

Prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD)

The Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States

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Summary

Approximately 251,000 Ethiopian immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the United States, and Ethiopia-born immigrants account for 0.5 percent of the total U.S. foreign-born population. The size of the Ethiopia-born population in the United States grew rapidly from a small base in recent decades; in 1980, about 10,000 Ethiopian immigrants resided in the United States. Today, Ethiopia-born immigrants constitute the United States' second-largest African immigrant group after Nigeria. Sixty percent of Ethiopian immigrants to the United States arrived during or after 2000, making this the most recently settled of the 15 groups in the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD) analysis. Despite being recently settled in the United States, nearly half of all Ethiopian immigrants are U.S. citizens. The majority of Ethiopian immigrants who recently gained legal permanent residence did so through family reunification or diversity visa programs, although many in this population were admitted as refugees.

Of the 15 diaspora groups in the RAD analysis, the Ethiopian first and second generations are among the youngest populations in their respective generation.¹ Ethiopian immigrants in the United States have a median age of 37, and the vast majority of the population is working age (86 percent). The median age of the children of Ethiopian immigrants (the second generation) is 7, and 62 percent of those in the second generation have a mother and father who were born in Ethiopia.

While the Ethiopian diaspora has similar educational attainment as the U.S. population overall and is more likely to be in the labor force, its average household income is substantially lower. The median annual income for Ethiopian diaspora households is \$36,000, significantly below the overall U.S. median income of \$50,000 and among the lowest of the 15 RAD analysis groups. Moreover, only 11 percent of Ethiopian diaspora households have annual incomes over \$90,000, the threshold for the top 25 percent of U.S. households. Members of the Ethiopian diaspora are more likely than the general U.S. population to be in the labor force (74 percent versus 64 percent), but they are far less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations than U.S. workers overall (20 percent versus 31 percent).

Within the United States, the largest numbers of Ethiopian immigrants live in the states of

¹ All Rights Reserved. © 2014 Migration Policy Institute. Information for reproducing excerpts from this report can be found at www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy. The RAD Diaspora Profile series covers U.S.-based Bangladeshi, Colombian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Filipino, Ghanaian, Haitian, Indian, Kenyan, Mexican, Moroccan, Nigerian, Pakistani, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese diaspora populations.

California, Virginia, Maryland, Minnesota, and Texas. Ethiopian immigrants are more heavily concentrated in Washington, DC and its surrounding communities than in any other metropolitan area in the country, but nonetheless make up only 0.6 percent of the population. The Minneapolis, Seattle, and Atlanta metropolitan areas are also Ethiopian immigrant population centers.

The Ethiopian diaspora has established numerous, well-funded organizations throughout the United States, particularly in the Washington, DC and Los Angeles metropolitan areas. Despite the plethora of organizations, the only national umbrella group appears to be the Ethiopian Students Association. The core missions of the 45 Ethiopian diaspora organizations identified for the RAD analysis typically fall into one or more of three broad categories: the development of Ethiopia, social services and integration assistance to the Ethiopian population in the United States, and the welfare of certain religious communities. Some of these organizations were founded to provide refugee resettlement services to the Ethiopian community in the United States, although the most prominent of these groups, the Ethiopian Community Development Council, has extended its work to assist other refugee communities as well; it is one of nine national refugee resettlement agencies that partner with the U.S. government's refugee resettlement program. Other well-resourced groups are the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, African Services Committee (which principally serves refugees of Ethiopian origin), the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Religion Church. All five of these groups reported annual revenues in excess of \$1 million. Four additional organizations declared annual revenues above \$200,000 in their most recent federal tax filings, including Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services, HopeEthiopia, Friends of Ethiopian Jews, and the Ethiopian Community Mutual Association. Members of the Ethiopian diaspora are also active in diaspora organizations that involve groups of many national origins, such as the Diaspora African Women's Network (DAWN).

The United States is the most common destination for Ethiopian emigrants and the top source for remittances to Ethiopia. During 2012, the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States transferred \$181 million to its homeland. Israel and Sudan are also major countries of destination for Ethiopian emigrants, and the diaspora in these countries were Ethiopia's second- and third-largest sources of remittances respectively. In 2012, remittances to Ethiopia were valued at \$524 million, representing 1.2 percent of its \$43.1 billion gross domestic product (GDP).

Detailed Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics²

Analysis of data from 2009-13 reveals an Ethiopian diaspora in the United States of about 251,000 individuals, counting immigrants born in Ethiopia and U.S.-born individuals with at least one parent born in Ethiopia.

2 Unless otherwise noted, estimates for the diaspora population and its characteristics are based on Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys (CPS), using five years of pooled data (2009 through 2013) collected in March of each year. All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

First Generation (Ethiopian immigrants in the United States)

- An estimated 178,000 immigrants from Ethiopia resided in the United States. Ethiopian immigrants constituted the second-largest African group after Nigerians.
- Ethiopians accounted for a small share of all immigrants in the United States—0.5 percent of the population in 2012. The size of the Ethiopia-born population in the United States has grown rapidly from a small base in recent decades. In 1980, about 10,000 Ethiopian immigrants resided in the United States.³
- The majority of Ethiopian migrants to the United States arrived during or after 2000 (60 percent). By comparison, 36 percent of the overall U.S. foreign-born population arrived during this period. Ethiopian immigrants are the most recently arrived population among the 15 groups examined in the RAD analysis.
- Forty-seven percent of Ethiopian immigrants were U.S. citizens, a share slightly larger than the U.S. immigrant population overall (44 percent). Considering that the majority of Ethiopian immigrants arrived during or after 2000, their relatively high naturalization rate suggests that many Ethiopian immigrants applied for U.S. citizenship shortly after they became eligible.
- Between 1980 and 2013, approximately 48,600 Ethiopian immigrants were admitted to the United States as refugees. More than 1,000 Ethiopian refugees were resettled in the United States during each year from 1981 to 1993 and 1999 to 2007 (with the exception of 2002).⁴
- Of the 14,250 Ethiopia-born people who obtained permanent residence in the United States in 2010, 52 percent did so through family reunification channels; 28 percent came under the diversity visa program; 19 percent were admitted as refugees; and 1 percent entered through employment and other visa classifications.⁵
- Eighty-six percent of first-generation Ethiopian immigrants were working age (18 to 64), and 11 percent were under age 18. The median age of first-generation Ethiopian immigrants in the United States was 37; Ethiopian and Indian immigrants were tied for the second-lowest median age of the 15 groups in the RAD analysis (after Kenya).

Second Generation (U.S. born with at least one Ethiopia-born parent)⁶

- An estimated 73,000 U.S.-born individuals had at least one parent born in Ethiopia.
- Sixty-two percent of second-generation individuals reported that both parents were born in Ethiopia, and 25 percent said that one parent was U.S.-born.
- The second-generation Ethiopian population in the United States was very young, with a median age of 7. Eighty-seven percent of the second generation was below age 18, and 13 percent was working age (18 to 64). The children of immigrants from Ethiopia and Kenya were the youngest second-generation populations in the RAD analysis.

3 These estimates are based on MPI analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 1980 Census. Before the 2000 census, Eritreans were classified as Ethiopians, because Eritrea did not gain its independence from Ethiopia until 1993.

4 This estimate is based on administrative data provided to MPI by the U.S. Department of State's Refugee Processing Center.

5 Randy Capps, Kristen McCabe, and Michael Fix, *Diverse Streams: African Migration to the United States* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2012).

6 U.S. born is defined as born in the United States or born abroad to a U.S.-citizen parent.

Educational Attainment

- The educational attainment of the Ethiopian diaspora was similar to that of the general U.S. population.
- Twenty percent of Ethiopian diaspora members age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree as their highest credential, the same proportion as the U.S. population overall.
- Twelve percent of Ethiopian diaspora members age 25 and older had a master's degree, PhD, or an advanced professional degree, roughly equivalent to the 11 percent rate in the general U.S. population.

Household Income

- Despite similar educational attainment as the U.S. population overall, the Ethiopian diaspora had a significantly lower median annual household income: \$36,000 versus \$50,000. Ethiopian diaspora households had the second-lowest median annual income of the 15 groups in the RAD analysis (after Mexico).
- Eleven percent of Ethiopian diaspora households reported annual incomes above \$90,000, the threshold for the top 25 percent of general U.S. households. Of the 15 groups in the RAD analysis, Ethiopian and Mexican diaspora households were the least likely to be in the top quartile of the U.S. household income distribution.
- Three percent of Ethiopian diaspora households had annual incomes exceeding \$140,000, the threshold for the top 10 percent of general U.S. households. Ethiopian and Mexican diaspora households were also the least likely to be in the top tenth of income distribution.

Employment

- Members of the Ethiopian diaspora age 16 and older were more likely than individuals in the general U.S. population to participate in the labor force: 74 percent versus 64 percent.
- The employment rate among those in the labor force was nearly the same among the Ethiopian diaspora as the U.S. population: 90 percent versus 91 percent.
- Ethiopian diaspora members were significantly less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations than the general U.S. labor force: 20 percent versus 31 percent.⁷ The share of the Ethiopian diaspora in professional or managerial occupations was the fourth-lowest in the 15-group analysis (after El Salvador, Mexico, and Haiti). Such occupations include specialized fields (e.g. engineering, science, law, or education) as well as administrative and managerial jobs (e.g. finance or human resources).

⁷ This rate is calculated based on the share of all individuals reporting an occupation for their primary job at the time the CPS was administered, or their most recent primary job.

Geographic Distribution⁸

- Immigrant populations from Ethiopia were widely distributed across a number of states, with the largest populations in California, Virginia, Maryland, Minnesota, and Texas. Each of these states had about 15,000 Ethiopia-born residents.
- The Washington, DC, metropolitan area had a population of about 35,000 Ethiopian immigrants, making it the largest population center for Ethiopia-born people in the United States. The metropolitan areas of Minneapolis, Seattle, and Atlanta each had approximately 10,000 Ethiopia-born residents.

Remittance Volume⁹

- In 2012, remittances to Ethiopia totaled \$524 million, representing 1.2 percent of the country's \$43.1 billion gross domestic product (GDP). Remittances to Ethiopia have surged since 2003, when they were valued at 0.5 percent of GDP.
- The Ethiopian diaspora in the United States transferred about \$181 million to Ethiopia in 2012, making the U.S.-based diaspora Ethiopia's largest source of remittances.
- The United States was the most common global destination for international migrants from Ethiopia, followed by Israel and Sudan.

⁸ Analysis based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008-12 ACS. Note that geographic distribution is only analyzed for the immigrant population. Second-generation Ethiopian diaspora members are not included in this section due to data limitations.

⁹ Remittance data are taken from World Bank Prospects Group tables for annual remittance inflows and outflows (October 2013 update) and the 2012 Bilateral Remittance Matrix (both available here: <http://go.worldbank.org/092X1CHHD0>). GDP estimates are from World Bank World Development Indicators data. Population estimates are from the United Nations Population Division mid-2013 matrix of total migrant stock by origin and destination.

Tables, Maps, and Graphs

Characteristics of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States, 2009-13

	Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States*	Total U.S. Population
Household Income		
Median household income	\$36,000	\$50,000
Average household size	2.8	2.5
Share of households with high incomes (\$90,000+)	11%	25%
Share of households with very high incomes (\$140,000+)	3%	10%
Employment		
Total population age 16 and older	171,000	239,386,000
Share in the labor force	74%	64%
... that was employed	90%	91%
... that was in a professional occupation ⁺	20%	31%
Educational Attainment **		
Total population age 25 and older	149,000	201,925,000
... with less than high school education	9%	13%
... with high school or some college education	58%	57%
... with a bachelor's degree	20%	20%
... with an advanced degree	12%	11%
Population Characteristics by Generation		
First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Population	251,000	73,140,000
First-generation immigrant population***	178,000	38,468,000
... that was working age (18-64)	86%	81%
... that entered the United States before 2000	40%	64%
... naturalized as U.S. citizens	47%	44%
Second-generation population****	73,000	34,672,000
... that was under age 18	87%	46%
... that was working age (18-64)	13%	43%
... with only one parent from Ethiopia	38%	

* defined as all first and second generation

** highest level reported

*** all individuals who report Ethiopia as their place of birth, excluding U.S. births abroad

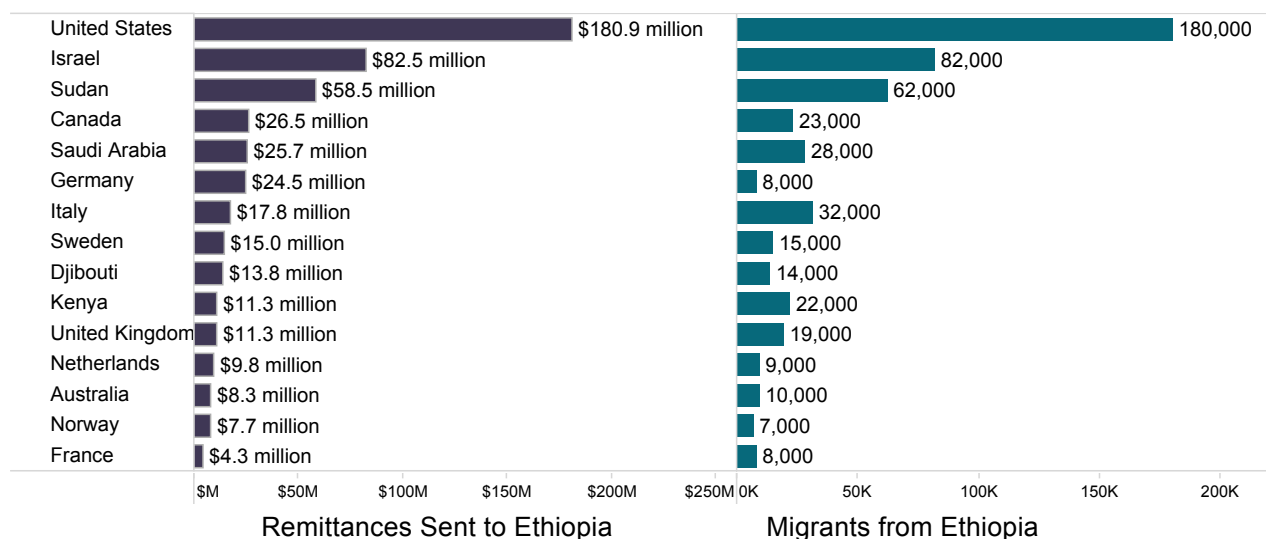
**** all individuals who report having at least one parent born in Ethiopia

+ calculated based on the share of all individuals reporting an occupation for their primary job at the time the Current Population Survey (CPS) was administered, or for their most recent primary job.

Note: Estimates are based on Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau CPS pooled 2009-13 data.

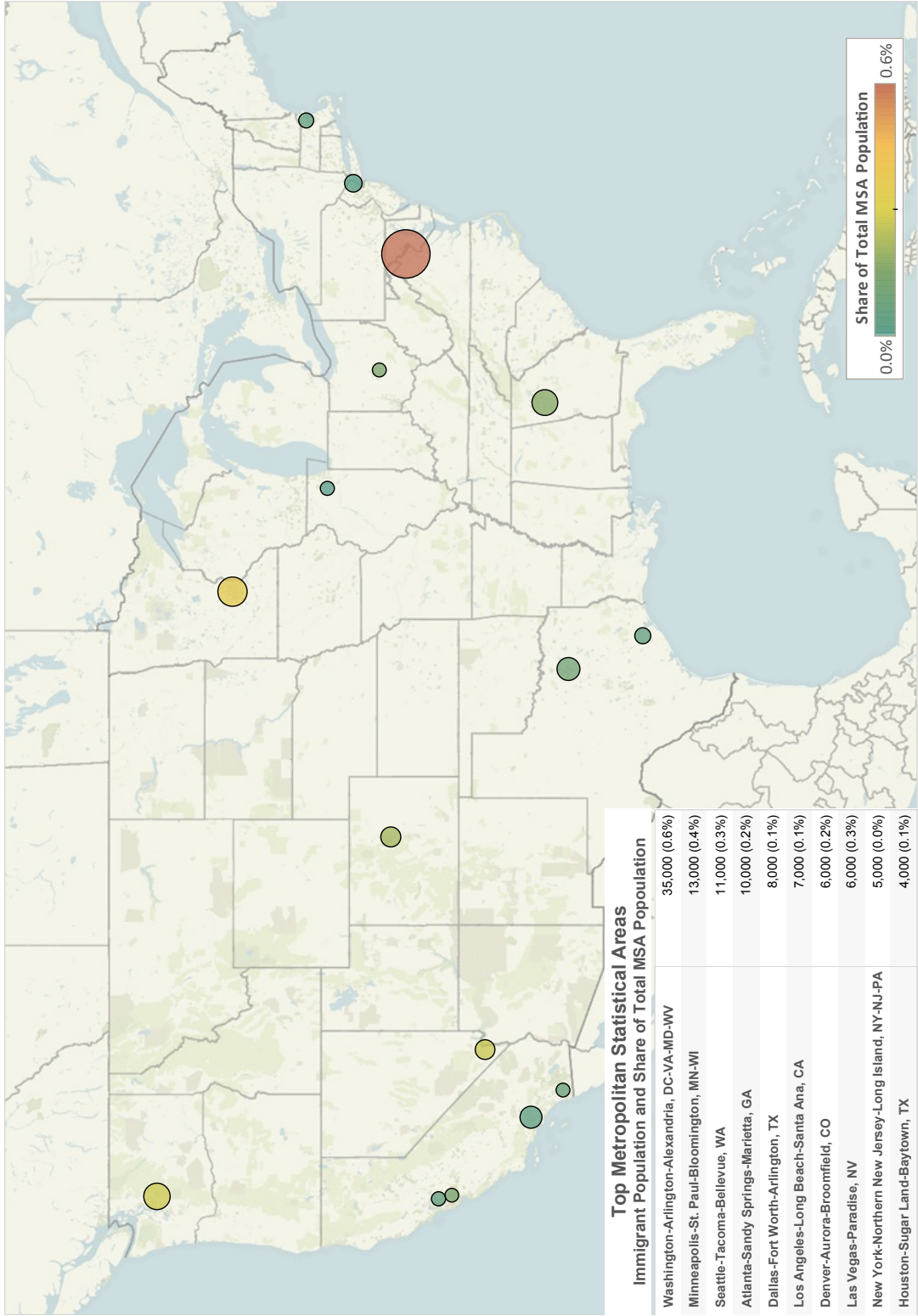
Source: All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

Remittance Inflows to Ethiopia by Sending Country and the Ethiopian Emigrant Population, 2012



Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of World Bank Prospects Group tables for annual remittance inflows and outflows (October 2013 update) and the 2012 Bilateral Remittance Matrix, the World Bank's World Development Indicators, and the United Nations Population Division's Matrix of Total Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination (mid-2013).

Immigrant Population from Ethiopia
Displayed by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)



Map based on Migration Policy Institute tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B05006.

Source: MPI analysis of 2010-12 ACS, pooled.