

# New Americans in Spokane

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants<sup>1</sup> in the City of Spokane & Spokane County<sup>2</sup>

JULY 2021



## Population

**12,315**

immigrants lived in the City of Spokane, in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the population in Spokane increased by



The immigrant population decreased by

**-16.6%**

during the same time period.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in Spokane in 2019.

## Demographics



of immigrants in Spokane are recent arrivals, with less than 5 years of residency in the United States, meaning



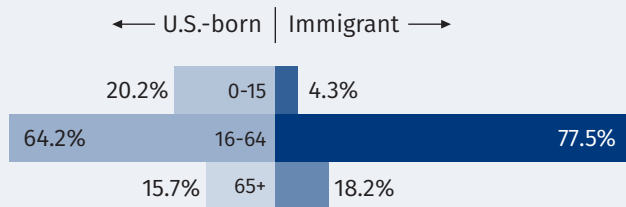
of immigrants in Spokane have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years.

In Spokane, immigrants are



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.<sup>3</sup>

### Shares of population by age groups:<sup>4</sup>

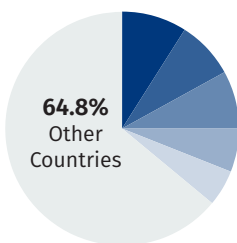


**2,066**

immigrants living in Spokane had limited English language proficiency, making up



of the immigrant population.



The top five countries of origin for immigrants living in Spokane were

- Mexico (8.7%)
- Ukraine (7.8%)
- Canada (7.5%)
- Russia (6%)
- Germany (5.2%)

1 We define immigrant as anyone born outside the country to non-U.S. citizen parents who is a resident in the United States.

2 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to the City of Spokane and Spokane County, Washington. Data results may be limited due to sample size restrictions.

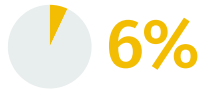
3 We define working age as 16-64 years of age.

4 Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

## 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



of all spending power in Spokane, more than their



share of the population.

In 2019, immigrant households in Spokane earned **\$423.6 million**

■ **\$79.3 million**

went to federal taxes<sup>5</sup>

■ **\$36.7 million** went to state & local taxes<sup>6</sup>

■ **\$307.6 million** left in spending power

Immigrants in Spokane also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed

**\$34.9 million**  
to Social Security

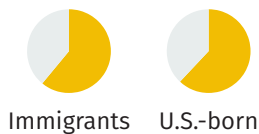
**\$9.7 million**  
to Medicare

**39%**  
of immigrants in Spokane received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with

**44.5%**  
of U.S.-born residents in 2019.

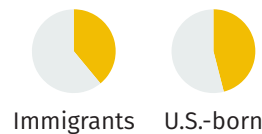
### Private Healthcare Coverage

About **61.5%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, similar to the **61.5%** of U.S.-born with private healthcare coverage.



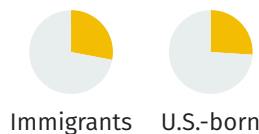
### Public Healthcare Coverage

About **39.2%** of immigrants had public healthcare coverage, while **45.9%** of U.S.-born had public healthcare coverage.<sup>7</sup>



### Poverty Threshold

Looking at their household incomes, **28.3%** of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to **26.3%** of U.S.-born residents.



<sup>5</sup> U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

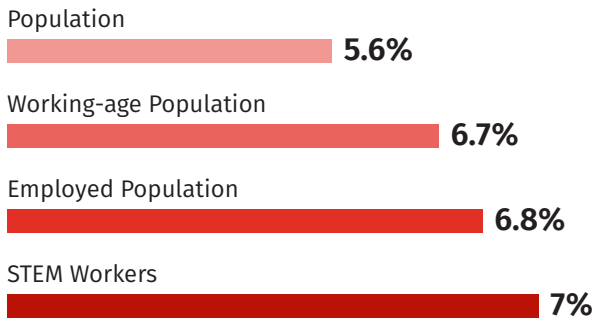
<sup>6</sup> Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

<sup>7</sup> Some individuals have both private and public healthcare coverage.

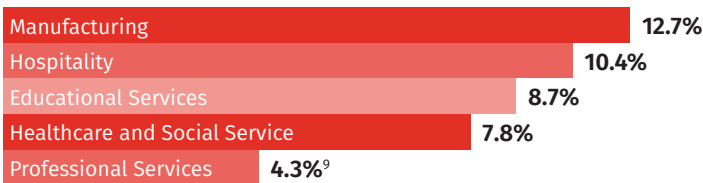
## Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **5.6%** of Spokane's overall population, they represented **6.7%** of its working-age population, **6.8%** of its employed labor force, and **7%** of its STEM workers in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

### Immigrant shares of the...



Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in Spokane. Here are the percentages of immigrant workers in these industries:



The immigrant working-age population was **51.6%** female and **48.4%** male.



The employed immigrant population was **54.2%** female and **45.8%** male.



Immigrants in Spokane are



more likely to be of working age than their U.S.-born counterparts.

<sup>8</sup> STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

<sup>11</sup> Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021

### SPOTLIGHT ON Immigrant Essential Workers

Immigrants have also been playing vital roles in critical industries that have kept the country functioning throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Immigrants in Spokane continue working in these frontline and essential industries:

**1,244** immigrants in Healthcare, making up



Immigrants in Food Service, making up



Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in Spokane had helped create or preserve **567** manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.<sup>10</sup>

### SPOTLIGHT ON Job Demand In Spokane In 2021

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in Spokane, but they are also a crucial part of the county's economy, and could help 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:<sup>11</sup>

1. Information

2. Health Care & Social Assistance

3. Finance & Insurance

4. Educational Services

5. Retail Trade

## Entrepreneurship

Despite making up



of the population, immigrants made up **6.6%** of the business owners in Spokane in 2019.

While **9.8%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs, **9.4%** of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses.

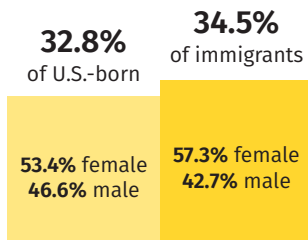


U.S.-born    Immigrant

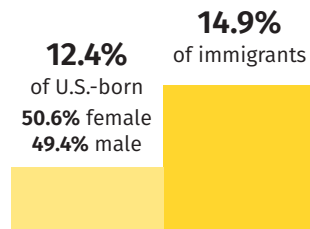
## Education

The share of immigrants with post-secondary education has increased in recent years.

Share of Spokane's population aged 25 or above that held a **bachelor's degree or higher** in 2019:



Share of Spokane's population aged 25 or above that held an **advanced degree** in 2019:



of K-12 students in Spokane were foreign-born in 2019.



of K-12 students in Spokane were the children of immigrants in 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Data on total student enrollment in the city 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.

<sup>13</sup> Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

### SPOTLIGHT ON

### University Population

**567**

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Spokane in fall 2019 were temporary residents.<sup>12</sup>

**28**

international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities in Spokane in the 2018-19 academic year.

International students supported

**146 jobs**

& contributed

**\$19.6 million**

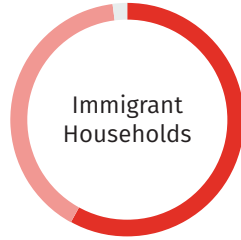
in the 2019-20 academic year.<sup>13</sup>

## Housing

In 2019, **52.6%** of immigrant households in Spokane owned their own homes, compared to **56.4%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born



- Lived in Houses **3,186** or **58.4%**
- Lived in Apartments **2,182** or **40%**
- Lived in Other Types of Housing **1.6%**

The total property value of immigrant households was

**\$814.9 million**

**47.4%** of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was

**\$24.4 million**



**86%** of immigrant households in Spokane had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared to **85.5%** of U.S.-born households in 2019.

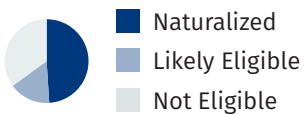
## Naturalization



of households in Spokane had at least one foreign-born resident in 2019.



- **56.2%** Naturalized Citizens (6,919)
- **16.4%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize (2,016)
- **27.4%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (3,380)



Nationally, **48.7%** of immigrants are naturalized citizens, **15.9%** are likely eligible to naturalize, and **35.4%** are not yet eligible.

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

**+8.9%**<sup>14</sup>

## Refugees

**1,622**

refugees, or **13.2%** of the foreign-born population, were likely refugees.<sup>15</sup>

## Undocumented Immigrants

**1,653**

undocumented immigrants lived in Spokane in 2019.

They made up



of the foreign-born population in Spokane in 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Enchautegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. "The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities." Urban Institute.

<sup>15</sup> New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

SPOTLIGHT ON

## Charity Bagatsing

*Publisher, Event Organizer  
and Asian Immigrant Historian*

In 1991, Charity Bagatsing came to Spokane from Manila, Philippines at age 21. “Everything I had to start a new life was in two suitcases,” she says. Yet she persevered in her adopted country, raising four children and developing a career as both a publisher of *The Family Guide*, a parenting resource distributed at local schools, and an event planner.

Despite creating a new life as an immigrant, Bagatsing made it her mission to honor her own Filipino culture. She’s a 13th generation “culture-keeper” preserving the arts, culture, history of the Ifugao tribe in the Philippines so that the history could be passed down to future generations.

She also became interested in learning about the history of Asian immigrants in Spokane. After doing considerable research, she was surprised to discover that the Chinese and Japanese have had a long presence in Spokane. In fact, the community dates back to the 1890s. She learned that Chinese workers built Spokane’s iconic clock tower along with the railroad that made the city a boom town. She also found evidence of a Chinatown and Japan Alley that was demolished in 1973 to make way for Expo 74.

“I was thrilled to uncover all this hidden history of Asian immigrants,” Bagatsing says. Now she’s working with representative of Spokane’s Historic Preservation Office and descendants of the Chinese and Japanese workers who arrived over 120 years ago. “I was thrilled to bring to light all this hidden history of Asian immigrants,” she says. “It’s so encouraging for the Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community to unite together to educate people about Asian contributions,” she says. “Now it’s time to share our side of the story to show we built this city in a positive way.”

SPOTLIGHT ON

## Lupe Gutierrez

*Caregiver and Latino Rights Advocate*

When Lupe Gutierrez followed her American husband from Mexico to Spokane in 1991, she was a nervous mother of three with only a sixth-grade education. But the support of two local Americans helped her become a successful and devoted community member. The first was her English as a Second Language teacher at Spokane Community College who gave her the confidence to pursue a social work degree. “I think of him as my guardian angel. I’m so grateful he was able to see my potential when I couldn’t see it myself,” she says. The second influential American was a prosecutor who hired her as an intern and opened her eyes to the disparities of the justice system.

Gutierrez became convinced that getting the right help—whether in the form of legal assistance or job counseling—could make a big impact on people’s lives. In 2018, she became a community advocate at *Latinos en Spokane*, a nonprofit organization that supports Latino families and immigrants in Spokane County. There, she helps connect people to services like rental assistance, voter registration, medical help, immigration lawyers and coronavirus vaccinations. “It feels rewarding to help people navigate the system. That’s the way I give back,” she says.

Gutierrez sees daily how these services help her clients integrate into society, build careers and find their own calling. But she also understands that such work can only go so far. She says the entire immigration process needs to be overhauled, especially the long wait times. “Sometimes people wait decades, and their lives are on hold,” she says.

In the meantime, she welcomes the support that Washington and the city of Spokane give local organizations like *Latinos en Spokane*. “There’s enough resources out there for everyone,” she says. Newcomers simply need advocates like her community college teacher who believe in their potential.

## Population Growth in Spokane County

**26,273**

immigrants lived in Spokane County in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the population in Spokane increased by



The immigrant population decreased by

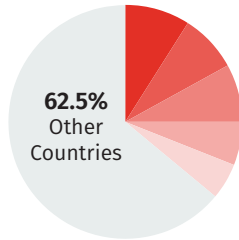
**-4.1%**

during the same time period.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in Spokane County in 2019.



The top five countries of origin for immigrants living in Spokane County were

- Mexico (**10%**)
- Canada (**9%**)
- Ukraine (**8.4%**)
- Vietnam (**5.1%**)
- Russia (**5%**)

## Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

Foreign-born households held



of all spending power in Spokane County, more than their



share of the population.

In 2019, immigrant households in Spokane County earned **\$849.5 million**

**\$152.1 million**

went to federal taxes

**\$77.1 million** went to state & local taxes

**\$620.3 million** left in spending power

In 2019, foreign-born residents of Spokane County contributed **\$1.8 billion** to Spokane County's GDP, or **6.1%** of the total.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2019 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.