# New Americans in the Grand Forks Region
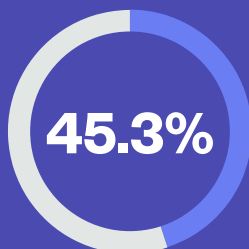
A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants and Refugees[1] in the Region[2]

**GATEWAYS** *for* **GROWTH**

CITY OF **GRAND FORKS** · A PLACE OF EXCELLENCE ·

New American Economy | State & Local

## POPULATION GROWTH

**8,781**

Number of immigrants living in the Grand Forks region in 2015. They made up **3.5%** of the overall population.

**45.3%**

Share of the region's immigrants who lived in the Grand Forks metro area in 2015.[3]

Between 2010 and 2015, the population in the region grew 2.0%.

### The immigrant population increased 27.6%.

**Total population**
248,077 → **253,113**

⬡ **2.0%**

**Immigrant population**
6,881 → **8,781**

**27.6%**

In 2015, **122,737** people worked in the region, either commuting in or commuting within the region.

Of these, **3.7%**, or **4,579**, were foreign-born workers.

**37.7%**

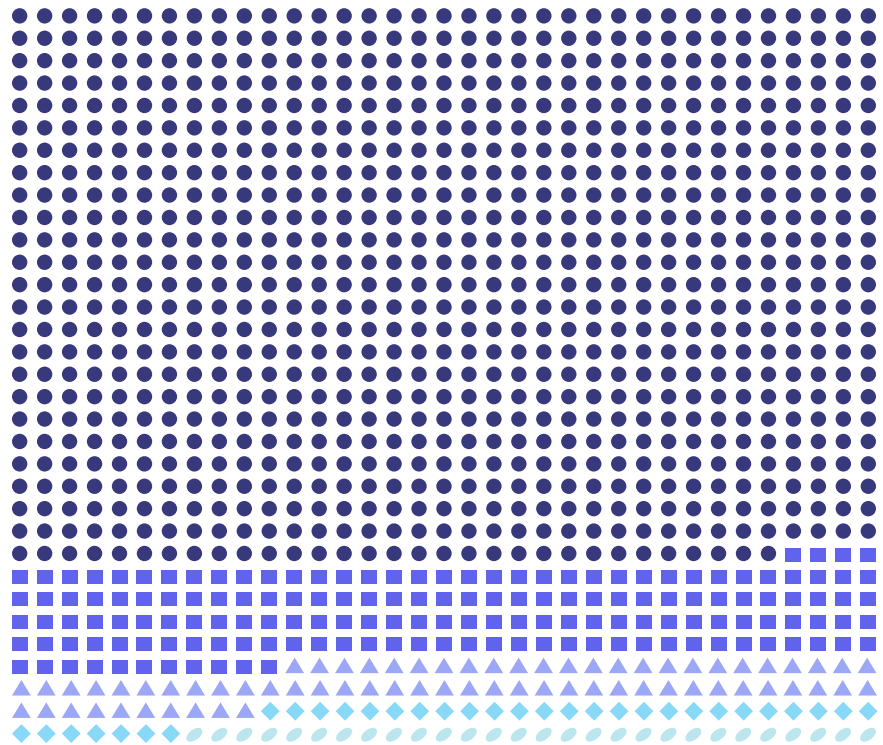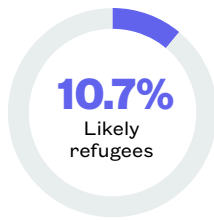Share of overall population growth in the region attributed to immigrants.

Top five countries of origin for immigrants living in the region:

1. Canada . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .15.2%
2. Mexico . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .10.7%
3. Philippines . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7.1%
4. Iraq. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6.1%
5. China . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4.9%

Canada **15.2%**

Other countries of origin **56.0%**
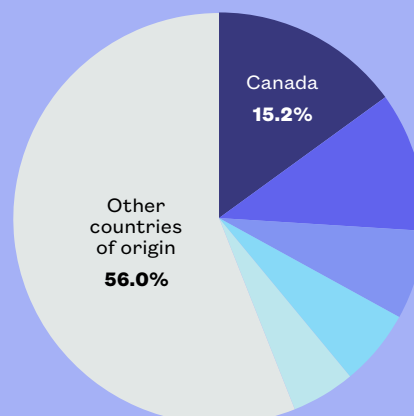
## REFUGEES

In 2015, **10.7%** of the immigrant population in the region were likely refugees.[4]

**10.7%**
Likely refugees

## Top Five Nationalities

for refugees resettled in the City of Grand Forks between 2002 and 2015:[5]

- ● Bhutan . . . . . . . . . . . . . .571
- ■ Somalia. . . . . . . . . . . . .155
- ▲ Iraq . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 69
- ◆ Liberia . . . . . . . . . . . . . .32
- ◗ Burundi . . . . . . . . . . . . .28



## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2015, foreign-born residents contributed **$353.7M** to the GDP of Grand Forks region.[6]

Given their income, immigrants contributed significantly to state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state or municipal governments.

Amount earned by immigrant households in 2015:
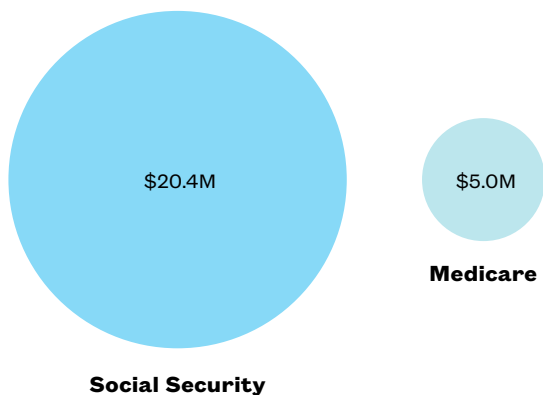
$177.7M

$50.1M went to federal taxes.[7]

$14.4M went to state and local taxes.[8]

Leaving them with

$113.3M

in spending power.[9]

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS CONT.

Immigrants in the Grand Forks region also support federal social programs. In 2015, they contributed **$20.4M** to Social Security and **$5M** to Medicare.

$20.4M

$5.0M

**Medicare**

**Social Security**

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**24.6%** of immigrants in the region received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **27.9%** of the U.S.-born residents.

Immigrants

**24.6%**

U.S.-born

**27.9%**

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About **67.5%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **25.3%** had public healthcare coverage.

Private

Public

Other

# Mon Bista

## Registered Nurse

**M**on Bista was 11 years old when his family began life in a refugee camp. Victims of an ethnic cleansing campaign in Bhutan, they were among 120,000 refugees temporarily housed across eastern Nepal. Their hut, made of bamboo rods and plastic sheets, yielded easily to rain, wind, and falling trees. Outside the hut, snakes and elephants posed a constant threat. Outside the camp did not exist for them; they were not allowed to leave. "As a refugee, you have no rights except food, water, and shelter," says Bista. "It was a very terrible life."

The family's wait for a new home country lasted 18 years. When Bista arrived in Grand Forks at age 29 with his wife and two daughters, he had little education and limited English. He knew, though, that America held opportunity, so he set forth on an ambitious plan to become a healthcare practitioner.

He began with English and high school equivalency courses. For work, he found a job cleaning a small motel at night. "I knew I had to start with whatever I can find," he says. When his English improved and he had local job references, he applied for work at Altru Hospital. "That was my happiest moment," he says, "to find a housekeeping job in the hospital."

From 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., Bista mopped floors and scrubbed down rooms. During the day, he took classes to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). Once licensed, he got a job at the hospital as a CNA, continued to work evenings, and took morning classes to become a licensed practical nurse (LPN). Once licensed, he got an evening job as an LPN, and took university courses to become a registered nurse.

Now, eight years after arriving in America and six years after starting at Altru, Bista is working as a registered nurse in the cardiology unit. With an earlier start, he admits he could have gone even further in his career. "If I would be in United States 15 years ago, I would go for medical school," he says. "Now I'm almost 40 years old."

"We'll see," he says.

## LABOR FORCE GROWTH

Although the foreign-born made up **3.5%** of the region's overall population, they represented **4.3%** of its working-age* population, **3.8%** of its employed labor force, and **4.8%** of STEM workers in 2015.
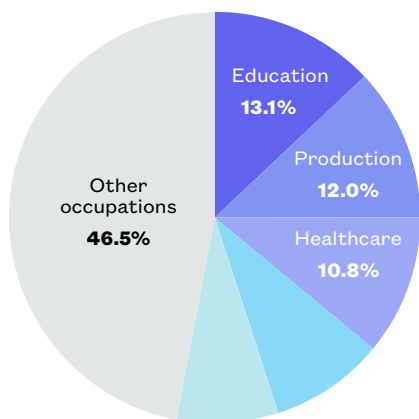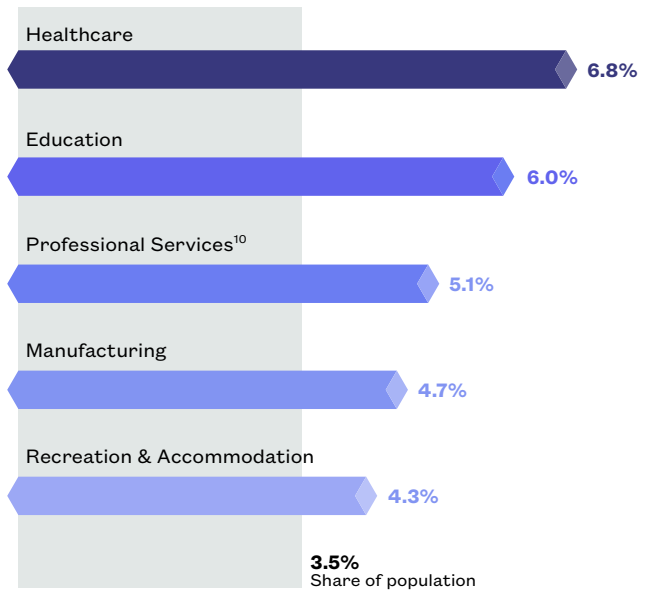
### Immigrant shares of the...

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 3.5% |
| Working-age population | 4.3% |
| Employed labor force | 3.8% |
| STEM workers | 4.8% |

\* Working-age refers to people ages 16-64 years old.

Immigrants tend to concentrate in these **occupations** in the region:

1. Education . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 13.1%
2. Production[11] . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .12.0%
3. Healthcare . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .10.8%
4. Sales . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 9.3%
5. Transportation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 8.3%

Education
13.1%

Production
12.0%

Healthcare
10.8%

Other occupations
46.5%

Immigrants play a critical role in several key industries in the region, making up significant shares of the workforce in 2015:

Healthcare 6.8%

Education 6.0%

Professional Services[10] 5.1%

Manufacturing 4.7%

Recreation & Accommodation 4.3%

**3.5%**
Share of population

Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that by 2015, immigrants living in the region helped create or preserve

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**local manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.[12]

# Badera Muhanna

## Teacher

**B**adera Muhanna grew up in Palestine. In 1995, she moved to an unlikely place, Fargo, North Dakota, although it was meant to be temporary. Her husband, also from Palestine, was completing a PhD in civil engineering at North Dakota State University.

Before even finishing his program, however, the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, offered him a professorship. "Before you know it, we have the children, we have citizenship," Muhanna says.

When the youngest of their four children entered preschool, Muhanna, who has a math education degree, decided to become certified to teach in North Dakota. During her field studies, she found herself moved by the young immigrant students. "Even the ones that weren't brand new, I felt they weren't engaged in the classroom because of the language barrier," she says. "I kept thinking, I have to do something about this." She immediately pursued a master's degree in English as a second language.

Now Muhanna teaches English Learners, or EL, at a Grand Forks elementary school. A magnet school, 102 of the 220 students are classified as EL. The majority are from refugee camps in Nepal, Bhutan and Somalia. Other EL students include immigrants from India, China, and other African countries. "Some refugees have never been in school," she says. "So we are also teaching them basic skills: how to follow the rules, how to walk in the hallways."

At the beginning of the school year—and later, if needed—Muhanna and her colleagues visit the new EL students' homes to help everyone adapt. "We want those families to trust us and feel this is a safe community," says Muhanna, who gives them her cell phone number. "One mom said, 'I forget all the troubles we've been through when you guys come visit, because this never happens.'"

Her work not only helps new arrivals become self-sufficient. It also makes the school a draw for American families, who appreciate the diversity. "Many families appreciate that their children have the opportunity to be in the classroom with children from so many countries," Muhanna says. "In fact, many of them don't even want to move."

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Immigrants represented **1.6%** of the entrepreneurs in the Grand Forks region in 2015.

Share of **foreign-born** who were self-employed in 2015: **4.5%**

Share of **U.S.-born** who were self-employed in 2015: **11.3%**
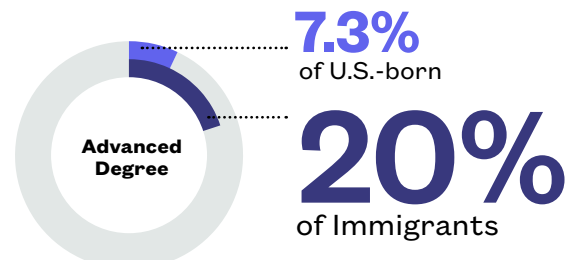
## EDUCATION

Immigrants were more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher in 2015.

Share of population over age 25 with a **bachelor's degree:**

**Bachelor's Degree**

**25.4%** of U.S.-born

**36.2%** of Immigrants
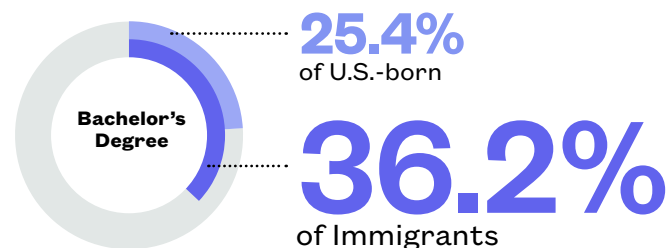
Share of population over age 25 with an **advanced degree:**

**Advanced Degree**

**7.3%** of U.S.-born

**20%** of Immigrants

## EDUCATION CONT.

**1,694** students who were enrolled in Grand Forks colleges and universities during the fall of 2015 were temporary residents.[13] They supported...

**343** local jobs...

And spent **$37.9M** in the 2016-17 academic year.[14]

Immigrants make up

**1.7%** of students under age 18 who attended public schools in the region in 2015.
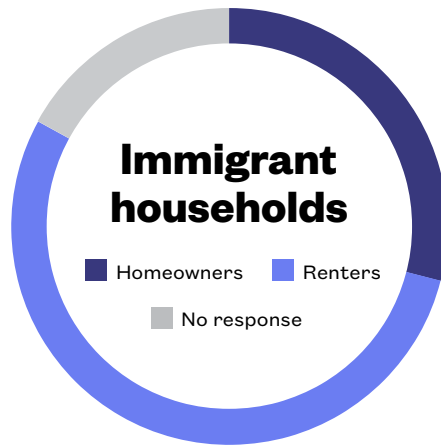
## HOUSING WEALTH

In 2016, **29.3%** of immigrants in the region owned their own homes, compared to **61.7%** of the U.S-born.

**54.3%** of immigrants were renters.

### Immigrant households

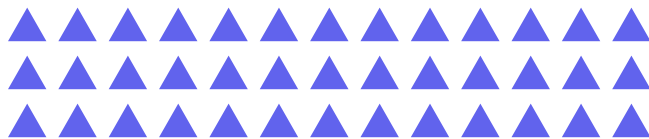■ Homeowners  ■ Renters
■ No response

The total property value of immigrant households was **$212.7M**.

Their total annual rent was **$16.3M**.

In 2015, **43.3%** of immigrant households lived in houses...

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▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲
▲▲▲▲▲▲ **43.3% in houses**
● ● **2.2% in other types of housing or no response**

And **54.5%** lived in apartments.
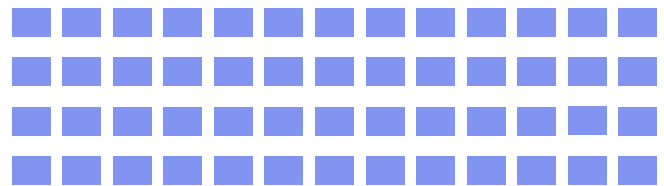
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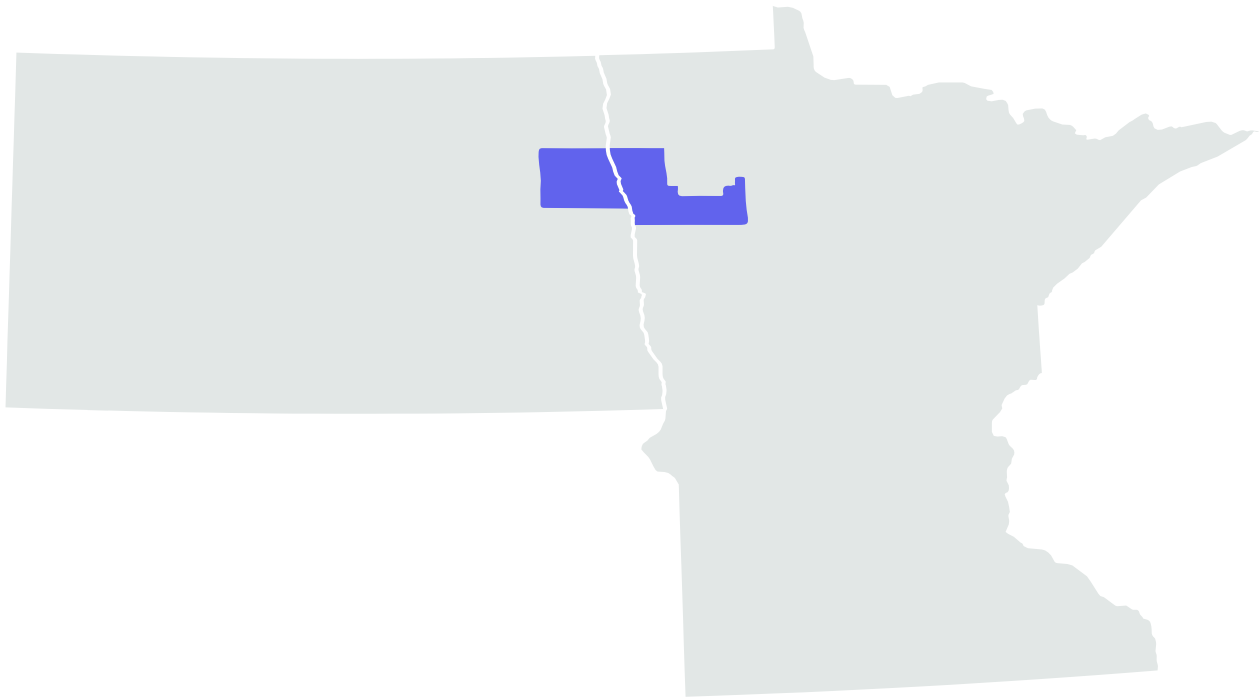■■■■ **54.5% in apartments**

## NATURALIZATION

**38.1%**
Naturalized

Share of immigrants who were naturalized citizens in 2015. This constitutes **3,349** immigrants.

**32.4%**
Potentially eligible

Share among the 5,432 who were not citizens but potentially eligible for naturalization. This constitutes **1,760** immigrants.

## MAP OF GRAND FORKS REGION

For more city, district, and state-level data,
visit **MapTheImpact.org** and explore our interactive map.

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1   For the purpose of this report, we refer to immigrants as individuals living in the United States who were born outside of the country to parents who were not U.S. citizens. This term "immigrant" is inclusive of refugees, who we define as foreign-born people who have been resettled in the United States due to war, violence, or persecution.

2   Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2010 and 2015. For the purpose of this report, the Grand Forks region refers to the area surrounding the Grand Forks, ND-MN Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The region includes 16 counties (Cavalier, Grand Forks, Griggs, Pembina, Steele, Towner, Traill, and Walsh Counties in North Dakota, and Clay, Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau Counties in Minnesota).

3   Based on the Office of Management and Budget definition, the Grand Forks MSA includes Grand Forks County in North Dakota and Polk County in Minnesota. Data comes from the American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau.

4   New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

5   U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, WRAPS Database, "MX - Arrivals by Destination and Nationality." Accessed on Feb. 12, 2018, at: http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/Interactive-Reporting/. Numbers represent those resettled by the Department of State in partnership with local or regional direct service providers. It does not represent those who may have moved in or moved away after resettlement.

6   These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2015 and the statistics of GDP by the National Association of Counties.

7   U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."

8   Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

9   Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

10  Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.

11  This group includes many manufacturing occupations, such as machine operators, welders, and assemblers.

12  Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." New American Economy.

13  Data on total student enrollment in the region is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics.

14  Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.