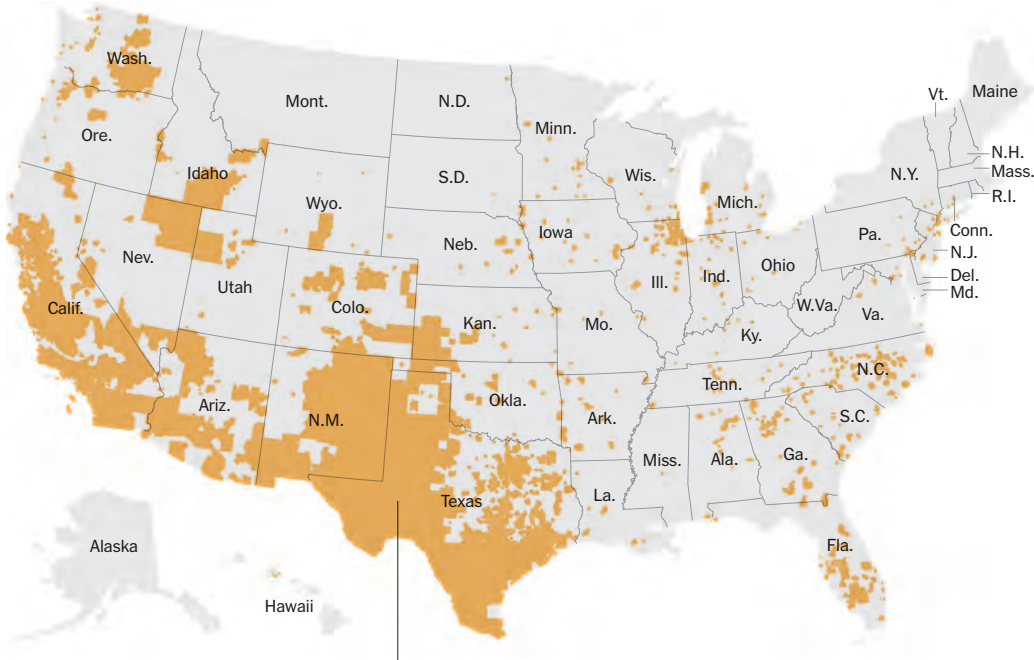
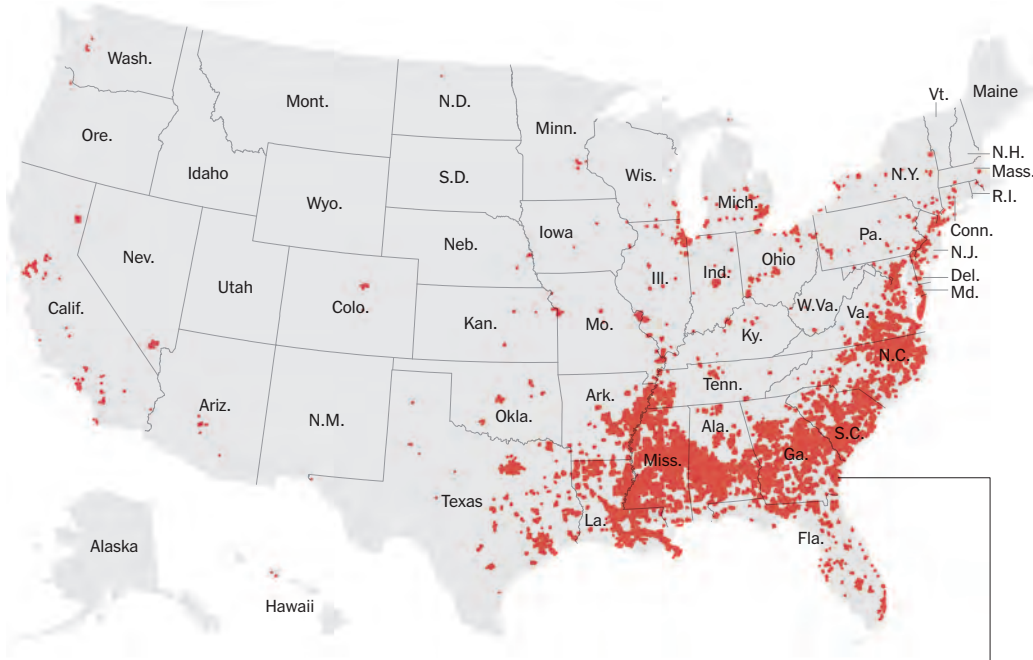


The New York Times



Areas that are at least 20% Mexican

You can see the descendants of Mexicans who settled along the southwestern U.S. border long before it was drawn.

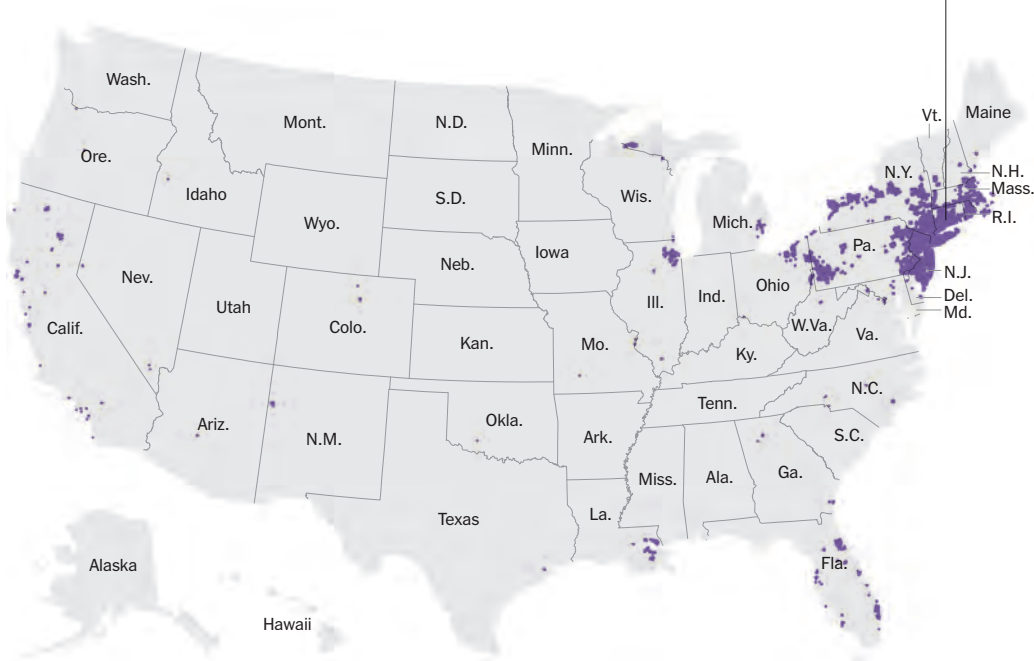


Areas that are at least 20% African American

Many of the descendants of enslaved Africans living in the South migrated north during the 20th century.

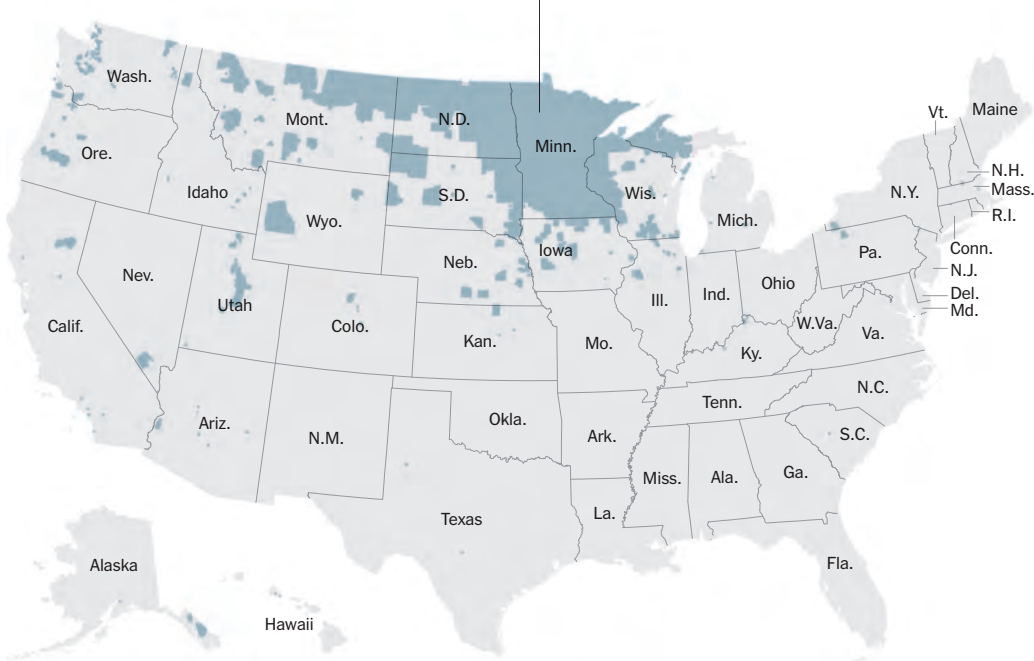
Areas that are at least 20% Italian

Descendants of Italians who began arriving in New York Harbor in the late 19th century are largely concentrated in the Northeast.



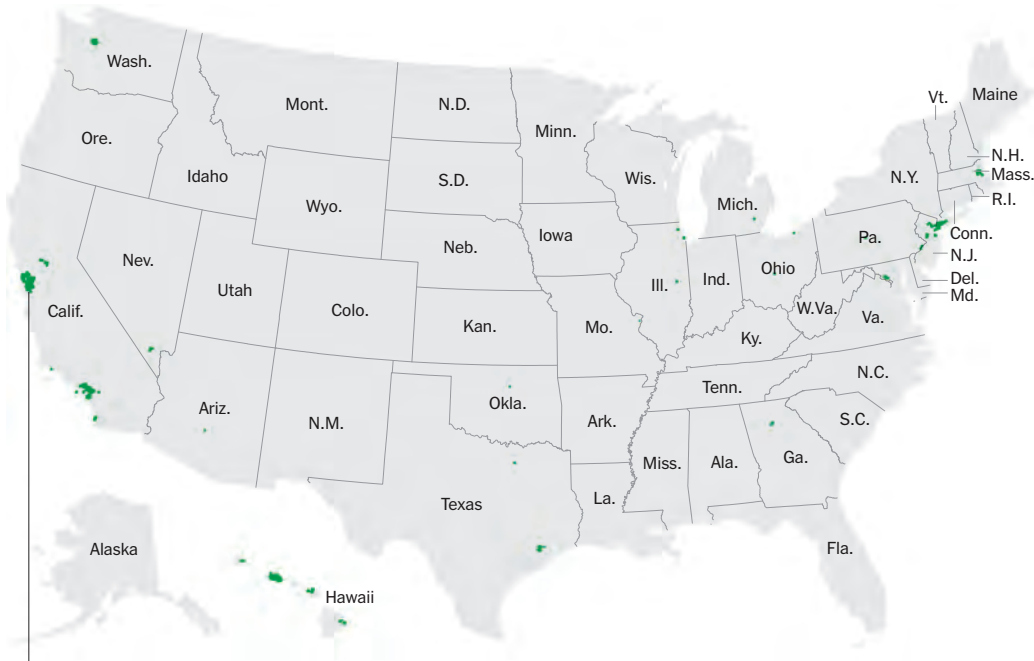
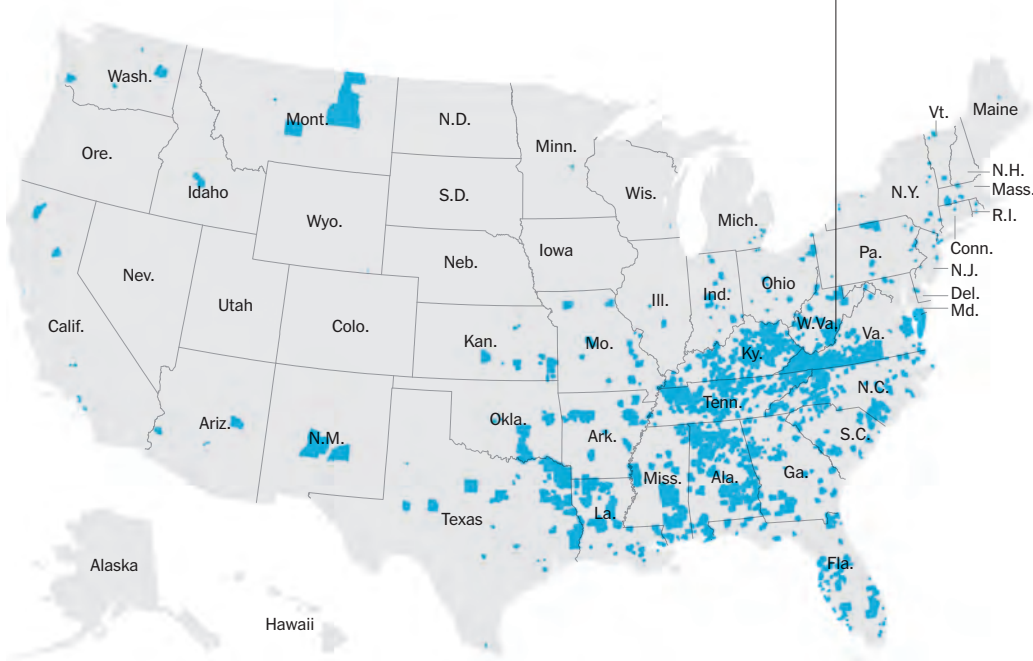
Areas that are at least 20% Scandinavian

After the Civil War, many Scandinavian farmers settled in the Upper Midwest, where their descendants remain today.



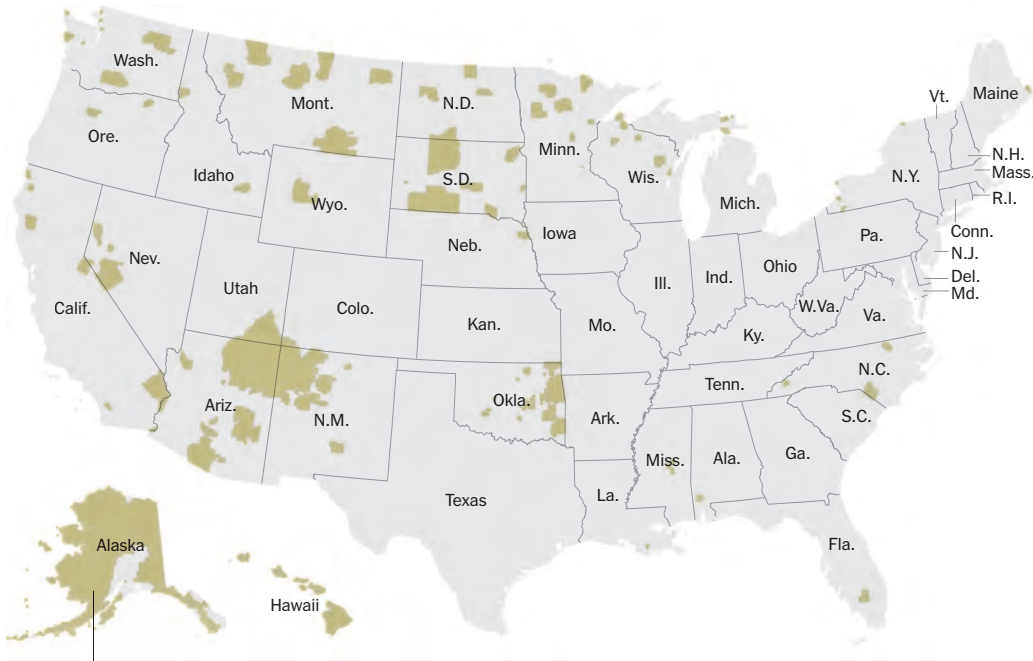
Areas that are at least 20% American

Some people, including descendants of long-ago English, Welsh and Scotch-Irish settlers, now identify themselves simply as American.



Areas that are at least 20% Chinese

Chinese people were barred from entering the country for decades, but newer arrivals are spreading beyond historical Chinatowns.



Areas that are at least 20% Native American

The Native Americans who were already here — the Iroquois, Navajo, Inupiat, Chickasaw and many others — have descendants across the country today, largely concentrated on reservations in the West.

An American Story, Told by Americans

Tracing the Ancestries of a Nation of Immigrants

By ALBERT SUN, JEFF ADELSON, LARRY BUCHANAN and LILY COWPER

Why are there so many Greeks in Tarpon Springs, Fla.? Because in the early 1900s, Greek sponge divers came from the Dodecanese islands and revolutionized the sponge industry on Florida’s Gulf Coast.

What explains the pockets of Portuguese and Cape Verdeans in New Bedford, Mass.? In the 1800s, winds pushed whaling boats east to the Azores and Cape Verde, where experienced whalers joined the crews.

There’s the Basque population in Boise, Idaho, whose ancestors traded a mountainous region between France and Spain for the American West in the hopes of finding gold, but later turned to sheep herding. There are the families of Yemeni immigrants hired by Ford Motor Company to build cars in Detroit, and the Vietnamese refugees who were resettled near New Orleans and Houston, where they could carry on shrimping.

This map of American ancestry shows how people described their backgrounds to the Census Bureau. Nearly 200 unique identities are represented. Blend them — as 340 million Americans do — and we arrive at a jumbled, story-filled infinity.

Over 250 years, the country has absorbed more than 100 million people. We can trace the pressures that pushed and pulled them here — and the policies that welcomed certain groups while keeping others out — through the patterns in where their descendants live today.

Now, a larger share of the country was born abroad than ever before, and the Trump administration’s sweeping immigration bans echo exclusionist policies enacted a century ago.

Those policies defined Americans for generations. Recent efforts to limit immigration will likewise affect how future Americans understand their heritage and themselves.

Continued on Pages 16-18

A Nation of Immigrants Traces Its Roots

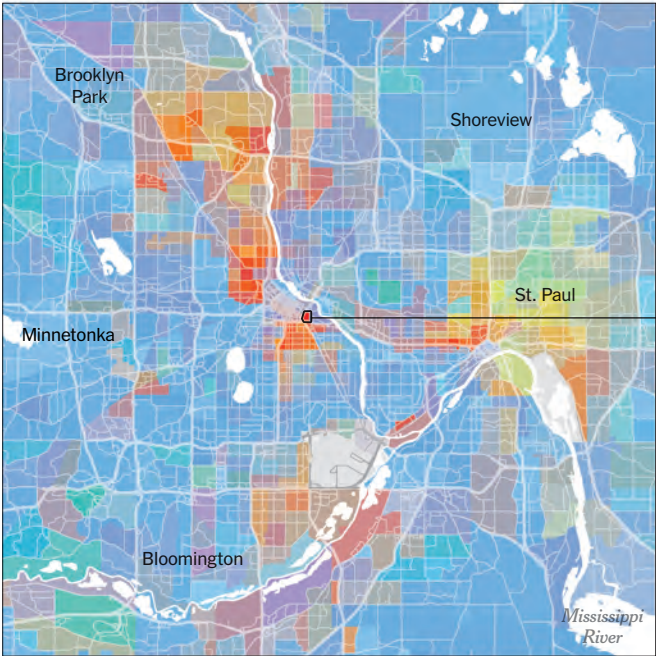
Each state, county and city has an identity, often made of many identities. This is how 340 million Americans describe their backgrounds, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.



Explore an interactive map of American ancestries online.

Minneapolis-St. Paul

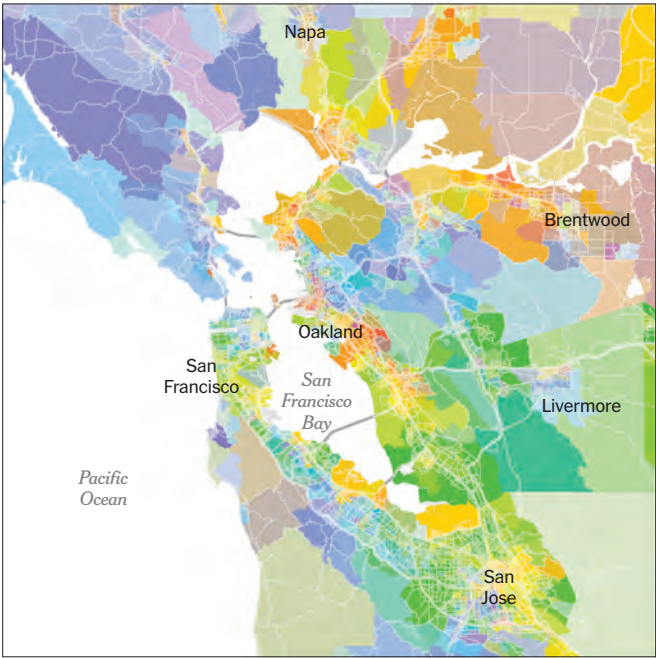
10 MILES



Tract in **Central Minneapolis**
POPULATION 5,000
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Somali 53%
African American 19%
Ethiopian 7%
Irish <5%

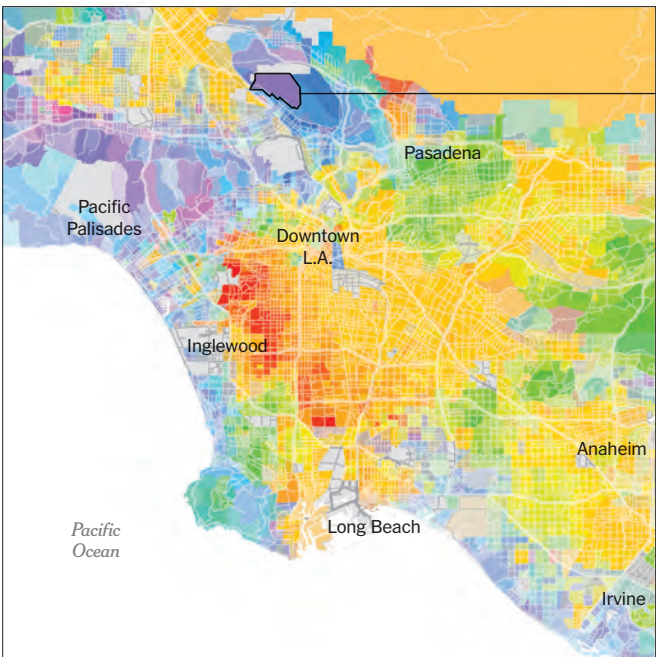
San Francisco Bay Area

10 MILES



Los Angeles

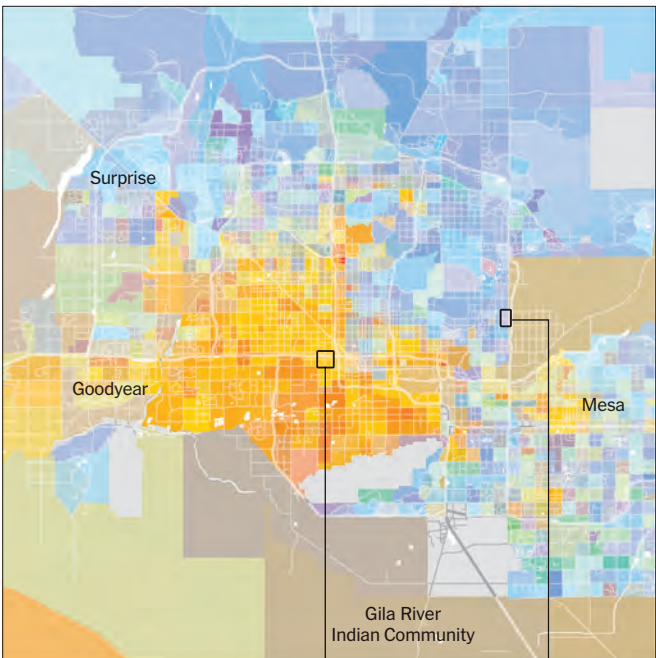
10 MILES



Tract in **Burbank**
POPULATION 6,000
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Armenian 19%
Iranian 12%
German 11%
Italian 11%

Phoenix

10 MILES

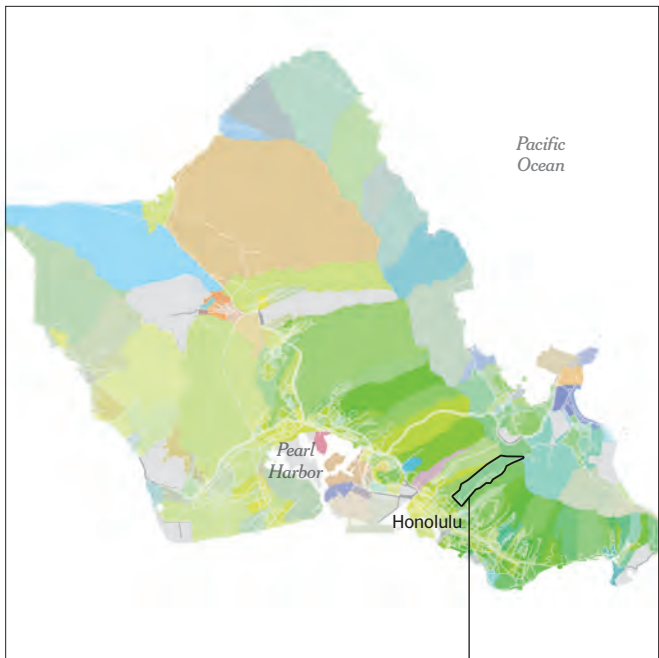


Tract in **Downtown Phoenix**
POPULATION: 7,100
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Mexican 81%
Guatemalan 5%
Maya <5%
English <5%

Tract in **Scottsdale**
POPULATION 2,900
TOP ANCESTRIES:
English 21%
German 19%
Mexican 12%
Iranian 11%

Oahu, Hawaii

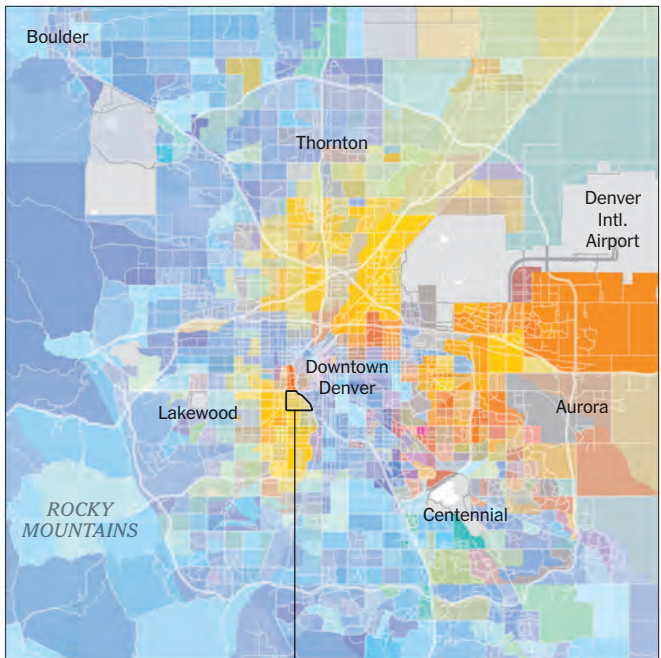
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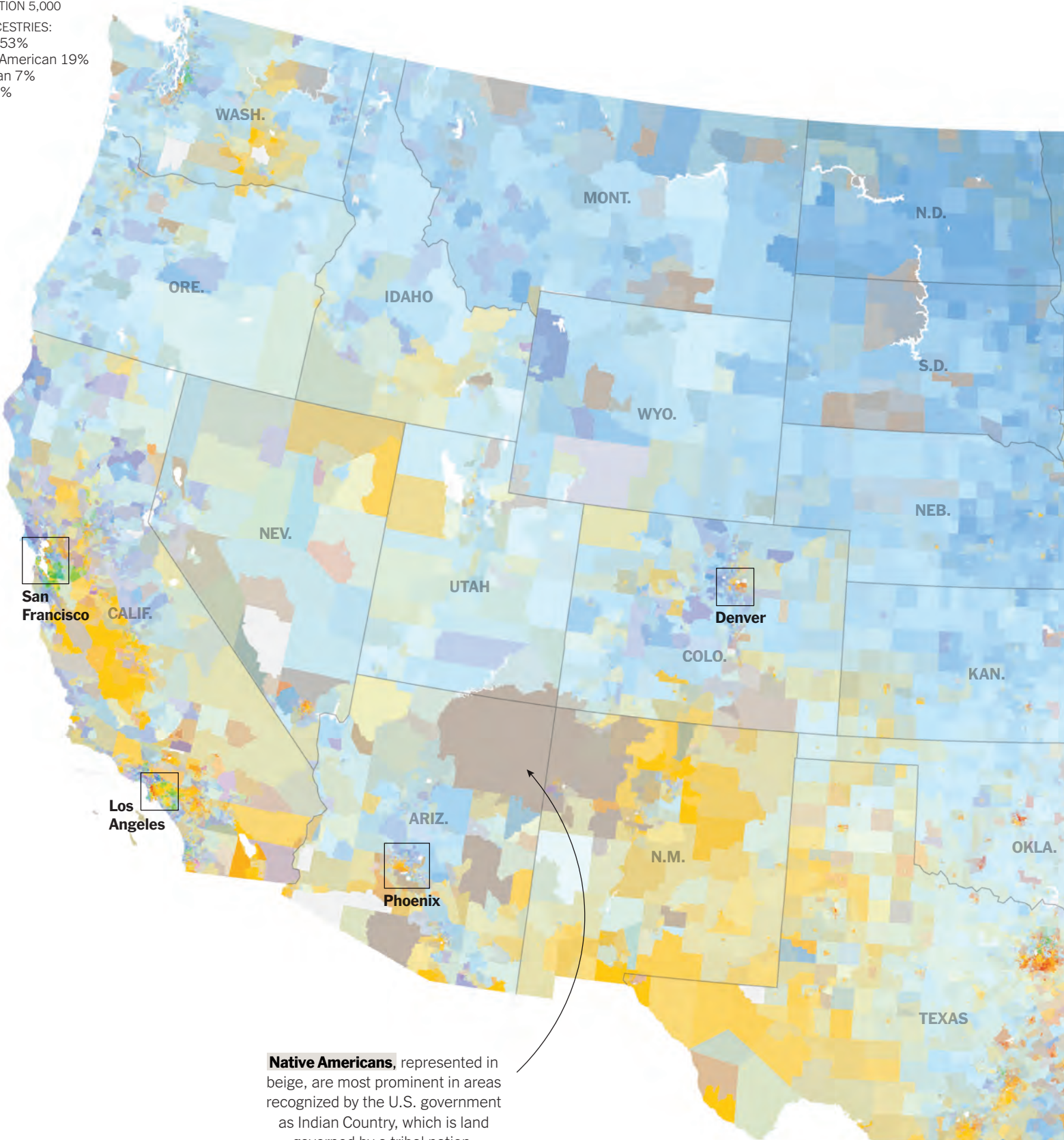
Tract in **Honolulu**
POPULATION: 4,000
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Japanese 44%
Chinese 34%
Native Hawaiian 20%
Filipino 17%

Denver

10 MILES



Tract in **Valverde**
POPULATION: 3,300
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Mexican 67%
German 11%
Irish 8%
Polish 5%



Native Americans, represented in beige, are most prominent in areas recognized by the U.S. government as Indian Country, which is land governed by a tribal nation.

Northern Alaska is mainly inhabited by **Alaska Natives**, while southeastern areas near Fairbanks and Anchorage have more **European** and **Scandinavian** people.



BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

Includes Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian

MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN

Includes Egyptian, Turkish, Israeli, Sudanese, Iranian, Palestinian

SOUTHERN EUROPEAN

Includes Italian, Portuguese, Greek

WESTERN EUROPEAN

Includes English, Irish, Scottish, French

CENTRAL EUROPEAN

Includes German, Austrian, Slovak

EASTERN EUROPEAN

Includes Polish, Russian, Hungarian

SCANDINAVIAN

Includes Swedish, Norwegian, Danish

SOUTH AMERICAN

Includes Colombian, Venezuelan, Brazilian

CENTRAL AMERICAN AND OTHER HISPANIC/LATINO

Includes Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Taino

NATIVE AMERICAN

Includes Native Alaskan

NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER

EAST AND CENTRAL ASIAN

Includes Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, Mongolian, Afghan

SOUTH ASIAN

Includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese

SOUTHEAST ASIAN

Includes Filipino, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, Indonesian

Note: Each category contains more ancestries than the examples listed here.

About the Colors in This Map

The lines of American ancestry today are not neatly drawn, and groups overlap and spill into one another. Some people don't answer the census questions about their origins at all. For others, it's complicated. Descendants of enslaved people, for example, may identify themselves as African American because they are unable to trace their roots to a specific place. Many Jews may identify most closely with their religious background, but the census does not ask about religion.

All told, the census records nearly 200 unique categories of ancestry or family origin. They are represented here grouped by color. The map shows a blend of those colors based on how Americans in each census tract identify themselves.

Descendants of **Scandinavians** can be seen throughout the Upper Midwest. **Swedes** and **Norwegians** fleeing poverty in their homelands settled in the Upper Great Plains after the Civil War.

Purple, which represents **Southern European** ancestries, surrounds historic port cities in the Northeast and the Midwest. During the Industrial Revolution, immigrants from these countries arrived in steamships to New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

Many Americans' **Central** and **Eastern European** ancestors first settled in these darker blue areas across the North and the Midwest.

Predominantly **African American** communities, seen in red, make up a large part of the South. Many living in these areas are descendants of enslaved Africans.

Cubans, shown in yellow, make up a large portion of the population of Miami-Dade County in Florida, stemming from a mass exodus from the island nation following the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

Areas in yellow and orange are largely inhabited by those of **Hispanic, Latino** or **South American** ancestry. Many of the census tracts along the southwestern border are majority **Mexican**.

Chicago

10 MILES

Detroit

10 MILES

Tract in **Dearborn**
POPULATION: 7,200
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Lebanese 32%
Yemeni 23%
Jordanian 11%
Iraqi 8%

New York City

10 MILES

Houston

10 MILES

Tract in **Spring Branch**
POPULATION: 3,400
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Mexican 30%
English 12%
Palestinian 8%
Irish 6%

Atlanta

10 MILES

Tract in **Norcross**
POPULATION: 4,000
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Mexican 28%
Cuban 11%
Guatemalan 10%
Laotian 8%

Washington, D.C.

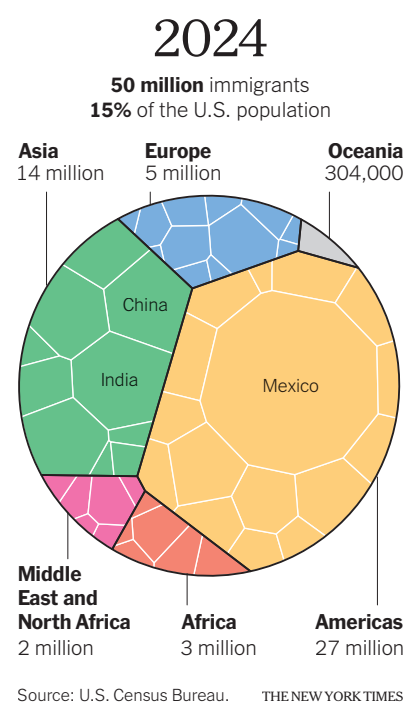
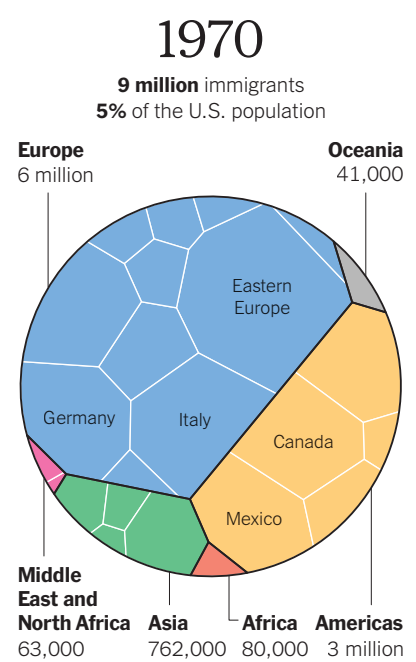
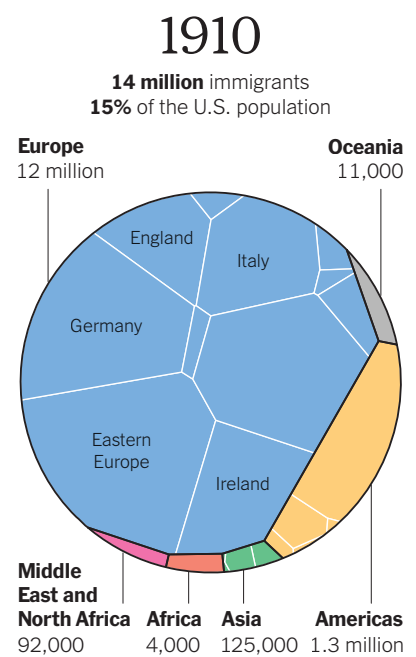
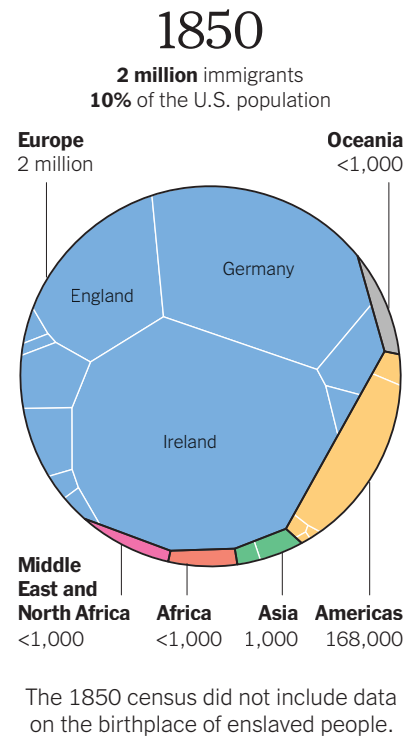
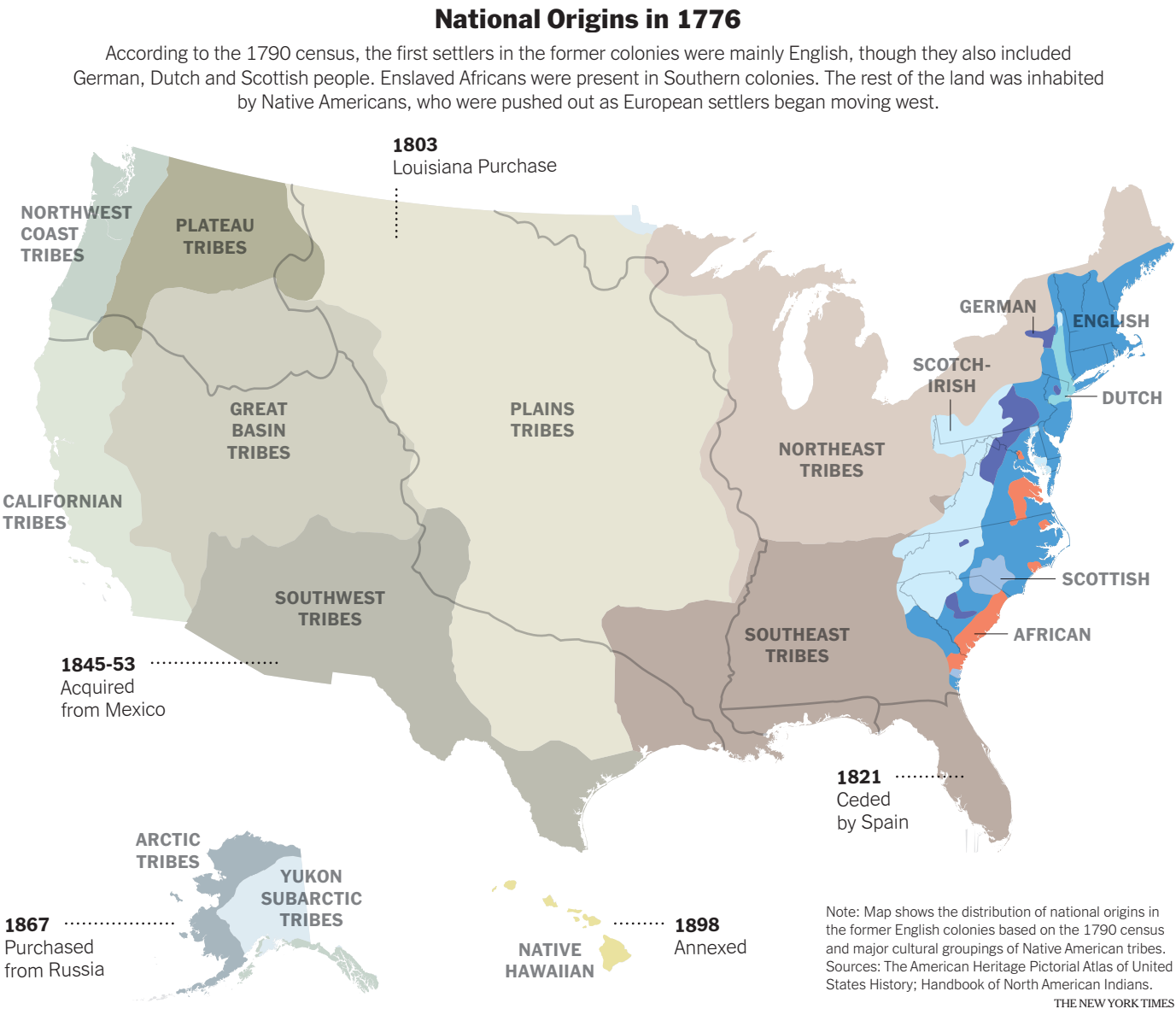
10 MILES

Tract in **Sugar Land**
POPULATION: 11,700
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Indian 37%
Chinese 19%
Pakistani 10%
Vietnamese 5%

Tract in **Pinehurst**
POPULATION: 3,700
TOP ANCESTRIES:
African American 52%
Jamaican 11%
Canadian 9%
American <5%

Tract in **Silver Spring, Md.**
POPULATION: 4,500
TOP ANCESTRIES:
Ethiopian 24%
German 16%
Irish 13%
African American 12%

How a Nation of Immigrants Traces Its Roots



How We Got Here

In the late 1700s, the area that would become the present-day United States was already diverse. At least 1.5 million Native people, and possibly many more, were living across the territory. They were joined by about three million Europeans and enslaved Africans living in both the English colonies and the French and Spanish territories.

From colonial times, immigration was an important contributor to population growth. It accelerated as the new country's territory expanded west and immigrants arrived to settle it. From 1820 to 1860, more than five million people came, through a mostly open door.

With the advent of the steamship, the cost of passage plummeted, and companies offered special immigrant fares that were often coupled with rail tickets to the interior of the country. Once a community of immigrants was established somewhere, it tended to grow.

After 1840, immigration from Western Europe began to rise quickly as political instability in Germany and the famine in Ireland drove people to leave. Asian immigrants, drawn by the discovery of gold in California in 1848, were recruited to work on farms and railroads.

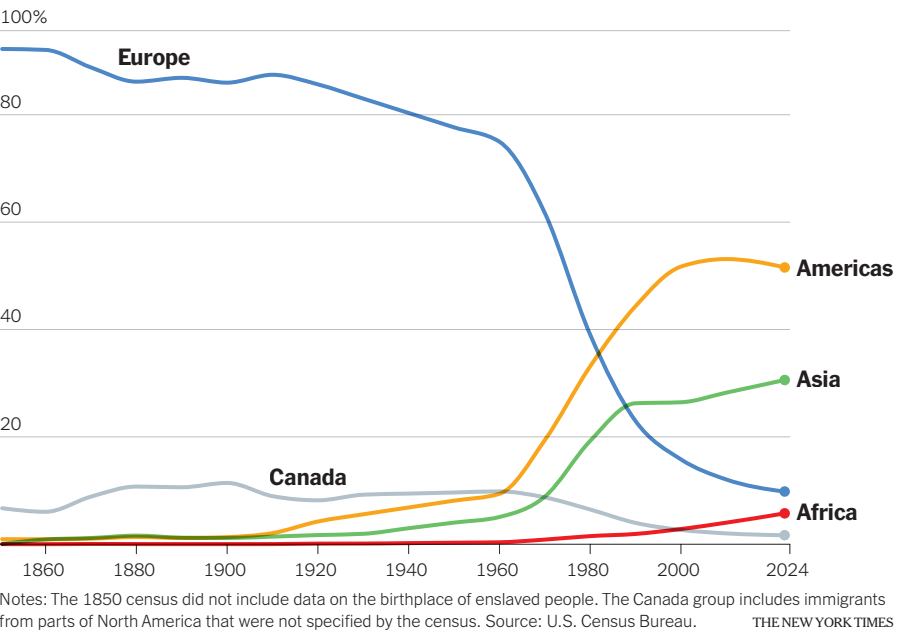
Later in the 19th century, pogroms across Eastern Europe and the aftermath of Italian reunification drove a surge of migration to the United States. From 1880 to 1920, 24 million immigrants arrived. They went almost everywhere except the South, where the land-owning elite already had cheap labor from formerly enslaved people and poor tenant farmers.

Cities swelled. In 1910, according to the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration, three-quarters of the residents of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and New York City were immigrants or children of immigrants.

Many rural areas in the Midwest had a similar share of immigrants in 1910, but newcomers to the cities tended to be from novel sources like Russia or Italy. That meant there were more languages, more cuisines and more workers. It also meant there were more crowds, more slums and more people behaving in unfamiliar ways — fodder to drive views that the new immigrants were unassimilable and that policies were needed to keep them out.

The first federal law to severely limit immigration had come much earlier, in

Share of Immigrants in the United States by Region of Birth



1882, when practically all Chinese people were barred from entering the country. More restrictions followed, and eventually animosity toward new immigrants led to the passage of laws in the 1920s creating a quota system tied to nationality.

Western Europeans were given generous quotas and Southern and Eastern Europeans much smaller ones. For the rest of the Eastern Hemisphere, the quotas were set to almost nothing. Ships raced through the night to reach New York Harbor, all trying to be first to dock at Ellis Island.

There weren't quotas for countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, but there were other restrictions. Mexicans faced mass deportation campaigns in the 1930s and 1950s, even as millions were recruited as temporary workers to fill agricultural jobs across the Southwest.

Over the next 40 years, these rules drove the foreign-born population in the United States to its lowest levels. Children of immigrants replaced immigrants, blending into American society while retaining their own cultural traditions.

Then, alongside the civil rights movement of the 1960s, activists and lawmakers who saw the national quota system as racist pushed to replace it with one based on employment and family ties.

Another decades-long wave of

immigration followed, this time from different parts of the world.

The new rules allowed people to sponsor their family members and relatives, and they gave preference to workers with advanced degrees and specialized skills. The family visas, in particular, led to an unforeseen boom in immigration.

An expanded refugee program also brought more immigrants, many from Southeast Asia who were displaced by Cold War conflicts.

For the first time, immigrants from the Western Hemisphere faced limits on their numbers. Similar to the European workers who arrived earlier in the century, many chose to settle in the United States permanently instead of risking returning to their home countries between periods of working in the United States. Millions who couldn't get visas turned to entering illegally.

The most recent immigration wave, during the Biden administration, was different still: The number of visas for immigrants remained steady, while migrants from Central America arrived at the southwest border in large numbers to seek asylum. Desperate conditions in Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela, as well as wars in Afghanistan, Ukraine and elsewhere led hundreds of thousands of people to flee to the United States — many of them drawn to established communities of immigrants from their countries.

Who Comes Next?

If the patterns in these maps reflect the immigration policies of at least a century ago, we can expect them to shift and change again as a result of contemporary decisions about who makes up the American mosaic.

No comprehensive immigration legislation has passed Congress since the 1980s. After a surge of immigration during the Biden administration, in which an estimated eight million people entered the country over three years, demographic experts estimate that the United States could reach net-zero or negative immigration sometime soon.

That is in part because of the Trump administration's aggressive actions to speed deportations of people who are in the country illegally and to limit pathways to legal immigration.

At the same time, the factors that pull immigrants to the United States remain strong. And, unlike 100 years ago, the country now faces a declining population and work force. The tension between the need for new workers and resurgent nativist politics will influence who comes, who settles and who is counted among the ancestors of future generations.

ABOUT THE DATA

The ancestry maps in this article and the related interactive map online draw from seven tables of race, ethnicity and ancestry data that the Census Bureau published as part of the American Community Survey estimates for 2019-24.

The census ancestry and origin data are estimates based on a sample of the population and include margins of error that can be large for small population groups. We used the estimates published by the Census Bureau without adjustment.

In the survey, respondents are asked questions about their race and whether they are of Hispanic or Latino origin. Each of those questions allows respondents to list their national origins. An additional question asks about their ancestries. People can claim multiple ancestries or origins and appear in multiple categories.

Some groups appear in multiple tables. For example, people can select "white" as their race and list "German" as a specific origin. Separately, anyone can also choose "German" in response to the survey's ancestry question. For such groups, we used the table with the higher value for the country as a whole. In a small number of cases, similar ancestries were grouped together.

Colors for each census tract are blended based on the adjusted number of people who reported being of each race and ancestry in the tract, for each group above a minimum threshold.

In charts of the immigrant population, counts come from Census Bureau research publications, the 2000 census and the American Community Survey. Those counts include only foreign-born residents and exclude any descendants born in the United States.