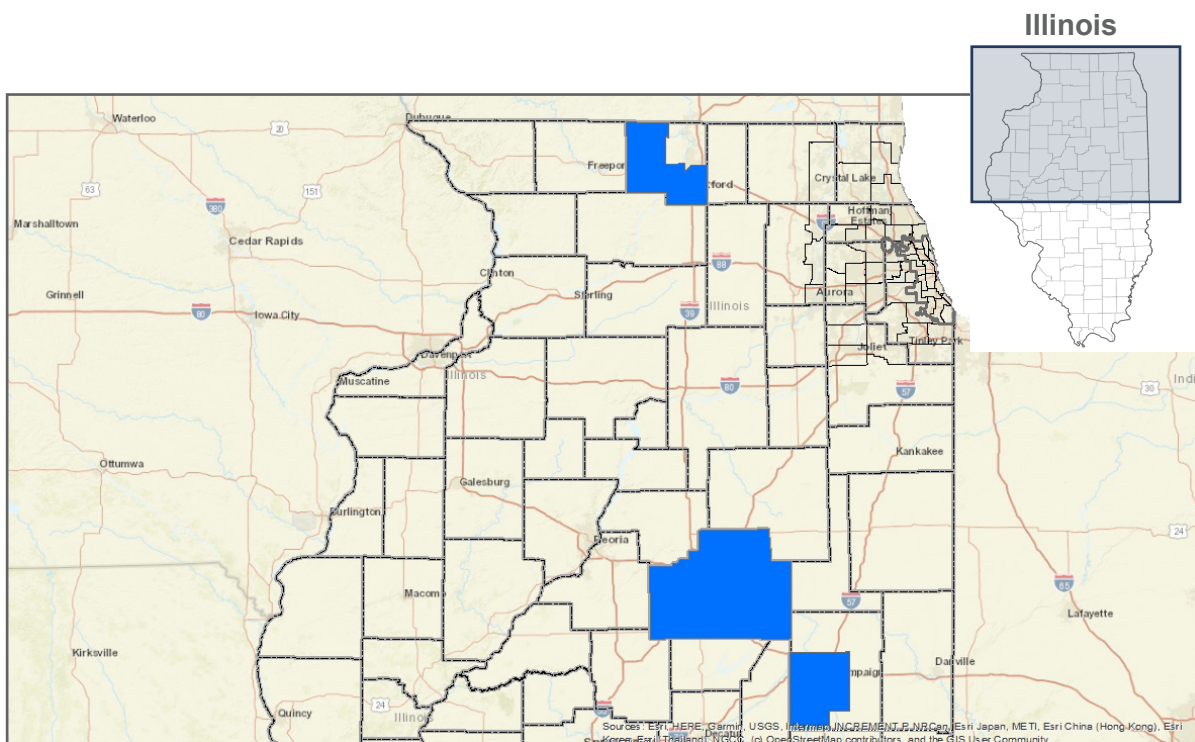
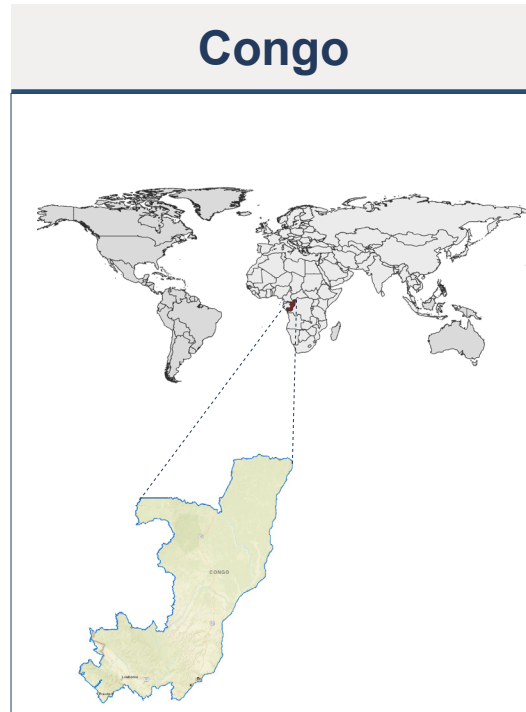
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Population | 2,089 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 962 |
| | Not a Citizen | 1,127 |
| %-Bachelor + | 44% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 63% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 11% |
| | 18-64 | 83% |
| | 65+ | 5% |
| % in Labor Force | 83% | |
| % Employed | 97% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | French | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 48% | |
| % that own their home | 54% | |



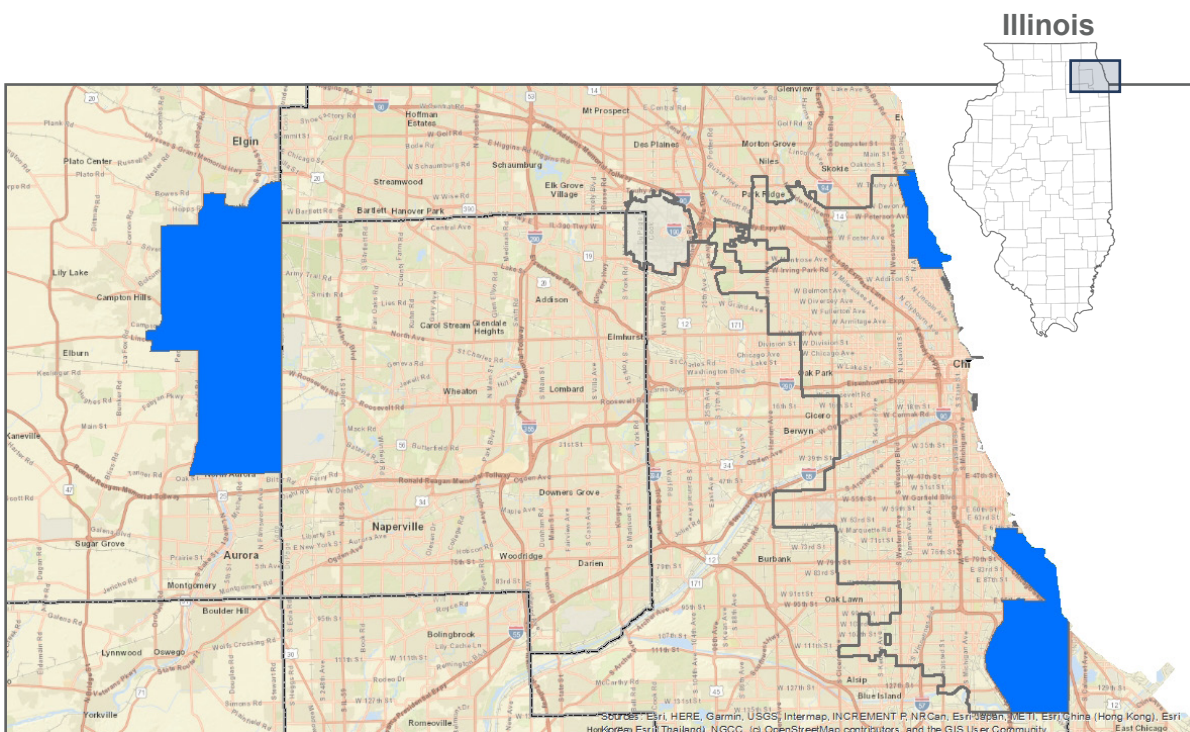
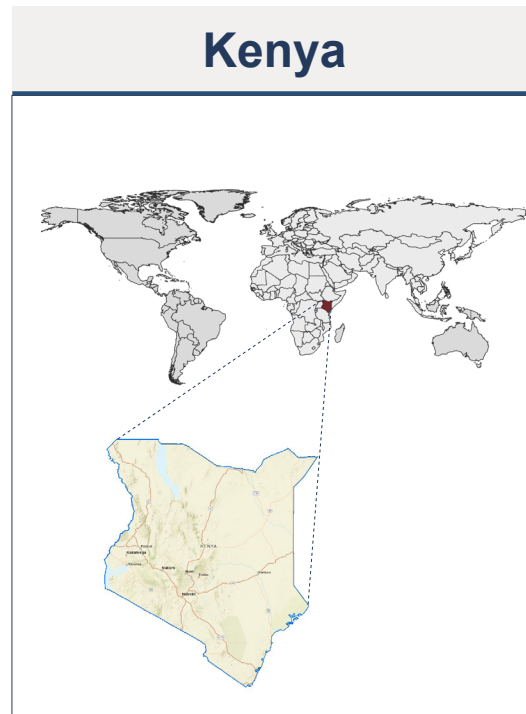
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Population | 1,522 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 956 |
| | Not a Citizen | 566 |
| %-Bachelor + | 18% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 86% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 8% |
| | 18-64 | 68% |
| | 65+ | 24% |
| % in Labor Force | 63% | |
| % Employed | 97% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | English | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 15% | |
| % that own their home | 60% | |



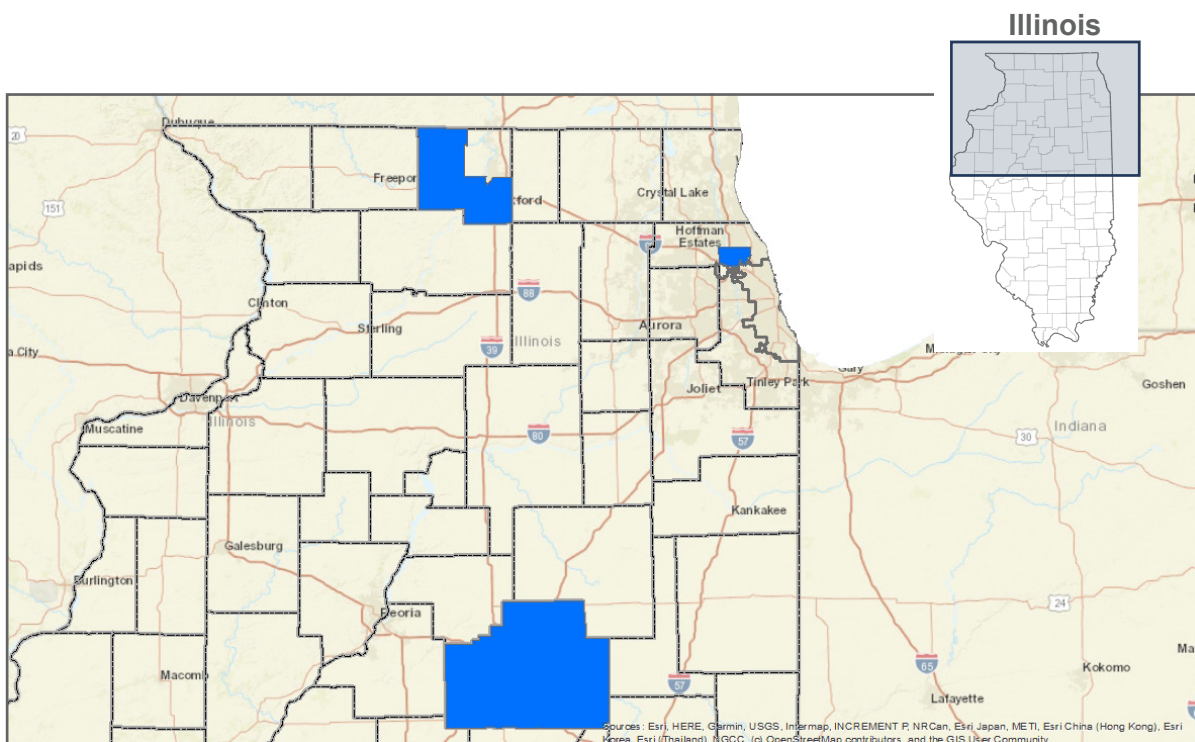
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Population | 1,482 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 634 |
| | Not a Citizen | 848 |
| %-Bachelor + | 30% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 73% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 10% |
| | 18-64 | 90% |
| | 65+ | 0% |
| % in Labor Force | 64% | |
| % Employed | 90% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | French | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 44% | |
| % that own their home | 15% | |



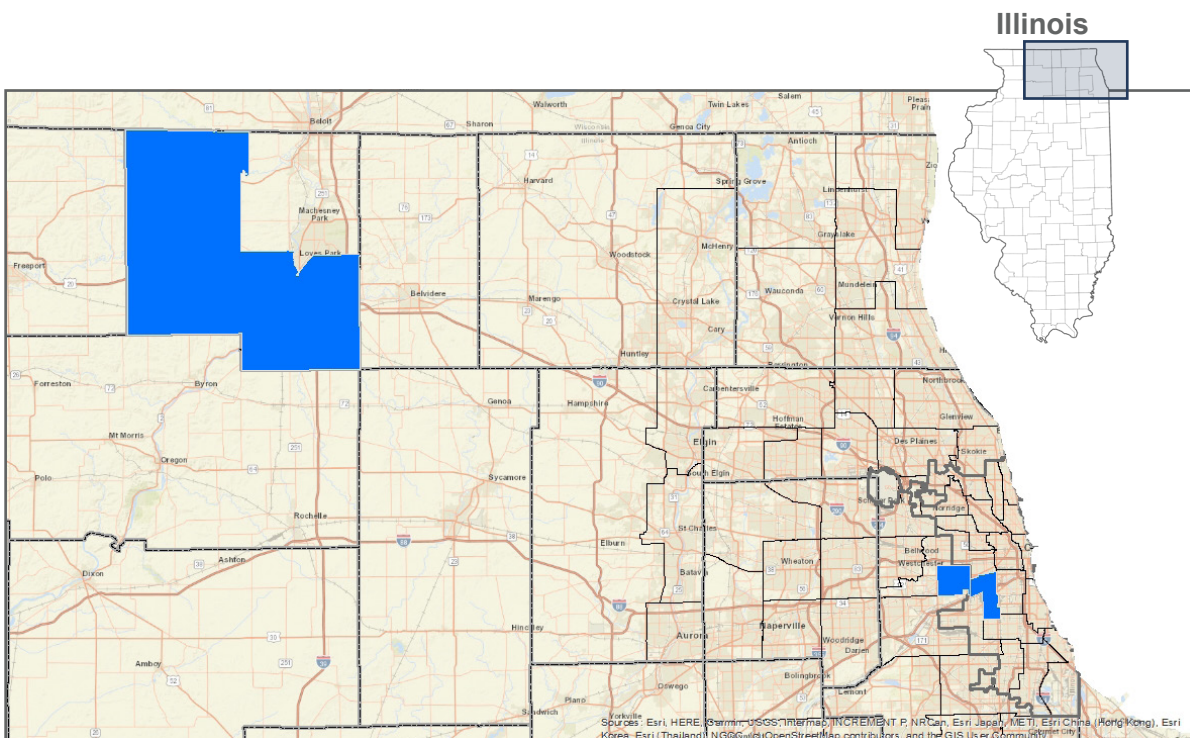
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Population | 1,462 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 809 |
| | Not a Citizen | 653 |
| %-Bachelor + | 81% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 94% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 18% |
| | 18-64 | 82% |
| | 65+ | 0% |
| % in Labor Force | 86% | |
| % Employed | 95% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | English | Swahili |
| | 43% | 43% |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 42% | |
| % that own their home | 31% | |



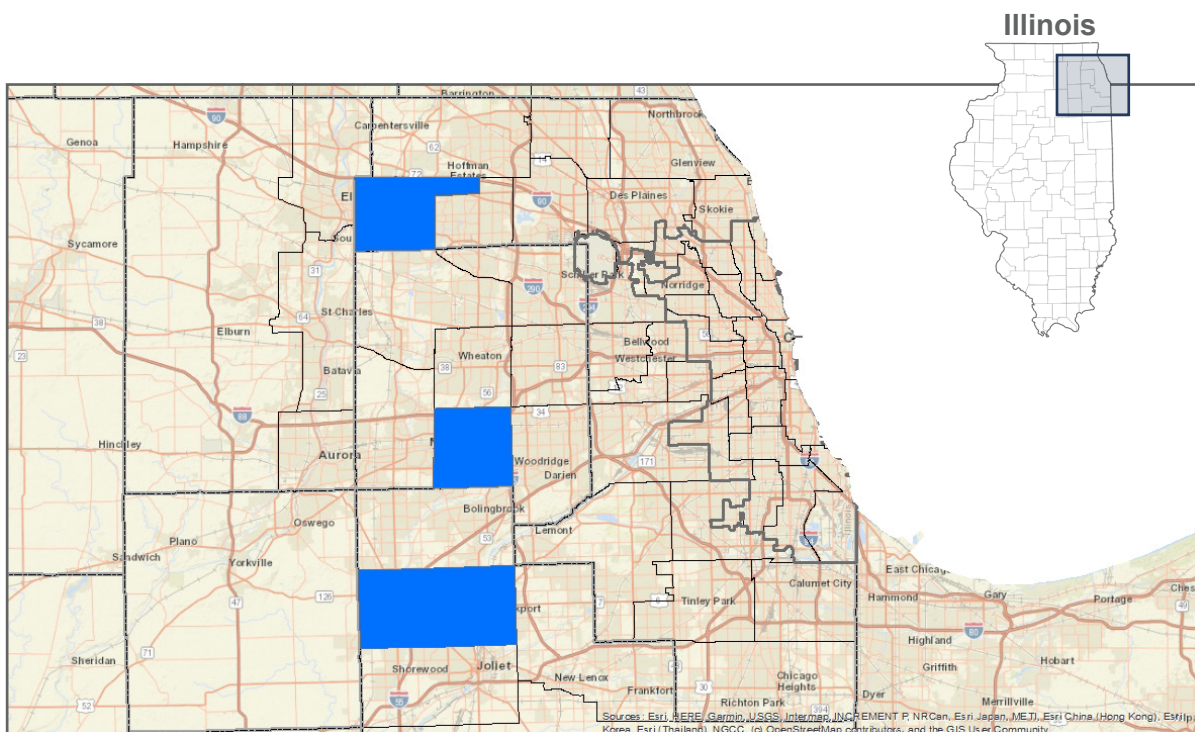
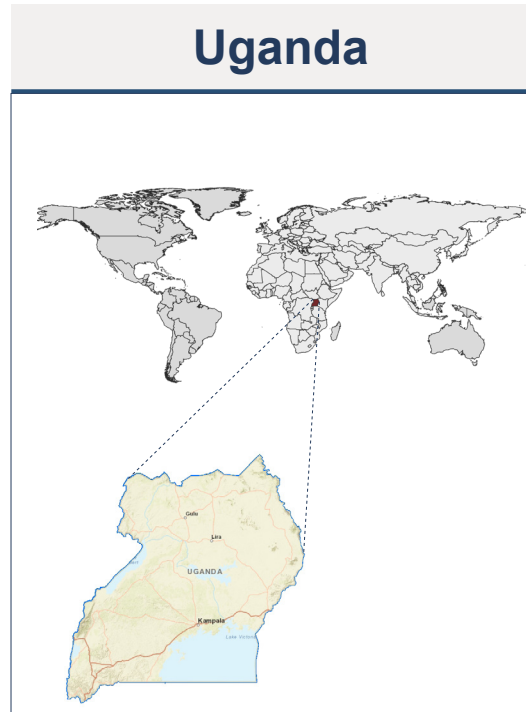
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Population | 1,172 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 180 |
| | Not a Citizen | 992 |
| %-Bachelor + | 15% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 48% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 49% |
| | 18-64 | 49% |
| | 65+ | 1% |
| % in Labor Force | 74% | |
| % Employed | 93% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Swahili | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 78% | |
| % that own their home | 17% | |



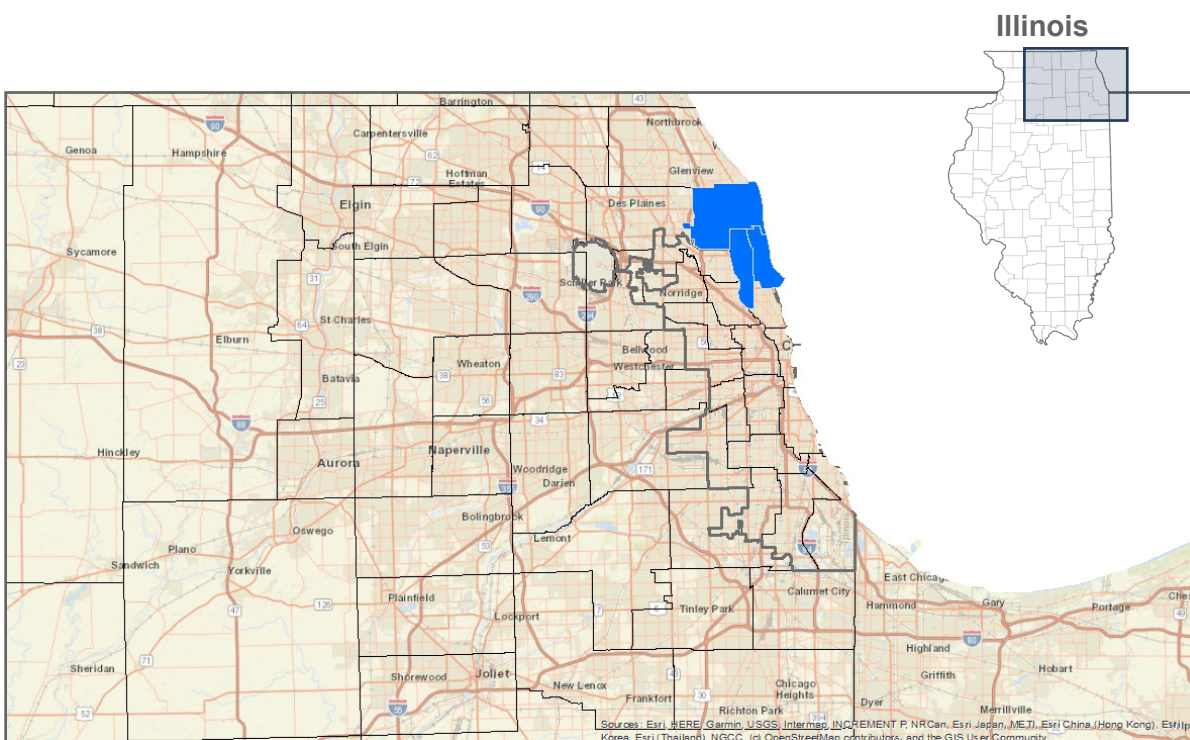
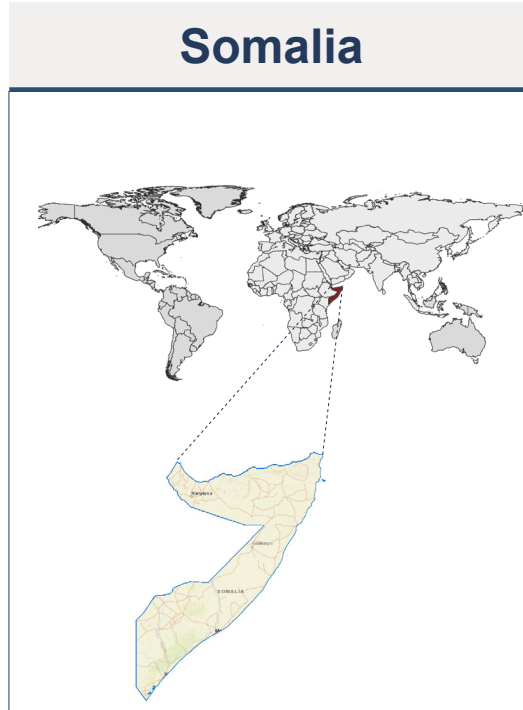
| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Population | 1,114 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 331 |
| | Not a Citizen | 783 |
| %-Bachelor + | 8% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 23% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 0% |
| | 18-64 | 82% |
| | 65+ | 18% |
| % in Labor Force | 72% | |
| % Employed | 91% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Spanish | |
| | 96% | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 15% | |
| % that own their home | 30% | |



| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Population | 1,096 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 436 |
| | Not a Citizen | 660 |
| %-Bachelor + | 54% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 89% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 17% |
| | 18-64 | 75% |
| | 65+ | 7% |
| % in Labor Force | 65% | |
| % Employed | 94% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Bantu | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 50% | |
| % that own their home | 33% | |



| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Population | 1,029 | |
| Citizenship | Citizen | 726 |
| | Not a Citizen | 303 |
| %-Bachelor + | 14% | |
| Speak only English or 'Very Well': | 42% | |
| Age-% | 0-17 | 0% |
| | 18-64 | 100% |
| | 65+ | 0% |
| % in Labor Force | 79% | |
| % Employed | 97% | |
| Top Language Spoken at Home | Cushite, Beja, Somali | |
| | 69% | |
| % Arrived in the Last 10 Years | 24% | |
| % that own their home | 15% | |



Appendices

Black Immigrant Task Force Interview Guide

Section 1 – Understanding the Black Immigrant Community in Illinois

- 1) Task force members have numerous identities and affiliations. To start, how do you relate to the Black immigrant community in Illinois?
- 2) How would you describe the Black immigrant community in Illinois broadly?
- 3) How would you describe the diversity within the Black immigrant community in Illinois in terms of national origin, culture, generational gaps, background, and experiences?

Section 2 – Identifying Community Strengths and Supports

- 4) Can you tell us about how Black immigrants build social networks and support in Illinois?
- 5) What organizations, cultural centers, or community groups are particularly important to serve Illinois' Black immigrant community?
 - a. Can you share specific examples of programs that work well to serve Black immigrants?
 - b. Can you elaborate on the specific org that you have found supportive?

Section 3 – Identifying Community Challenges and Needs

- 6) What specific challenges do Black immigrant families face in Illinois, especially in terms of employment, housing, mental health, health care, and education?
 - a. Can you say more about educational needs for children of Black immigrants?
 - b. Can you say more about the challenges you've faced using your degree?
 - c. What challenges are unique to the intersection of being Black and an immigrant?
- 7) Can you describe discrimination or prejudice against Black immigrants that you have experienced or witnessed in Illinois, if any?
 - a. Can you say more about how this prejudice could be related to the intersection of being Black and an immigrant?

Section 4 – Assessing State Services and Policies through a Black Immigrant Lens

The State of Illinois has responsibilities that include providing education, health care, human services, workforce training, and many other services to the residents of our state. Some specific examples of general services are public schools, universities, the Medicaid program and unemployment assistance. Some specific examples of services for immigrants are legal assistance, citizenship assistance and healthcare.

- 8) What kind of services or policies do you think most affect the Black Immigrant community?

a. Can you give an example of a service or policy that either positively or negatively affected your experience?

9) At the state level, how could these services or policies be improved?

a. Are there specific state policies or services that you believe are currently missing or need to be created to better support Black immigrants in Illinois?

Section 5 – Future Aspirations and Policy Recommendations

10) Looking ahead, what are your aspirations for the future of Black immigrants in Illinois?

a. Follow up: What concrete changes would you like to see in Illinois in the next 5-10 years that would significantly improve the lives of Black immigrants?

11) What specific state level policy recommendations or strategies would you recommend to realize this vision?

Text of the Illinois House Joint Resolution

WHEREAS, The last four decades have represented a period of significant demographic change in the United States; now more than ever, Black immigrants compose a significant percentage of both the immigrant and Black populations in the U.S. overall; and

WHEREAS, Black immigrants face disproportionate interactions with the criminal justice system and encounter more discrimination based on their race as well as immigrant status; just as African Americans suffer disproportionately high arrest, prosecution, and incarceration rates, so too are Black immigrants, despite no evidence that they engage in more criminalized activities in comparison to any other racial group; Black immigrants are also disproportionately affected by the compounding impact of the immigration enforcement system, where numerous federal agencies and programs work in conjunction with local law enforcement to criminalize, detain, and deport immigrants; these disparities in policy and law concerning Black immigrants are rooted in racism and unjustly target Black immigrants at all stages of the process; and

WHEREAS, The Biden Administration has pledged to develop a pathway to lawful permanent status for undocumented immigrants, but advocates are asking how President Biden will address the overall plight of Black immigrants; and

WHEREAS, As the number of Black immigrants living in the United States continues to rise, debates around immigration must acknowledge and rectify the injustice inherent in the system; and

WHEREAS, There is much work to be done to address the struggles of Black immigrants, who have been left out of policy decisions for too long; and


WHEREAS, The State of Illinois is committed to protecting Black immigrants; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN,

that the Task Force on Black Immigrants is created and charged with the task of studying the state of Black immigrants in Illinois and providing recommendations on how to assist them; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall consist of the following 16 members, who shall serve without compensation:

(1) One member appointed by the Speaker of the House, who shall serve as co-chair;

- 
- (2) One member appointed by the Senate President, who shall serve as co-chair;
 - (3) One member appointed by the House Minority Leader;
 - (4) One member appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;
 - (5) One member appointed by the Chair of the House Black Caucus;
 - (6) One member appointed by the Chair of the Senate Black Caucus;
 - (7) One member appointed by Governor;
 - (8) One member appointed by the Lt. Governor;
 - (9) The Director of the Department of Human Rights or his or her designee;
 - (10) The Director of the Department of Human Services or his or her designee;
 - (11) Three members representing diplomatic missions and trade organizations that serve Black immigrants, appointed by the Governor;
 - (12) Two members from an organization dedicated to defending the rights and improving the quality of life for immigrants, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and
 - (13) One member from an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for African Americans in the State of Illinois, appointed by the Senate President; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Human Rights shall provide administrative support for the Task Force; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall meet at the call of the co-chairs; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall submit its final report to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2024, and upon the filing of the report, is dissolved.

Report of the Task Force on Black Immigrants

December, 2025