

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

## The Ghanaian Diaspora in the United States

May 2015 Revised

### Summary

Approximately 235,000 Ghanaian immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the United States, and Ghana-born individuals account for a small fraction of the total U.S. foreign-born population: 0.3 percent. The Ghana-born population in the United States grew from an even more modest base; in 1980, fewer than 10,000 Ghanaian immigrants resided in the United States. The majority of Ghanaian immigrants arrived in the United States during or after 2000, and they are the second most recently settled population in the 15-group Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD) analysis (after Ethiopia).<sup>1</sup> A relatively low proportion of Ghanaian immigrants are U.S. citizens (40 percent), but given their short period of settlement in the United States and the length of residence required for naturalization, this population's low citizenship rate is to be expected. Like most other populations in the RAD analysis, Ghanaian immigrants in the United States are nearly all working age (88 percent are between 18 and 64), and have a median age of 40. The children of Ghanaian immigrants (the second generation) have a median age of 8 and 83 percent of the population is below age 18, making the Ghanaian second generation one of the youngest of the 15 second-generation populations in the RAD analysis.

Ghanaian diaspora members (the first and second generations) are more likely to be in the U.S. labor force and are about as likely to be employed as the general U.S. population overall; they also have similar educational attainment. Nonetheless, the Ghanaian population has a lower income than the general U.S. population. The median annual income for Ghanaian diaspora households is \$6,000 below the U.S. average of \$50,000, and only 18 percent of these households have annual incomes over \$90,000, the threshold for the top quarter of the U.S. household income distribution. U.S.-born children of Ghanaian immigrants (the second generation) make up a relatively small and young population group.

Immigrant populations from Ghana are widely distributed across the United States, with the largest number in New York State followed by Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland. By metropolitan area, New York City has the largest Ghanaian immigrant population, although Washington, DC is also home to a significant number of Ghana-born residents. Of their top ten destinations, Worcester (MA) has the highest concentration of Ghanaian immigrants, but they comprise only 0.5 percent of the population.

<sup>1</sup> All Rights Reserved. © 2015 Migration Policy Institute. Information for reproducing excerpts from this report can be found at [www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy](http://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. This updates the initial July 2014 diaspora profile to correct an error.

Ghanaian diaspora organizations in the United States tend to be smaller groups without full-time professional staff or significant revenue streams. Among the 63 U.S.-based Ghanaian diaspora organizations identified for this profile, the majority aspire to be social networking groups serving the U.S.-based migrant community as well as charitable institutions providing humanitarian assistance to Ghana's most vulnerable populations or catalysts for the country's economic growth. Notable Ghanaian diaspora organizations include the Ghana National Council of Chicago, the Council for Ghanaian Associations, and the Ghana Physicians and Nurses Association. While many Ghanaian diaspora organizations are pan-ethnic, others focus on a shared subnational ethnic identity, reflecting both the richness and diversity of Ghanaian cultural traditions and the mismatch between ethnic and political boundaries in West Africa. Ghanaian-origin population groups that have built networks of ethnic-specific diaspora organizations in the United States include the Ewe, the Asante, and the Gadangme. Only one of the Ghanaian diaspora organizations identified for this analysis has annual revenues in excess of \$1 million—the Seattle-based Ashesi University Foundation. No other organizations had revenues exceeding \$200,000.

The United States is the second most common destination for Ghanaian emigrants and the primary source of Ghana's remittances. The diaspora in the United States transferred approximately \$33 million to Ghana during 2012. Ghana's total remittances were valued at \$151 million in 2012, representing 0.4 percent of the country's \$40.7 billion gross domestic product (GDP). Among the 15 countries in the RAD analysis, Ghana's economy was least dependent on remittances, as defined by share of GDP.

## Detailed Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics<sup>2</sup>

Analysis of data from 2009-13 reveals a Ghanaian diaspora in the United States of about 235,000 individuals, counting immigrants born in Ghana and U.S.-born individuals with at least one parent who was born in Ghana.

### First Generation (Ghanaian immigrants in the United States)

- An estimated 153,000 immigrants from Ghana resided in the United States.<sup>3</sup>
- Ghanaian immigrants accounted for a small share of the U.S. foreign-born population overall—0.3 percent in 2012. The size of the Ghana-born population in the United States grew from a small base; in 1980, fewer than 10,000 Ghanaian immigrants resided in the United States.<sup>4</sup>
- Fifty-six percent of immigrants from Ghana arrived in the United States in 2000 or later, a higher proportion than for the U.S. foreign-born population as a whole (36 percent). Ghanaian immigrants are the second most recently arrived population among the 15 groups examined in the RAD analysis (after 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/>.

3 According to estimates from the 2009-13 CPS, the Ghanaian immigrant population was 153,000. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) gives a lower estimate: 130,000.

4 These estimates are based on MPI analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 1980 Census.

- Forty percent of immigrants from Ghana were U.S. citizens, slightly below the rate for the overall U.S. foreign-born population (44 percent). Following El Salvador and Mexico, the Ghanaian immigrant population has the third-lowest proportion naturalized among the RAD analysis's 15 groups.
- Eighty-eight percent of Ghanaian immigrants were working age (18 to 64), and 8 percent were under age 18. The median age of Ghanaian immigrants was 40.

### **Second Generation (U.S. born with at least one Ghana-born parent)<sup>5</sup>**

- An estimated 82,000 U.S.-born individuals had at least one parent born in Ghana.
- Sixty-eight percent of second-generation individuals reported that both parents were born in Ghana, and 25 percent said that one parent was U.S.-born.
- The Ghanaian second-generation population in the United States had a median age of eight. Eighty-three percent of the second generation was below age 18, and 17 percent was working age (18 to 64). The Ghanaian second generation was one of the youngest second-generation populations in the 15-group RAD analysis.

### **Educational Attainment**

- The Ghanaian diaspora in the United States had educational attainment largely similar to the general U.S. population.
- Eighteen percent of Ghanaian diaspora members age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree as their highest credential, nearly the same proportion as for the U.S. population overall (20 percent).
- Twelve percent of Ghanaian diaspora members had a master's degree, PhD, or an advanced professional degree, compared to 11 percent of the general U.S. population.

### **Household Income**

- The Ghanaian diaspora had a lower median annual household income than the overall U.S. population: \$44,000 versus \$50,000.
- Eighteen percent of Ghanaian diaspora households reported annual incomes above \$90,000, the threshold for the top 25 percent of U.S. households.
- Five percent of Ghanaian diaspora households had annual incomes exceeding \$140,000, the threshold for the top 10 percent of U.S. households.

### **Employment**

- Members of the U.S.-based Ghanaian diaspora age 16 and older were more likely than individuals in the general U.S. population to participate in the labor force: 76 percent versus 64 percent. The employment rate for those in the labor force was the same for the Ghanaian diaspora as the U.S. population: 91 percent.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. born is defined as born in the United States or born abroad to a U.S.-citizen parent.

- Members of the Ghanaian diaspora were less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations than the general U.S. labor force: 22 percent versus 31 percent.<sup>6</sup> These occupations include specialized fields (e.g. engineering, science, law, or education) as well as administrative and managerial jobs (e.g. finance or human resources).

### **Geographic Distribution<sup>7</sup>**

- Immigrants from Ghana were widely dispersed across the United States, with the largest number in New York State (approximately 30,000). Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland were each home to about 10,000 Ghana-born immigrants.
- About 35,000 Ghanaian immigrants lived in the New York metropolitan area, while Washington, DC, and its surrounding communities had approximately 15,000 Ghana-born residents.

### **Remittance Volume<sup>8</sup>**

- In 2012 remittances to Ghana totaled \$151 million and represented 0.4 percent of the country's \$40.7 billion GDP. Among the 15 countries in the RAD analysis, Ghana's economy was least dependent on remittances, as defined by share of GDP.
- The Ghanaian diaspora in the United States transferred about \$33 million in remittances to Ghana in 2012, making the U.S.-based population Ghana's largest source of remittances.
- The United States was the second most common global destination for international migrants from Ghana, behind Nigeria.

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6 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.

7 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 Ghanaian diaspora members are not included in this section due to data limitations.

8 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 Ghanaian Diaspora in the United States, 2009-13

	Ghanaian Diaspora in the United States*	Total U.S. Population
<b>Household Income</b>		
<b>Median household income</b>	\$44,000	\$50,000
Average household size	2.9	2.5
Share of households with high incomes (\$90,000+)	18%	25%
Share of households with very high incomes (\$140,000+)	5%	10%
<b>Employment</b>		
<b>Total population age 16 and older</b>	160,000	239,386,000
Share in the labor force	76%	64%
... that was employed	91%	91%
... that was in a professional occupation <sup>+</sup>	22%	31%
<b>Educational Attainment **</b>		
<b>Total population age 25 and older</b>	131,000	201,925,000
... with less than high school education	8%	13%
... with high school or some college education	62%	57%
... with a bachelor's degree	18%	20%
... with an advanced degree	12%	11%
<b>Population Characteristics by Generation</b>		
<b>First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Population</b>	235,000	73,140,000
<b>First-generation immigrant population***</b>	153,000	38,468,000
... that was working age (18-64)	88%	81%
... that entered the United States before 2000	44%	64%
... naturalized as U.S. citizens	40%	44%
<b>Second-generation population****</b>	82,000	34,672,000
... that was under age 18	83%	46%
... that was working age (18-64)	17%	43%
... with only one parent from Ghana	32%	

\* defined as all first and second generation

\*\* highest level reported

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

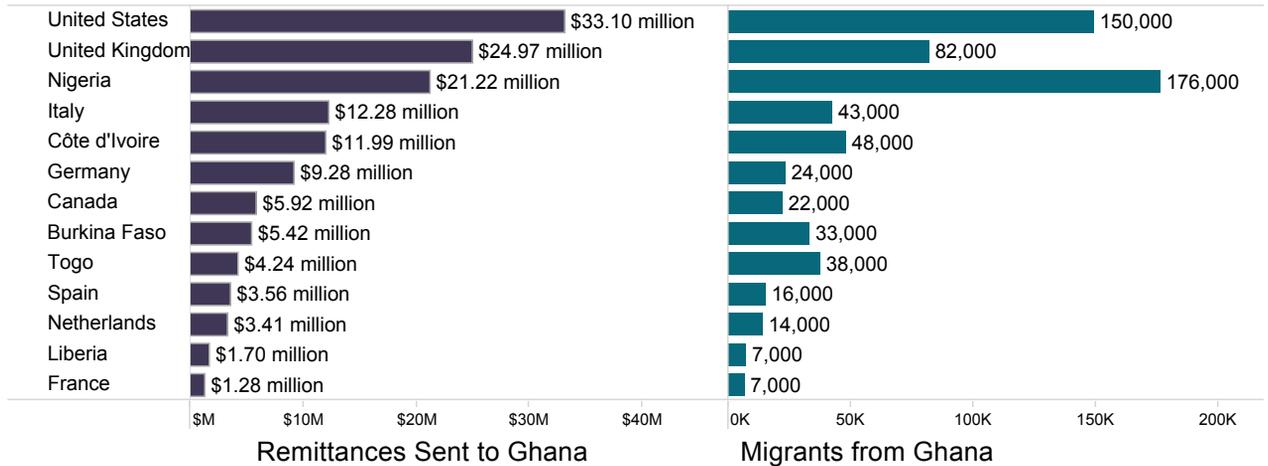
\*\*\*\* all individuals who report having at least one parent born in Ghana

+ 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.

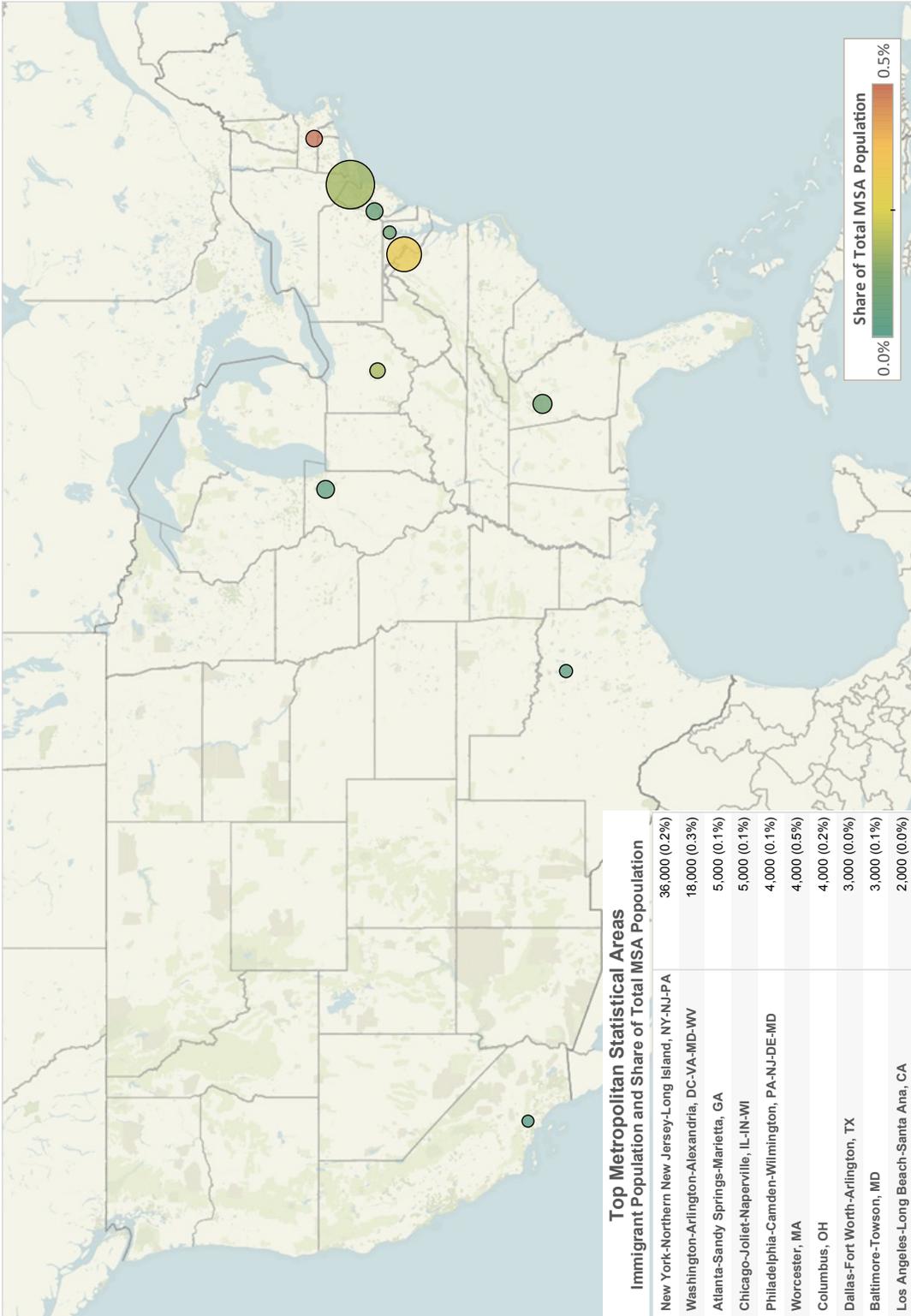
Source: All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis: University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

## Remittance Inflows to Ghana by Sending Country and the Ghanaian 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 Ghana**  
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.