



 RESEARCH BRIEF

# The American Diaspora: A New Era of Emigration

Trends, Insights, and Emerging Pathways to Global Citizenship and Residency

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# Table of contents

1. Introduction: The Exit Imperative
2. Historical Perspectives on American Emigration
3. Contemporary Patterns in Global Mobility
4. Expanding Opportunities Through Ancestry-Based Citizenship
5. Future Directions: Navigating Emerging Trends

Conclusion: Expanding Horizons through Global Mobility

Appendices

- Sources
- Visualizations

# 01. Introduction

## The Exit Imperative

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The United States has long been known as a nation of immigrants, but today, more Americans than ever want to move abroad. Whether for better job opportunities, a lower cost of living, or a sense of adventure, this growing interest reflects a desire for new possibilities beyond U.S. borders. According to a 2024 Monmouth University poll, over one-third of Americans would like to settle abroad, a sharp increase compared to previous decades [1].

Figure 1

### American Diaspora Overview



Source: [https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_us\\_032624/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_032624/)

The rising interest in emigration reflects a fundamental principle: having the freedom to leave empowers people to pursue better opportunities. As technology investor Balaji Srinivasan argues, the option to "exit" - whether from a country, job, or situation - gives individuals more power to improve their circumstances [5]. For many Americans, this means pursuing paths that allow them to improve their quality of life, reconnect with family roots, or access global resources like healthcare and education.

This research brief examines how Americans have historically migrated, what patterns are emerging today, and where future opportunities lie. It also explores how underused pathways, such as citizenship by descent, hold untapped potential for millions of Americans seeking more opportunities abroad.

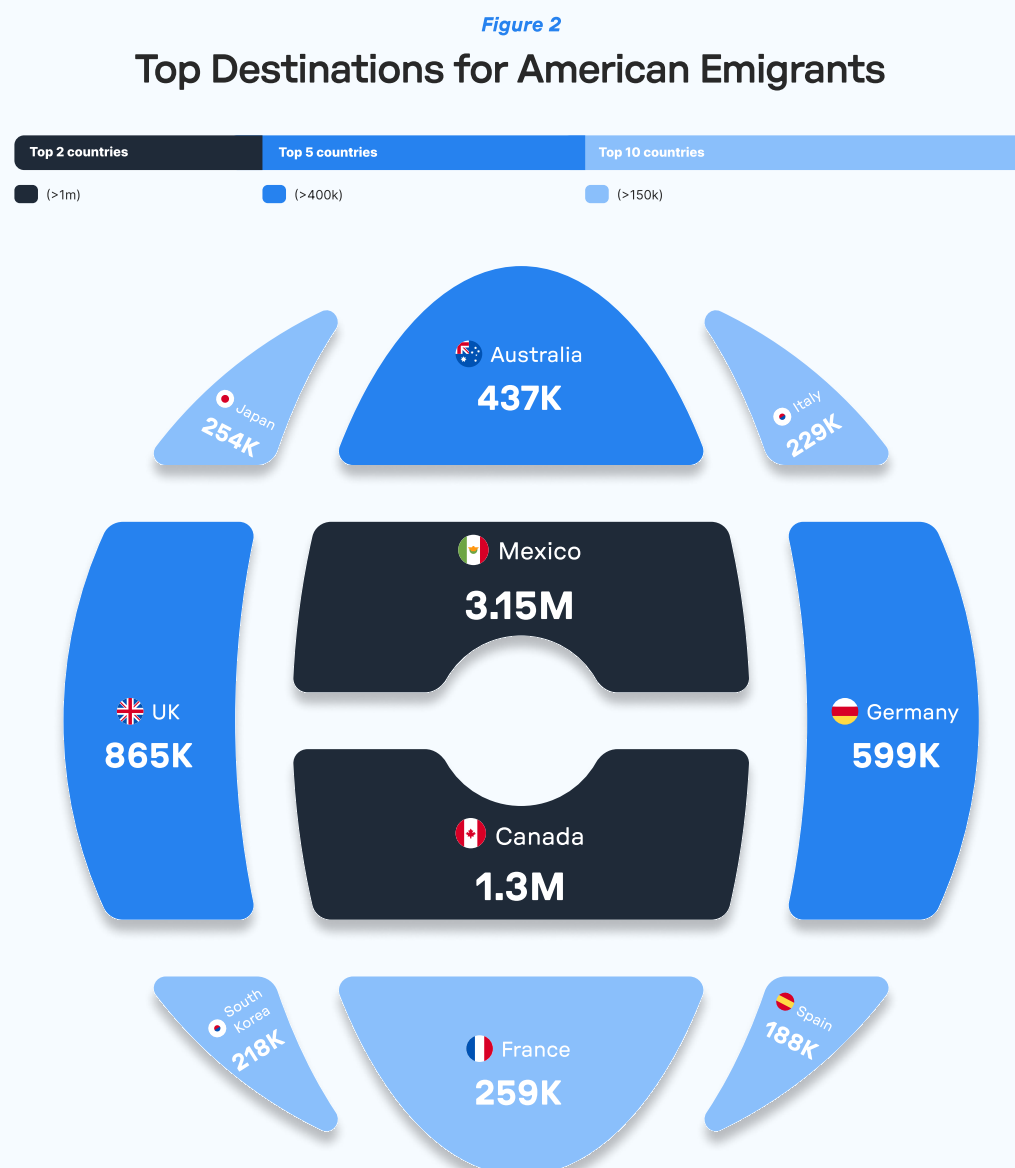
# 02. History

## Historical Perspectives on American Emigration

Emigration has often taken a backseat in discussions about the United States' demographic identity. While the country is widely celebrated as a destination for immigrants, it has a lesser-known history of outward migration. Between 2000 and 2020, millions of Americans chose to move abroad, seeking opportunities and stability in other countries. This decade provides valuable insights into the drivers of emigration and the countries that historically attracted American citizens.

### Top Destinations Historically

Data from the United Nations (UN) reveals the most popular destinations for American emigrants during the past 20 Years [2].



Source: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

## Key Drivers of Emigration

The movement of Americans can be attributed to a combination of economic, social, and political factors:

### Economic Integration

The 1990s saw significant trade agreements, such as NAFTA - the North American Free Trade Agreement - which encouraged cross-border mobility. Mexico and Canada, as close neighbors, became logical choices for many Americans. Economic ties and shared industries foster easier transitions for emigrants.

### Political and Social Stability

Countries like Canada, the UK, and Australia offer a sense of predictability and safety. For many, these nations represent an escape from domestic uncertainties, including fluctuating economic conditions and political tensions in the U.S.

### Family Reunification

Proximity plays a significant role in driving emigration to Mexico and Canada. Many Americans move to reconnect with family members or to establish cross-border ties.

### Cultural Familiarity

Language, shared histories, and cultural connections make the UK, Canada, and Australia particularly appealing. These factors reduce the challenges of adjusting to life abroad, especially for first-time emigrants.

## Case Study: NAFTA and Cross-Border Migration

NAFTA, implemented in 1994, not only reshaped trade but also influenced migration patterns. While often discussed in the context of Mexican workers moving to the U.S., the agreement also enabled greater movement of Americans into Mexico and Canada. For example, professionals in industries such as agriculture, energy, and manufacturing relocated to take advantage of cross-border economic opportunities.

# 03. Contemporary

## Contemporary Patterns in Global Mobility

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As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, American emigration patterns have evolved significantly in the 21st century. The modern emigrant is no longer limited to traditional career opportunities or family reunification as primary motivations. Instead, emerging drivers such as the rise of digital nomadism, cost-of-living differences, and global accessibility through technology have redefined mobility.

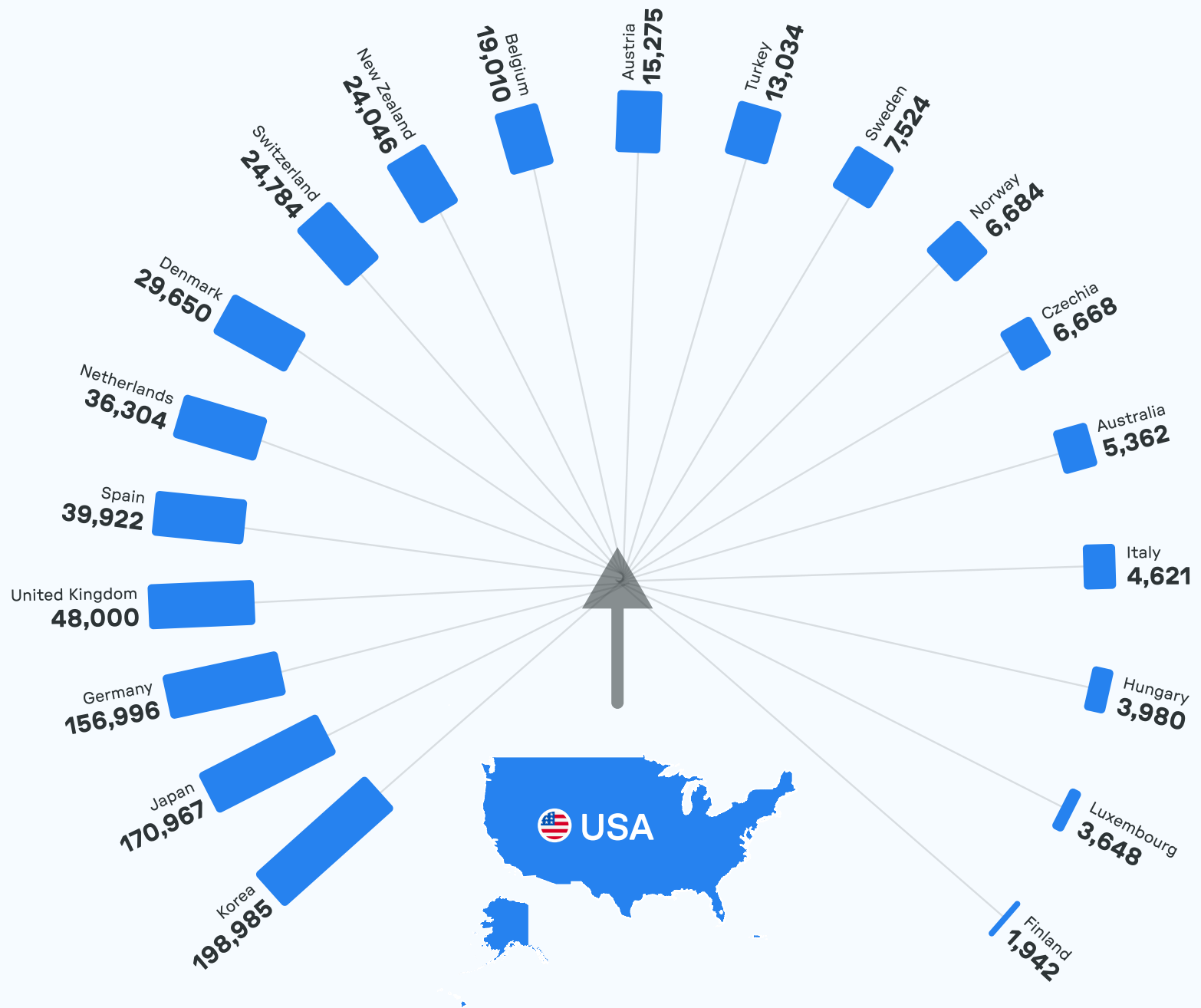
### Top and Growing Destinations

The OECD highlights several countries that have seen substantial increases in American emigrants over the past decade [3]:

- **South Korea:** Over 200,000 Americans relocated between 2012 and 2021, drawn by opportunities in education, technology, and cultural exchange. South Korea's robust economy and widespread English-language programs make it an attractive destination for young professionals and educators.
- **Germany:** Hosting 157,000 U.S. emigrants, Germany continues to attract Americans with its strong economy, affordable education, and central location within Europe. Germany's focus on sustainability and engineering makes it a top choice for those in STEM fields.
- **United Kingdom:** Approximately 150,000 Americans moved to the UK, leveraging career opportunities in finance, technology, and education. Long-standing cultural and linguistic ties further ease the transition for many.
- **Japan:** With 135,000 emigrants, Japan has become a destination for professionals in technology, business, and teaching. Japan's unique blend of cultural heritage and innovation attracts Americans seeking an immersive global experience.
- **Portugal:** Portugal has emerged as a hotspot for digital nomads and retirees, welcoming 120,000 Americans during this period. With its affordable cost of living, high quality of life, and programs like the D7 Visa, Portugal is rapidly becoming a preferred destination.

Figure 3

### American Emigration from 2012 - 2021



Source: <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-databases-on-migration.html>

## Emerging Themes

### The Rise of Digital Nomadism

Remote work has revolutionized global mobility, enabling Americans to live abroad while maintaining employment in the U.S. Countries like Portugal, Estonia, and Croatia have capitalized on this trend by introducing digital nomad visas, which provide legal frameworks for remote workers.

### Cost-of-Living Arbitrage

Many Americans are relocating to countries where their income stretches further. Regions like Southeast Asia (Thailand, Vietnam) and Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain) offer lower living costs, high-quality healthcare, and a vibrant cultural scene [4].

### **Cultural Exploration and Connection**

Increasingly, Americans are driven by a desire to immerse themselves in new cultures. Countries like Japan and South Korea attract individuals seeking unique lifestyles and opportunities to experience world-renowned cuisines, traditions, and technological advancements.

### **Heritage Pathways**

Citizenship by descent has become a growing pathway for Americans seeking long-term global mobility. Countries such as Italy, Ireland, and Poland allow descendants of emigrants to reclaim citizenship, enabling access to European Union benefits.

### **Case Study: Digital Nomad Success in Portugal**

Mark Davies's journey exemplifies how regional advantages can align with individual goals to create a transformative emigration experience. Attracted by Portugal's affordability, quality of life, and digital nomad-friendly policies, Mark leveraged the D7 Visa to relocate from Austin, Texas, to Lisbon. According to Numbeo statistics, this move allowed him to cut living expenses by almost 30% [4].



# 04. Opportunities

## Expanding Opportunities Through Ancestry-Based Citizenship

Ancestry-based citizenship represents one of the most significant yet underutilized pathways for Americans seeking long-term global mobility. Millions of U.S. citizens are eligible for dual citizenship through heritage connections, particularly in European Union (EU) countries.

Figure 4

### EU Citizenship by Descent - Eligibility vs. Applications

#	EU COUNTRIES WITH ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP BY DESCENT PROGRAMS	% OF POPULATION	TOTAL U.S. POPULATION	GLOBAL MOBILITY ASSET TICKER	TOTAL ADDRESSABLE MARKET (US. ONLY)	VS.	2002 - 2021 (TOTALS)	2021 # OF U.S. CITIZENS OBTAINED CITIZENSHIP (ACTUAL)
1	 Germany	12.31%	41,137,233	DE-CBD	2,056,862	VS.	2,741	215
2	 Ireland	9.65%	32,253,567	IE -CBD	8,063,392	VS.	2,120	199
3	 Italy	5.07%	16,945,656	IT -CBD	4,236,414	VS.	2,955	400
4	 Poland	2.74%	9,158,008	PL -CBD	2,289,502	VS.	22	22
5	 Spain	0.75%	2,500,000	ES-CBD	625,000	VS.	310	310
6	 Portugal	0.42%	1,403,782	PT -CBD	350,946	VS.	382	63
7	 Hungary	0.41%	1,370,359	HU -CBD	342,590	VS.	172	18
8	 Czechia	0.41%	1,370,359	CZ-CBD	342,590	VS.	183	33
9	 Greece	0.38%	1,270,089	GR -CBD	317,522	VS.	605	51
10	 Slovakia	0.39%	1,303,512	SK -CBD	325,878	VS.	209	21
11	 Croatia	0.12%	401,081	HR -CBD	100,270	VS.	114	3
		<b>32.65%</b>	<b>334,233,854</b>		<b>67,976,412</b>			<b>1,335</b>

Source: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/german-american-day.html>

Figure 5



Source: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/german-american-day.html>

## Untapped Potential

Data shows that an estimated 17 million Americans are eligible for EU citizenship through descent, yet fewer than 1,000 applications are approved annually. Countries like Ireland, Italy, and Poland top the list of opportunities for ancestry-based citizenship, with significant portions of the U.S. population qualifying due to historical immigration waves [5].

## Barriers to Uptake

### Documentation Complexity

Successful applications often hinge on obtaining and authenticating historical documents such as birth, marriage, and naturalization records. For many, this process requires navigating multiple jurisdictions and languages.

### Lack of Awareness

Many Americans remain unaware of their eligibility for citizenship by descent, and those who are may not fully understand the benefits, such as access to healthcare, education, and employment in the EU.

### Administrative Inefficiencies

Long processing times and inconsistent requirements across countries deter potential applicants. Streamlining these processes could unlock significant growth in applications.

## Case Study: Citizenship by Descent in Italy

The Anderson family from Chicago exemplifies the opportunities and challenges of ancestry-based citizenship. Motivated by their Italian great-grandfather's legacy, the family undertook an 18-month process to secure dual citizenship. Despite the hurdles of gathering decades-old documents and navigating Italy's bureaucratic system, they now enjoy the benefits of EU citizenship.

# 05. Future Directions

## Navigating Emerging Trends

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### Emerging Trends

#### Climate Resilience and Migration

As climate change intensifies, Americans are increasingly drawn to environmentally stable regions such as Canada, New Zealand, and parts of Northern Europe. These destinations offer not only safety from natural disasters but also robust policies on sustainability and disaster preparedness.

#### Virtual Mobility and Digital Pathways

Technological advancements, such as e-residency programs and blockchain-based citizenship, are redefining traditional notions of migration. Estonia's e-residency program allows individuals to access global economies without physically relocating [6].

#### Growth in Heritage Pathways

The rise in ancestry-based citizenship programs represents a significant avenue for future mobility. Projections suggest a continuing increase in applications as awareness grows and processes become more efficient. For example, American internet users have searched extensively for migration opportunities in Europe since the result of the US elections in 2024 was announced [7].

#### The Role of Remote Work

The ongoing expansion of remote work continues to lower barriers to relocation. Digital nomad visas are expected to proliferate, creating a competitive landscape among countries vying for mobile professionals.

### Opportunities for Policy and Practice

Governments and service providers have opportunities to adapt to these trends by:

- Enhancing visa programs
- Investing in technology
- Fostering global citizenship
- Streamlining application processes

# Conclusion

## Expanding Horizons through Global Mobility

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The American Diaspora is not just a trend but a reflection of a deeper shift in how Americans view their place in the world. From historical migration patterns shaped by regional proximity and economic ties, to contemporary movements driven by digital nomadism and ancestry-based opportunities, the motivations for emigration are evolving.

Today's mobility landscape offers an unprecedented array of opportunities for Americans. These pathways empower individuals to redefine what it means to live and work globally. By embracing these mobility assets, Americans can unlock access to global healthcare systems, world-class education, sustainable lifestyles, and economic resilience.

## About the Author



X @merchantofmobility

Rogelio Caceres, a four-time serial entrepreneur and first-generation American immigrant, brings two decades of experience in technology and global mobility to his role as Co-Founder and CEO of GlobalPassport. As co-founder of LCR Capital Partners, he pioneered new markets for the EB-5 immigrant investor program, raising \$190 million across 30+ countries, while leading successful ventures including Docurated (acquired by Quark Software) and Frontier Strategy Group (merged with Fiscal Note). A Harvard Business School graduate and father of three, Caceres combines his immigrant journey with his proven track record to lead GlobalPassport's mission of democratizing access to global citizenship.

## About GlobalPassport™



X @globalpass\_AI

GlobalPassport™ is pioneering the world's first comprehensive operating system for global citizenship, helping forward-thinking individuals secure residency and citizenship rights in over 70 countries worldwide. Built by first-generation US immigrants and powered by a globally distributed team across 10 countries and five continents, GlobalPassport™ automates and simplifies the traditionally complex process of obtaining dual citizenship and international residency privileges through its innovative technology platform. The company's mission to democratize access to global citizenship rights arrives at a crucial moment when a record 21% of Americans are seeking to permanently relocate overseas. Through a combination of AI-powered tools, streamlined document management, and a marketplace of vetted local providers, GlobalPassport™ is transforming global mobility from a luxury into an accessible asset for everyone.

### GlobalPassport™

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# Appendices

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## Sources

[1] [https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_us\\_032624/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_032624/)

[2] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

[3] <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-databases-on-migration.html>

[4] <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/>

[5] [https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_us\\_032624/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_032624/)

[6] Balaji Srinivasan's Silicon Valley Exit Speech: <https://genius.com/Balaji-srinivasan-silicon-valleys-ultimate-exit-annotated>

[7] <https://schengen.news/trumps-victory-triggers-surge-in-americans-eyeing-european-relocation-with-germany-ireland-leading-the-list>

## Visualizations

- Figure 1: Interest vs. Reality in American Emigration
- Figure 2: Top Destinations for American Emigrants
- Figure 3: American Emigration from 2012 - 2021
- Figure 4: EU Citizenship by Descent - Eligibility vs. Applications
- Figure 5: EU Citizenship by Descent - Eligibility vs. Applications (2)