
HEALTH EQUITY AND [AFRICAN] IMMIGRANTS

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OVERVIEW

- Discuss immigrants as an invisible and vulnerable social group.
- Share experiences in supporting African immigrants during COVID-19.
- Discuss public health strategies to address immigrant inequities.



46.2 million

(13.9% of the total population)

Source: 2018-2022 5-year American Community Survey (ACS)



IMMIGRANT CULTURE

Immigrants from different countries and cultures of origin experience commonalities:

- in their journeys of migrating
- challenges with “becoming American”
- maintaining links to home country
- relationship and interaction with government institutions

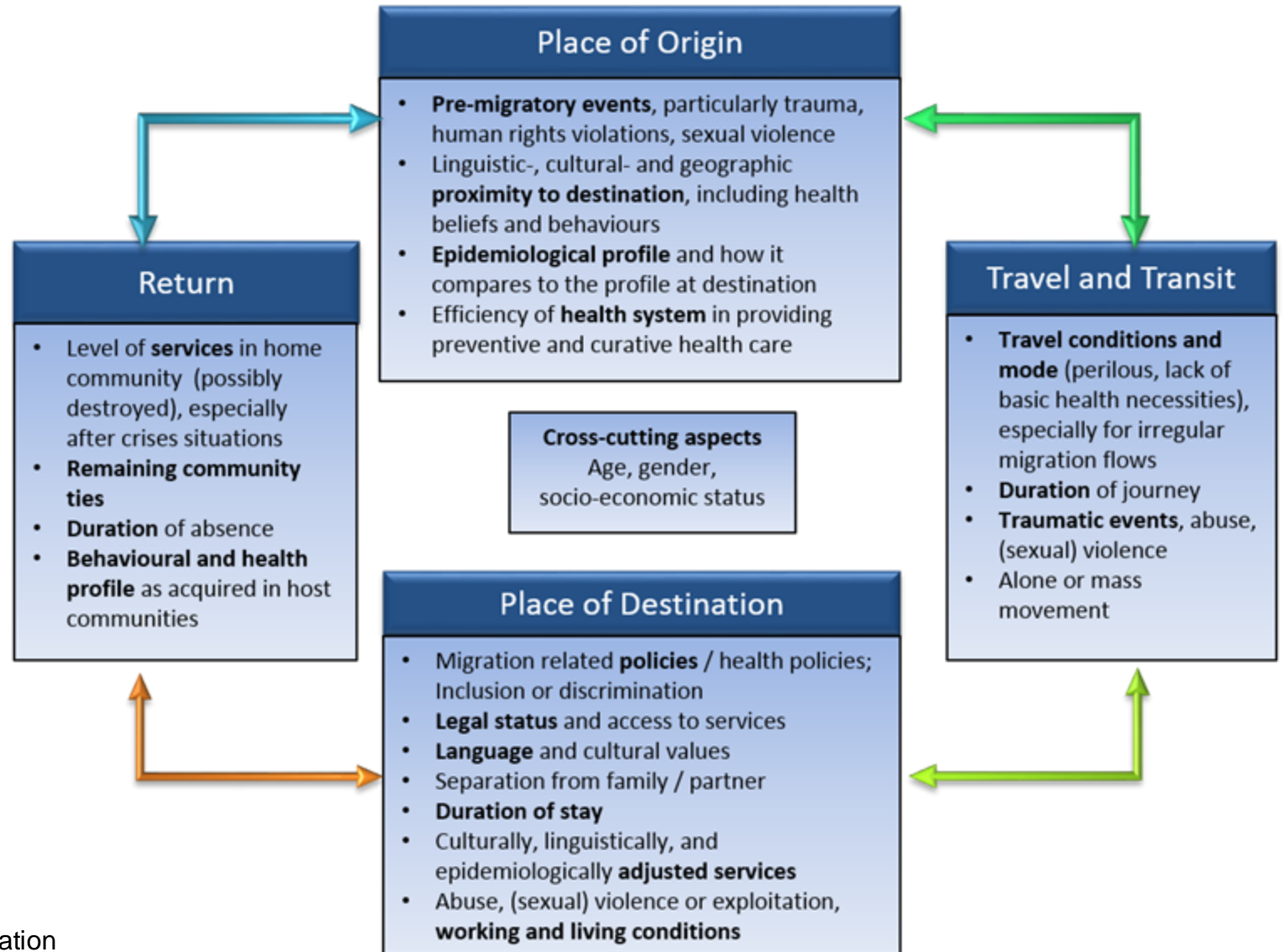
IMMIGRATION

AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

Immigration is “both
socially determined and a
social determinant of
health.”

Source: Castañeda H1, Holmes SM, Madrigal DS, Young ME, Beyeler N, Quesada J. (2015). Immigration as a social determinant of health. Annu Rev Public Health; 36:375-92. doi: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182419. Epub 2014 Dec 10.

THE MIGRATION PROCESS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES



IMPACT OF “IMMIGRATION” ON HEALTH

- Fear of discovery by immigration authorities
- Difficulty obtaining health insurance
- Belief that undocumented immigrants are ineligible for any health services
- Testing positive for stigmatized diseases impacts social and economic support
- Changing immigration policies – i.e. asylum, DED
- Criminalization of Black and Latinx immigrants – i.e. crossing the border, public charge rule
- (perceived) Ineligibility for housing, food and other benefits

IMPACT OF INTERSECTING SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND OPPRESSIONS

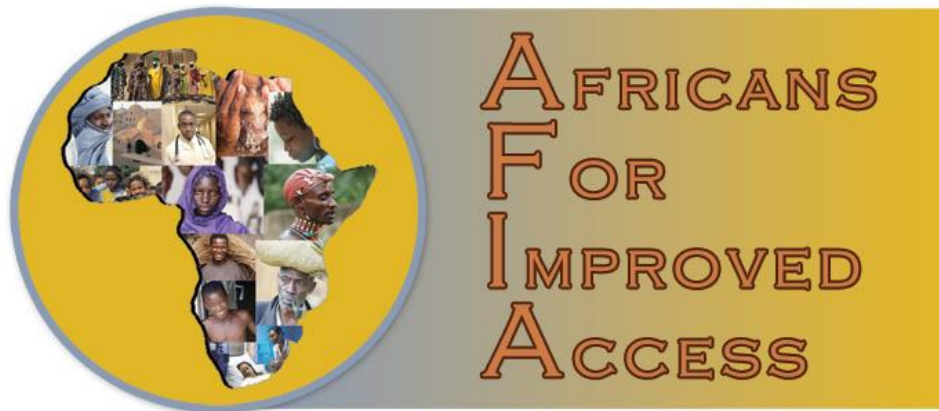
Social Identity Categories	Societal Oppressions	Marginalized Identity	Intersectional Impact
Race	Anti-Black Racism	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma • State-sanctioned violence • Targeted racialized criminalization • Economic instability • Linguistic discordance • Denied or limited health coverage • Lack of access to health resources
Nativity	Nativism, Xenophobia	Foreign-born	
Immigration Status	Nativism, Xenophobia	Undocumented, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Asylee, Non-Immigrant Visa or Refugee	
Ethnicity	Ethnocentrism	African country of origin	
Language	Language Oppression	African languages, dialects and accents	

Nnaji C, Ojikutu B. Intersecting stigmas: being black african, immigrant, and living with HIV in the united states. Am J Public Health. 2022;112(S3):e1–e4.

MULTICULTURAL AIDS COALITION



Formed in 1999, AFIA started as a community coalition, then quickly evolved into an HIV direct care service provider operating under the MAC. 20+ history of providing HIV/STI services to African immigrants and other Black immigrants in Massachusetts.



POSITIONING AND CAPACITY OF MAC

Long standing, state and federally funded grassroots organization

- Ongoing street outreach
- Onsite integrated HIV/STD testing
- Navigation support

Deeply rooted in communities most vulnerable to HIV and COVID-19

- Prevention and care programs started by community members
- Staff reflect and live in the communities we serve

AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS AND COVID 19

- work in high-contact jobs as essential or frontline workers
- higher death rates from COVID-19
- digital literacy challenges for scheduling appointments and understanding requirements for services
- fears related to immigration status led to reluctance to access COVID-19 services
- information and services not provided in diverse African dialects
- information not disseminated by trusted sources

COVID 19 EPIDEMIC: POSITIONING AND CAPACITY OF MAC

Long standing, state and federally funded grassroots organization

- Distributed PPEs
- Integrated COVID-19 testing and vaccinations
- Referred to clinical sites

Deeply rooted in communities most vulnerable to HIV and COVID-19

- Granting writing support
- Pass thru for PPEs
- Connector to resources and relationships
- Served as fiscal conduit to smaller CBOs



OUR VISION

A **thriving** African community **united** to celebrate **culture** and promote **civic engagement** to advance the lives of Africans in the **Commonwealth**.



COVID-19 RELIEF

- COMMUNITY VOICE VIDEOS ON COVID-19
- PPE SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED
- PEOPLE RECEIVED COVID-19 TESTING
- PEOPLE VACCINATED
- FAMILIES FROM 9 COMMUNITIES RECEIVED FOOD AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- STUDENTS AWARDED CHROME BOOKS

PARTNERSHIPS

- african organizations
- health care centers
- funders

MULTICULTURAL AIDS COALITION
 THE BOSTON FOUNDATION
 MASS REDISTRIBUTION FUND
 BLACK BOSTON COVID COALITION
 GUINEA CONAKRY UNITED MASSACHUSETTS
 LIBERIAN COMMUNITY OF METROPOLITAN BOSTON
 UGANDAN BOSTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
 MASSACHUSETTS SUDANESE COMMUNITY
 ASSOCIATION
 ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE TRINITY
 NIGERIAN AMERICAN MULTI-SERVICE ASSOCIATION

WHITTER STREET HEALTH CENTER
 HARVARD STREET NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH
 CENTER
 REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE
 CENTER
 GHANA ASSOCIATION OF GREATER BOSTON
 MALAWI ASSOCIATION
 GUINEAN ISLAMIC CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
 GGWANGA MUJJE BOSTON
 EQUITY NOW & BEYOND
 BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION





"Our heartfelt thanx for standing with me and my family and community at large during these trying times. When I received the COVID response kit/package, I felt not forgotten at a time when all are struggling...you care to look for us and advocate."

African Community Member
Waltham, MA

LESSONS LEARNED ON EQUITABLE STRATEGIES

- Collect, analyze and report data on non-US born populations
- Decentralized funding and restructure application criteria
- Leveraging the relationships and capacity of grassroots CBOs
- Build on informal communication and support networks
- Capacity building funding for immigrant-led grassroots agencies, including resettlement agencies

ADVOCACY for STRUCTURAL INTERVENTIONS and POLICY CHANGES

- Meaningful (representative) community engagement
- Integration of certified Community Health Workers (CHWs)
- Medical-Legal Partnerships
- State laws providing protection and pathways to citizenship to immigrants

National African Immigrant & Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Awareness Day (NAIRHHA Day)

September 9th

- **raise awareness** about HIV/AIDS and viral Hepatitis to eliminate stigma
- **learn** about ways to protect against HIV, viral Hepatitis and other related diseases
- **take control** by encouraging screenings and treatment, including viral Hepatitis vaccination
- **get involved** by advocating for policies and practices that promote healthy African immigrant families, communities and individuals

**"HIV and HepB among African immigrants in the US is a "hidden epidemic". Join us!
Educate others. Take action.**



<https://www.facebook.com/NAIRHHA>



@NAIRHHADay



Africanizing the Research Paradigm

A convening for African community leaders, grassroots organizations, researchers, social service and clinical providers, government officials, students, faith-based organizations, policymakers, and others who are interested in African immigrant health.



Hilton Boston Park Plaza
50 Park Plaza
Boston, Massachusetts, 02116



July 2024 **30th and 31st**

THANK YOU

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