The Future of Immigration
Four Paths

Immigration reaches deep into who we are as a society. It cuts across legal frameworks, policies, and strategies. It shapes stories of cultural identity and material survival. It connects...and is expressed by global and local contexts. And it shapes attitudes...and is distinct in different regional and urban landscapes.

In the future of American immigration, there is no single story to be told. Pathways to America are shifting toward new narratives. Immigration comes through new technology, demographics, media, culture, and climate. Indeed, the climate change will shape the experience of immigration and refugees...and the way we think about it. The future of immigration is not just about the number of people who will come to America. It is about the pathways...and the impact on our communities.

We want your labor, but not your bodies.

How to shape future experiences of immigration

This map is a conversation starter. It launches the discussion with four stories: four possible pathways to immigration for the coming decades. Here are some ways to continue the conversation with people at work, home, and in your community.

1. How to shape future experiences of immigration

2. How to shape future experiences of immigration

3. How to shape future experiences of immigration

4. How to shape future experiences of immigration

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Immigrants welcome here

We won't be replaced

We will not be replaced

We want your labor, but not your bodies.

The world finds itself at a critical moment in the history of human migration

Today, the world finds itself at a critical moment in the history of human migration.

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Beyond the core drivers (economic growth/stagnation, immigrants will make us stronger/weaker) that define the four-square scenario map, several other forces are set to shape immigration in the coming decade. These drivers play out differently in each of the four scenarios. Here, however, are baseline forecasts:

**CLIMATE CHANGE**
According to The World Bank, by 2050, climate change could push as many as 120 million people to migrate locally or between countries in the most at-risk regions of the world: Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. In 2017, an estimated 22–24 million people in these regions were forced to move by “sudden-onset” weather events, according to the Brookings Institution. In response to either chronic environmental degradation or repeated sudden disasters, labor migration (working in one country while sending money home to family in another) and distress migration (escaping to temporary camps) will both increase.

**POLITICAL ECONOMY**
Over the past few decades, a vastly more interconnected global economy has created relatively stable growth built on the so-called post-WWII political consensus. Today, however, this vision of a world of autonomous nations working together to manage a global political economy based on a free market has begun to fray under the pressures of growing wealth inequality, a slowdown in global economic growth, the rise of online disinformation, and a need for a new global energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, plutocratic governments undermine democratic institutions, fueled by globally connected networks of crime and corruption. The result is greater political and economic volatility, with more populations at risk of economic and political displacement.

**DEMographics**
U.S. immigration has been growing since 1970. Currently, immigrants and their U.S.-born children number nearly 90 million, or about 28% of the American population. In California—a state with a leading role to play in immigration—1 in 2 children has at least one immigrant parent. Nationwide, 1 in 4 workers is an immigrant, and nearly one-third of these immigrants are employed in management and professional occupations. The rest work across service jobs (16.6%), sales and office jobs (11.2%), resource and construction jobs (22.8%), and production and transportation jobs (19.8%). Meanwhile, the native-born population is also shifting in age and ethnic composition. One in 5 Americans will be over 65 in 2030, and millennials will take over as the largest single age cohort by 2020. The number of non-Hispanic whites will continue to decrease every year, reaching a plurality (but not a majority) by 2043—all while conventional categories for race, ethnicity, and gender undergo rapid redefinition, with so-called “spectrum identities” likely to supplant these categories over the coming decades.

**TechnoLogy**
Robotics and artificial intelligence dominate the forecasts for technology, with anticipated large-scale disruptions in everything from labor to security and surveillance. But demands for a new energy infrastructure will also likely drive new kinds of green jobs alongside a growing demand for a disaster-relief workforce. In addition, biotechnologies hover on the horizon, ready to reorganize food production (think lab-grown meat) while dispelling many of the long-standing beliefs about race and ethnicity. Looking further out, biotechnologies will yield more powerful tools to “engineer” biological entities, including humans, for desired traits.

**Media & Culture**
Twentieth-century media—from books to newspapers to broadcast and cable news—have undergone profound changes in response to user-generated content and its automatic aggregation. This fragmentation of the media landscape sets the conditions for the proliferation of new forms of digital propaganda and manipulation techniques, with experiments in AI-generated personas creating a next-generation wave of news bots (software that can mimic human actions online) and “deep fakes.” These have become political tools for undermining the legitimacy of nearly every institution and will continue to evolve as user-generated AI becomes mainstream over the next decade.
CLIMATE CHANGE

Asylum for climate refugees

The impacts of climate change enable illegal immigration by making the homes of people in poor countries unlivable. Some see the country as a haven for individuals whose lives are threatened by climate change. Meanwhile, the country is aging, and immigrants are the inconvenient solution. In 2030, a strong campaign has been launched to replace low-skilled workers with immigrants. The government enacts strict immigration policies to limit low-skilled immigration. But even though the door is open, immigrants are not actually welcome. The older population wants workers to fill the demand for low-wage caregiving jobs, while the younger generation demands less immigration. The Trump administration takes aim at all non-white immigrants. The media amplifies the panic around immigration, and the population is more divided than ever. Meanwhile, immigration reforms redirect ICE to enforce the rule of law and support ICE agents in their efforts to deport unauthorized immigrants. The country is divided over the issue of immigration.

We will not be replaced

ECONOMIC COMPETITION

American jobs for American citizens

The US economy is on the rise, and the demand for skilled workers is high. The government enacts policies to protect low-wage workers, and immigrants are replaced by skilled workers. The government enacts strict immigration policies to limit skilled immigration. The Trump administration takes aim at all non-white immigrants. But even though the door is open, immigrants are not actually welcome. The older population wants workers to fill the demand for low-wage caregiving jobs, while the younger generation demands less immigration. The media amplifies the panic around immigration, and the population is more divided than ever. Meanwhile, immigration reforms redirect ICE to enforce the rule of law and support ICE agents in their efforts to deport unauthorized immigrants. The country is divided over the issue of immigration.

GENETIC RIGHTS

DNA immigration quotas

White supremacists argue that the best way to prevent climate change is to limit immigration. DNA immigration quotas are imposed to prevent the entry of immigrants who are deemed to have harmful genetic traits. The government enacts strict immigration policies to limit immigration. But even though the door is open, immigrants are not actually welcome. The older population wants workers to fill the demand for low-wage caregiving jobs, while the younger generation demands less immigration. The media amplifies the panic around immigration, and the population is more divided than ever. Meanwhile, immigration reforms redirect ICE to enforce the rule of law and support ICE agents in their efforts to deport unauthorized immigrants. The country is divided over the issue of immigration.

Refugee camps

The reality of carbon collapse hits hard. Restructuring the fossil-based economy creates large-scale distress migration. The world is asked to take in millions of climate refugees. The government enacts strong policies to protect personal freedom. The media amplifies the panic around immigration, and the population is more divided than ever. Meanwhile, immigration reforms redirect ICE to enforce the rule of law and support ICE agents in their efforts to deport unauthorized immigrants. The country is divided over the issue of immigration.

DIGITAL TASKS

Immigration maps and media

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In algorithms we trust

EFFECTIVE TAX RATE

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We will not be replaced
Making the white supremacist agenda a reality

Immigrants make us weaker in a world of economic stagnation

We are a statistical summary of American immigration today

As a strong but unequal economy continues, Americans now face the realities of economic stagnation. While the number of immigrants has grown steeply in the past decade—making them the greatest source of global inequality and a detriment to economic prosperity—Americans now face the challenge of addressing intersecting issues of race, gender, and poverty.

Amid the rise of facism and the entrenchment of populist policies, immigration is the most powerful tool for creating social and economic equality in the U.S. A strong but unequal economy continues to shape immigration policy. The Ministry for Immigration and Naturalization should ensure that immigration policies and laws are uniform.

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