

### Immigration Landscape Today with Michelle S. Dromgold-Sermen, PhD

Question: In your opinion, what specific immigration policy changes are needed to meet contemporary issues?

Michelle Dromgold-Sermen, PhD: In my opinion, there need to be more legal pathways for people to come to the United States for temporary or permanent stays. The main pathways to immigrate (and stay permanently) are through family ties or through employment. However, there are caps on immigration through these categories, based on relationships (for family) and employment/skill-level as well as caps for each country. This means that people coming from countries with larger populations (e.g. India and China) or countries with stronger co-ethnic ties to the United States (e.g. Mexico) must often wait years/decades for a green card to become available to them. Because there are no legal pathways to immigrate, this increases people's willingness to take unauthorized and/or more dangerous pathways to come to the United States. The waiting times for green cards are updated monthly in a Department of State Visa bulletin: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-bulletin/2024/visa-bulletin-for-june-2024.html>

Question: Michelle, in your opinion should more people seeking asylum from Central America be re-classified as refugees?

Michelle Dromgold-Sermen, PhD: If Central Americans are arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, then they would still be classified as asylum seekers. It would take big legal/processing changes to re-classify them as refugees. One accommodation that could be important would be to adjust /expand the legal rights that asylum seekers have while they are waiting for their cases to be determined in immigration court. Another strategy used for Central Americans is to provide them additional legal rights and protections under temporary protected status (TPS): <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

Question: What is the definition of an Asylum Seeker?

Michelle Dromgold-Sermen, PhD: The legal/official definition is quite long and different at the U.S. or international context; I like to use this definition for asylum seekers in the U.S. context: "A person who

moves across international borders in search of protection, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been decided.”