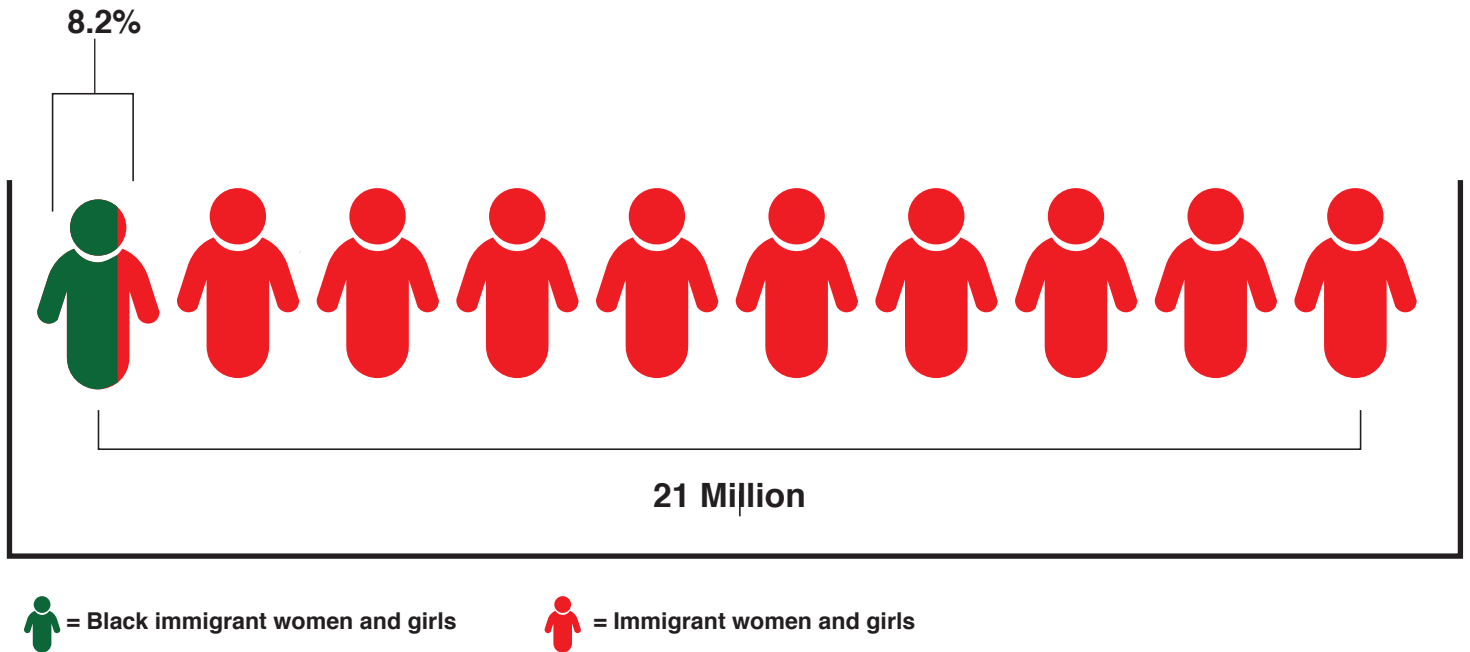




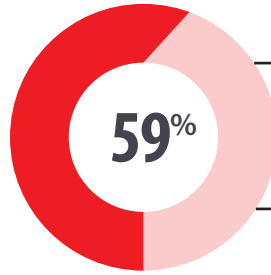
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF
**BLACK IMMIGRANT WOMEN
AND GIRLS IN THE U.S.**

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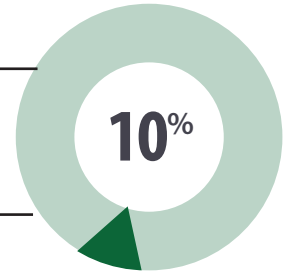
Population of Immigrant Women and Girls in the United States



There are approximately **21 million immigrant women living in the United States**, of which, an estimated **1.7M (8.2 percent) are Black**. Black immigrant women and girls come from diverse regions of the world but **primarily originate from African and Caribbean countries**, with **Jamaica, Haiti, and Nigeria among the leading places of origin for Black immigrants overall**. This brief document is intended to provide a preliminary overview of the state of Black immigrant women and girls in the U.S.



Black immigrants who arrive in the U.S. through family sponsored visas



Black immigrants who arrive
via the diversity visa program

Many Black immigrant and refugee women and girls move to the U.S. to escape war, violence, and persecution or to reunite with family members. Education and employment opportunities are also a motivating factor for migration. These pathways for legally authorized migration are currently under attack by proposed federal policies that would eliminate the diversity visa program, restructure family-based visa sponsorship, cap refugee resettlement, and establish language and education requirements for those seeking residency in the U.S.³

Many Black immigrant women and girls that migrate to the U.S. are survivors of gender-based violence and fled to the U.S. to escape sexual assault or dangerous relationships. Although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ⁴ Executive Committee “strongly condemns persecution through sexual violence” and “supports recognizing people entering the country based on fear of persecution, through sexual violence, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

Many Black immigrant women fleeing domestic and sexual violence and abuse, are turned away at the border, detained or deported. Those permitted to enter the U.S., often meet a system that lacks cultural competence and is unprepared to meet their acute needs.

For example, **advocacy and public policy reform** are **missing from pressing issues such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC)**. Female genital cutting refers to a range of procedures that involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other non-consensual injuries to the female genital organs. Because **FGC is an issue that ⁵ predominantly impacts African women and girls, limited culturally competent research and services exist** to address this sensitive issue. In many instances, services designed to respond to gender-based violence do not offer adequate cultural competence, translation and interpretation services and do not account for the necessary precautions for undocumented Black women and girls. **Many women are afraid to seek support when attacked because ICE has also been using Family Court and domestic abuse proceedings to arrest immigrant women,** including many survivors with valid claims under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). As a result, many women do not receive adequate services and support or ultimately end up detained or deported.

3 <http://observer.com/2017/08/donald-trump-immigration-limit-legislation/> 4 http://blackalliance.org/blog_berry_breakingbonds



2X more likely uninsured

5 years before eligible for Medicaid

The threat to Black immigrant women and girls' livelihood makes access to health services even more urgent, yet recently arrived Black immigrant and refugee women and girls report various challenges accessing medical services. Low-income immigrants, including Black women and girls, are more than twice as likely to be uninsured as low-income citizens.⁶ Additionally, immigrant women have to wait 5 years before they are eligible for Medicaid.⁷ Texas and Florida, two of the states with the largest Black immigrant populations, have either rejected Medicaid expansion or limited its use in recent years. **Medicaid is how many Black immigrant women and girls gain access to reproductive health and preventative care such as birth control, mammograms, and prenatal care.** This is especially significant to the lives of Black immigrant women and girls because they experience low birth weight and pre-term birth at higher rates than non-Black immigrants and U.S. citizens alike.⁸

Economic Disenfranchisement

In total, there are almost 12 million immigrant women workers in the U.S.; in which African women have the highest rate of participation. Immigrant women work in a variety of fields including hair braiding, healthcare, hospitality, and food service. The largest makeup of immigrant women are domestic workers, with light industrial occupations, nursing, and psychiatric services also high up on the list. The labor done by immigrant women is an important piece of the U.S. economy, yet many immigrant women earn less than a minimum wage. In 2015, almost half of immigrant women workers made less than \$20,000 per year. Sadly, nearly 20 percent of Black immigrants live below the federal poverty line.⁹ Haitian women experience the largest economic gap, earning 18.6 percent less than White women.

School Pushout and Mass Incarceration

Black girls are over six times more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts¹⁰

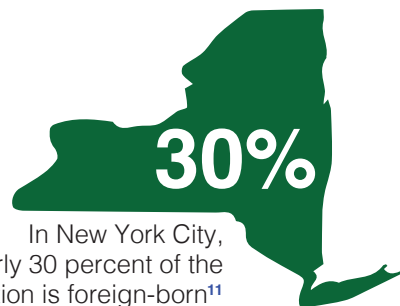


Along with economic inequality, Black immigrant women and girls are also disproportionately impacted by school pushout, mass incarceration, and deportation.

The more than 700 percent increase of women in prison since the 80's was made up of Black women, who are more than twice as likely to go to prison as White women.



There are more police officers in New York City schools than counselors.¹²



⁵ <https://www.sautiyetu.us/issues-female-genital-cutting>

⁶ <https://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/immigrants-health-care-coverage-and-access-pdf.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2013/03/08/55794/10-facts-you-need-to-know-about-immigrant-women-2013-update>

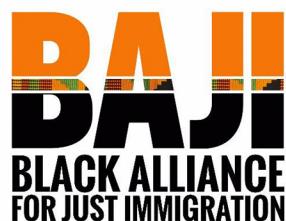
Additionally, when schools that violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which prohibits schools from sharing students' information without consent from a parent, undocumented Black girls face the risk that their information will be shared with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), which might expose them to deportation. Black women are also highly criminalized. The increasing number of Black women in the prison system as a direct result of anti-Black criminalization places Black immigrant women and girls at the intersection of race, gender, and xenophobic oppression. Those intersections make Black immigrant women and girls particularly vulnerable to detention and deportation.

Conclusion

Although the population of Black immigrant women and girls is rapidly increasing, their experiences continue to be erased in public discourse and advocacy efforts to advance race, gender, and immigrant equity. Contributing to their lack of visibility in racial justice and immigration debates is the sparse availability of research and data on this population.

Advocates must amplify the voices of Black immigrant women and girls. The community must actively pursue and model a gender justice analysis in organizations and within the racial justice and immigrant's rights movements broadly and uplift the leadership of Black immigrant women and girls to achieve holistic liberation.

Despite this stark picture, the emergence of organizations and institutions led by Black immigrant women and girls present opportunities for transformation. This piece aimed to shed light on some of the issues affecting this community and lay the groundwork for deeper engagement and innovative solutions to the challenges facing Black immigrant women and girls and inevitably, all oppressed communities in the U.S.



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