New Americans in the Columbus Metro Area

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Columbus Metro Area

**Population**

184,800 immigrants lived in the Columbus metropolitan area, Ohio, in 2019.

Immigrants made up 8.7% of the total population in the metro area in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the population in the metro area increased by 6.4%.

The immigrant population grew by +22.2% of total population growth in the metro area was attributable to immigrants.

**Demographics**

23.7% of immigrants in metro Columbus are recent arrivals, with less than 5 years of residency in the United States, meaning

76.3% of immigrants in metro Columbus have lived in the United States for more than 5 years.

In the metro area, immigrants are 25.9% more likely to be of working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.\(^2\)

**Shares of population by age groups...**\(^3\)

- India (15.4%)
- Mexico (7.5%)
- Somalia (6.7%)
- China (6.7%)
- Bhutan (4.2%)

1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to the metropolitan statistical area of Columbus, Ohio.

2 We define working age as 16-64 years of age.

3 Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Demographics continued

28,200
immigrants living in the metro area had limited English language proficiency, making up

15.4%
of the immigrant population.

Among them, the top language spoken at home other than English was

Spanish
which made up 32.3% of all non-English languages spoken at home by immigrants with limited English language proficiency.

Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

Foreign-born households held

10.1%
of all spending power in metro Columbus, more than their 8.7% share of the population.

In 2019, foreign-born residents in the metro area contributed

$15.4 billion
to the metro area’s GDP, or 11.5% of the total.6

Immigrants in the metro area also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed

$729.5 million
to Social Security

$204.3 million
to Medicare

In 2019, immigrant households in the metro area earned

$7.4 billion

$1.4 billion
went to federal taxes4

$712.4 million
went to state & local taxes5

$5.3 billion
left in spending power


6 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the 1-year ACS sample from 2019 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.
Spending Power & Tax Contributions continued

About 72.2% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while 32.0% had public healthcare coverage. About 58.2% of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage, while 25.9% had public healthcare coverage. Given their household incomes, 17.5% of immigrants lived at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to 26.1% of U.S-born residents.

Workforce

Although the foreign-born population made up 8.7% of the metro area’s overall population, they represented 10.7% of its working-age population, 10.7% of its employed labor force, and 22.4% of its STEM workers in 2019.

Immigrant shares of the...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant Shares</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Working-age Population</th>
<th>Employed Population</th>
<th>STEM Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The immigrant working-age population was 49.9% female and 50.1% male. The employed immigrant population was 43.2% female and 56.8% male.

Immigrants in the metro area are 25.9% more likely to be working age or employed than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the metro area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare and Social Service</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Services</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.8% of workers in the Transportation & Warehousing industry were foreign-born in 2019.

7 Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.
8 STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.
9 Professional services: Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.
10 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
Immigrants have also been playing vital roles in critical industries that have kept the country functioning throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Immigrants in the metro area continue working in these frontline and essential industries:

- **Transportation & Warehousing**: Immigrants made up 20.8% of the workforce.
- **Healthcare**: Immigrants made up 12.8% of the workforce.
- **Food Service**: Immigrants made up 10.6% of the workforce.
- **Essential Services**: Immigrants made up 9.9% of the workforce.
- **Construction**: Immigrants made up 9.3% of the workforce.

Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the metro area had helped create or preserve 8,500 manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.13

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the metro area, but they are also a crucial part of the city’s economy, and could help us meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare increases. **The top 5 industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers:**

1. **Retail Trade**
2. **Finance & Insurance**
3. **Healthcare & Social Assistance**
4. **Transportation & Warehousing**
5. **Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services**

Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the metro area in 2019:
- **Software Developers (4.3%)**
- **Truck Drivers (4.2%)**
- **Postsecondary Teachers (2.3%)**

In 2019, about 29.6% of college-educated immigrants were underemployed, working in occupations not requiring a bachelor’s degree.16

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11 These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.

12 Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies for the time period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.


14 Information of entry-level education for occupations is obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
Entrepreneurship

9,800
immigrant entrepreneurs
lived in metro Columbus in
2019, making up
11.7%
immigrant entrepreneurs
in metro Columbus generated
$289.6 million
in business income in 2019.

While 7.5% of the U.S.-
born population were
entrepreneurs, 8.2% of
foreign-born residents
worked for their own
businesses.

Education

Share of the metro
area’s population aged
25 or above that held a
bachelor’s degree or higher
in 2019:

- 37.6% of U.S.-born
- 44.4% of immigrants

Share of the metro
area’s population aged
25 or above that held an
advanced degree in 2019:

- 13.3% of U.S.-born
- 21.4% of immigrants

- 45.9% female 54.1% male
- 47.3% female 52.7% male

University Population

- 7,900 students enrolled in colleges and universities in metro Columbus in fall 2019 were temporary residents.15
- 1,000 international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities in the metro area in the 2018-19 academic year.
- 3,900 local jobs were supported by international students in the 2019-20 academic year.
- $342.5 million was spent by international students in the 2019-20 academic year.16

15 Data on total student enrollment is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics. Temporary residents refer to people who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents.
16 Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.
Antoinette Wilson

CEO, Triumph Communications

As a first-generation American growing up in Toledo, Ohio, Antoinette Wilson watched her parents make a tangible difference in their community. Her father was a pediatric physician from the Philippines. Her mother was a pediatric nurse from Panama. Over three decades, the family helped over 30,000 patients at their practice. “Every time we were out in the community we’d run into a patient,” Antoinette says. “The community embraced us.”

When her parents weren’t working, they threw themselves into community service, volunteering at underresourced hospitals, charity events and Filipino cultural engagements. “I grew up in a family where our parents were always working hard and always giving back,” Antoinette says. “This is the kind of work ethic and altruism many immigrants bring to Ohio.”

Today, Antoinette and her three siblings all continue to live in Ohio, where they’ve built thriving careers. One brother is the CEO of a hospital, another an entrepreneur and her sister works for an international consulting group. Antoinette has run Triumph Communications from Columbus for nearly two decades. She was also appointed as the first woman Assistant Secretary of State in 2008. Throughout it all, she has volunteered on projects to help the homeless and assist immigrant organizations with ESL training. She also mentors women interested in running for public office.

Antoinette believes Columbus is an ideal city for immigrant families. “When people come here, they feel the energy,” she says. “They see the opportunities. They sense that it’s inviting and inclusive.” She said the city is good about showcasing its global diversity, including frequent festivals and cultural events that connect immigrants and native-born Americans. She’s sad to see such opportunities for exchange put on hold during the pandemic, and she hopes the city will prioritize them as it reopens.

“The better we understand each other, the better we work together. And that makes Columbus stronger for all of us,” she said.

Deba Uwadiae

Editor-in-Chief, New Americans Magazine

In 2010, Deba Uwadiae, his wife and three children were selected to receive visas through the U.S. Diversity Visa Lottery, allowing them to move from their native Nigeria to Columbus, Ohio.

Their transition wasn’t easy. In Nigeria, Deba had risen from political reporter to editor-in-chief and publisher, but Columbus news outlets overlooked him. His wife had studied physics and managed the family travel agency in Nigeria, but she, too, couldn’t break into the professional job market. They suspected their accents created a barrier. Receptionists would sometimes offer them Spanish interpretation. “I speak fluent English; I don’t speak Spanish,” Deba says with a laugh.

While working with his wife at Cheryl’s Cookies to make ends meet, Deba was determined to make the most of their American opportunity. He started his own publications, the New Americans and New Americans Business magazines, which cover subjects relevant to the Ohio immigrant community. The New Americans magazine currently trains 10 interns from the Ohio Media School, employs four part-time contributors and works in partnership with Apex 1 Radio. Deba’s wife returned to school and now works as a nurse on the front lines of the pandemic. Two of their children are college educated and their third just graduated from high school.

Deba feels welcomed by the people of Columbus and loves the life that he and his family have built here. In 2018, he joined a City Council-sponsored leadership and professional development program, which helps new immigrants become active community stakeholders. However, he also recognizes that the City could do more to support new arrivals. “We need ads and outreach to connect them to resources,” he says. “After the pandemic, we need events that bring them face to face with social services organizations, employers seeking workers and others who can help them acclimate to the City.”

In the meantime, Deba is stepping up. In response to the global pandemic, he started the New American Community Information Center (NACIC) to connect local immigrants to life-saving social services. NACIC has also helped immigrants apply for citizenship and assisted new citizens with voter registration.

Deba believes his news outlets and nonprofit work can help foster a more welcoming community. “When immigrants are seen, when our accents are heard, we are normalized,” he says. “It’s not that people don’t want our talents; many simply aren’t exposed to us. Once they are, they’ll see everything we have to offer.”
New Americans in the Columbus Metro Area

**Housing**

In 2019, 62.3% of U.S.-born households in metro Columbus owned their own homes, compared to 44.1% of immigrant households.

- Lived in Houses: 42,200 or 51.8%
- Lived in Apartments: 37,900 or 46.5%
- Lived in Other Types of Housing: 1,400 or 1.7%

55.9% of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was $450.5 million.

The total property value of immigrant households was $10.1 billion.

86.0% of immigrant households in the metro area had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared to 85.7% of U.S.-born households in 2019.

**Naturalization**

- 49.4% Naturalized Citizens (91,200)
- 14.9% Likely Eligible to Naturalize (27,500)
- 35.8% Not Eligible to Naturalize (66,100)

11.7% of households in metro Columbus had at least one foreign-born resident in 2019.

If all immigrants who are eligible to naturalize became U.S. citizens, their earning potential would increase by +8.9%.

17 Immigrants were not eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens either because they have not met certain criteria for naturalization, such as residency requirements, age, and English proficiency, or because they are undocumented.


**Refugees**

32,700 refugees, or 17.7% of the foreign-born population in metro Columbus, were likely refugees.

The top countries of origin for the refugee population in the metro area were:

- 41.9% Other Countries
- 35.6% Somalia
- 22.5% Bhutan
Refugees continued

About 17.5% of refugees held at least a bachelor’s degree.

In 2019, refugee households earned

- **$737.9 million**
- **$82.8 million** went to federal taxes
- **$78.3 million** went to state & local taxes
- **$576.7 million** left in spending power

In 2019, about 74.7% of refugees in the area were naturalized U.S. citizens.

DACA-Eligible Population

In 2019, DACA-eligible people made up 1.6% of the foreign-born population in metro Columbus.

Undocumented Immigrants

41,100 undocumented immigrants lived in metro Columbus in 2019.

They made up 22.3% of the foreign-born population in the metro area in 2019.

The top countries of origin for undocumented immigrants in the metro area were

- **56.6%** Other Countries
- **23.8%** Mexico
- **19.6%** India

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. More than 83.0% are of working-age in the metro area.

Undocumented immigrants by age groups:

- 0-15: 13.9%
- 16-64: 83.0%
- 65+: 3.1%


Undocumented Immigrants continued

Undocumented immigrants tended to work in these key industries:

- **Hospitality (18.3%)**
- **Manufacturing (15.9%)**
- **Other Industries (65.8%)**

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households earned

- **$887.2 million**

  - **$66.9 million** went to federal taxes\(^{22}\)
  - **$44.7 million** went to state & local taxes\(^{23}\)
  - **$775.6 million** left in spending power

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New Americans in the City of Columbus

Population in the City of Columbus

103,500
Immigrants lived in the City of Columbus, Ohio, in 2019.

11.7%
Immigrants made up 11.7% of the total population in the city in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the city increased by 7.0%.

The immigrant population grew by +19.8% of total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants.

The top five countries of origin for immigrants living in the city were:
- India (10.5%)
- Somalia (9.9%)
- Mexico (8.5%)
- China (6.9%)
- Ethiopia (4.8%)

Other Countries (59.4%)

Spending Power & Tax Contributions in the City of Columbus

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

Foreign-born households held 12.5% of all spending power in the city, more than their 11.7% share of the population.

In 2019, immigrant households in the City of Columbus earned

$3.6 billion

- $656.2 million went to federal taxes\(^{24}\)
- $353.0 million went to state & local taxes\(^{25}\)
- $2.6 billion left in spending power
