

New Americans in Saint Paul

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the City¹

SEPTEMBER 2021



Population

60,500
immigrants lived in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 2019.

Immigrants made up **19.9%** of the total population in the city in 2019

In comparison, **476,556** immigrants lived in Minnesota in 2019. They made up **8.5%** of the population.²

Between 2014 and 2019, the population in the city increased by

4.4%

The immigrant population increased by **+15.2%** during the same time period.

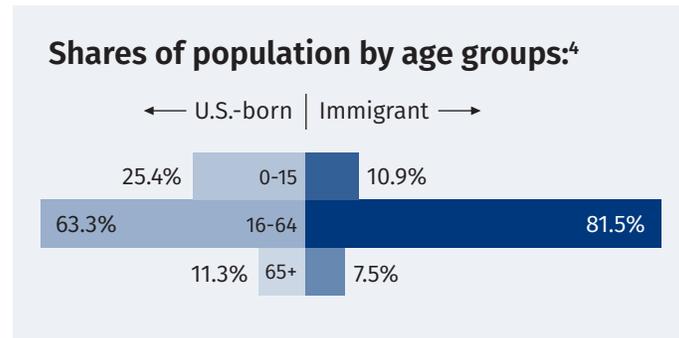
62.4% of total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants.

Demographics

17.1% of immigrants in Saint Paul are recent arrivals, with five years or less of residency in the United States, meaning

In Saint Paul immigrants are **28.8%** 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.³

82.9% of immigrants in the county have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years.



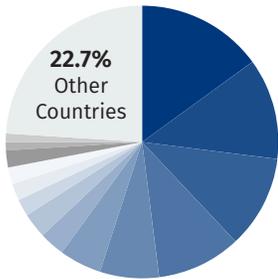
¹ Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Saint. Paul, Minnesota.

² NewAmericanEconomy. 2021. "MaphelImpact:Minnesota." <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/minnesota/>

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

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

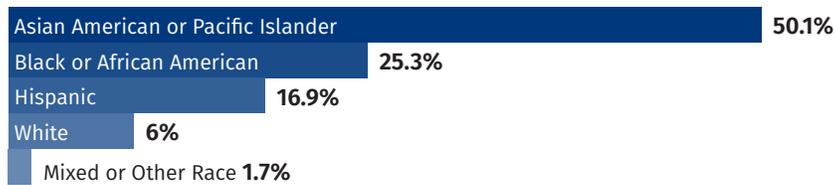
Demographics *continued*



The top countries of origin for immigrants living in the city:

- Laos (15%) ■ Ethiopia (7%) ■ Philippines (2.2%)
- Thailand (12.3%) ■ Somalia (5.4%) ■ Korea (2%)
- Mexico (11.1%) ■ Eritrea (3.4%) ■ India (1.6%)
- Burma (Myanmar) (9.8%) ■ China (2.9%) ■ Kenya (1.3%)
- Vietnam (2.4%) ■ Canada (0.9%)

The immigrant population by race and ethnicity:



17,900

immigrants living in the city had limited English language proficiency, making up



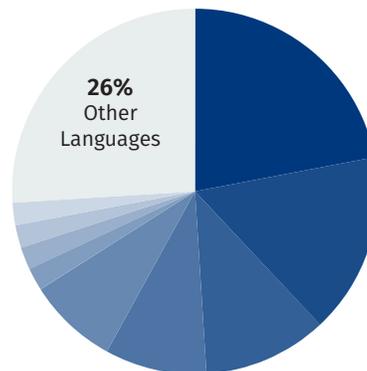
of the immigrant population.

Among them, the top languages spoken at home other than English were:

- Hmong**27.9%
- Spanish**22.8%
- Karen**22.6%
- Vietnamese**.....4%

The top languages spoken for immigrants living in the city:

- Hmong (22.2%) ■ Vietnamese (2.2%)
- Spanish (16%) ■ Filipino, Tagalog (2.2%)
- Karen (11.4%) ■ Chinese (2%)
- English (11.1%) ■ French (1.8%)
- Somali, Oromo, Beja, and other Cushite language (8.5%)
- Amharic and related (7.5%)



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 the city.

In 2019, immigrant households in Saint Paul earned **\$1.3 billion**

■ **\$182.7 million**

went to federal taxes⁵

■ **\$120.6 million** went to state & local taxes⁶

■ **\$966.2 million** left in spending power

In 2019, immigrant households in Minnesota⁷ earned **\$17.5 billion**

■ **\$3.2 billion**

went to federal taxes

■ **\$1.7 billion** went to state & local taxes

■ **\$12.6 billion** left in spending power

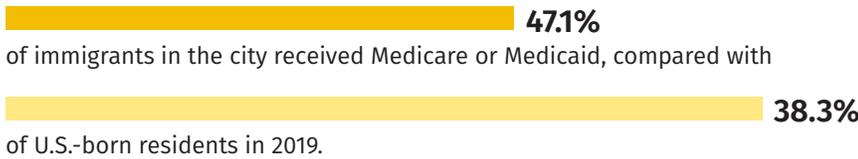
5 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

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

7 NewAmericanEconomy. 2021. "MaptheImpact:Minnesota." <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/minnesota/>

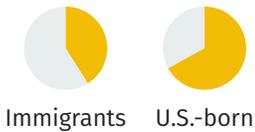
Spending Power & Tax Contributions *continued*

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



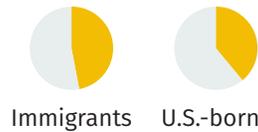
Private Healthcare Coverage

About **41.3%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **67%** of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage.



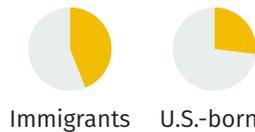
Public Healthcare Coverage

About **47.1%** of immigrants had public healthcare coverage, while **38.8%** of U.S.-born had public healthcare coverage.⁸



Poverty Threshold

Given their household incomes, **43.5%** of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to **26.6%** of U.S.-born residents.



Immigrant use of Public Assistance⁹ decreases over time as immigrants are better acclimated into the state and local economy.

In Saint Paul,



of immigrants who had resided in the U.S. for three years or less used Public Assistance compared to **9.9%** of the immigrant population who have resided in the U.S. for four or more years.

Immigrant use of Public Assistance in Saint Paul, East Metro Area and Minnesota, by years of U.S. Residency

Region	Use of Public Assistance for Immigrants...	
	≤ 3 years of residency in the U.S.	≥ 4 years of residency in the U.S.
City of Saint Paul	33%	9.9%
East Metro Area	30%	7.8%
Minnesota	22.6%	8.3%

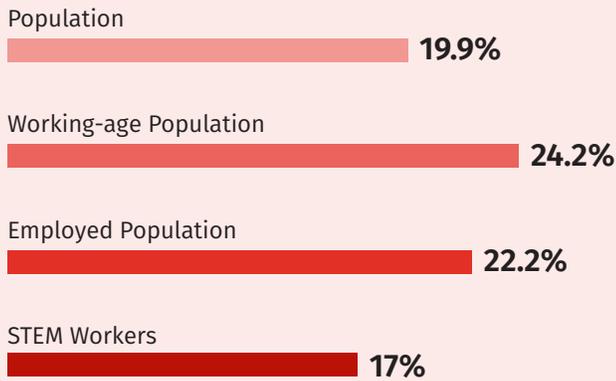
⁸ Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

⁹ Public assistance includes cash and non-cash benefits (e.g. TANF, SNAP) to low-income families or individuals. Undocumented immigrants, including DACA holders, are ineligible to receive these benefits.

Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **19.9%** of the city's overall population, they represented **24.2%** of its working-age population,¹⁰ **22.2%** of its employed labor force, and **17%** of its STEM workers in 2019.¹¹

Immigrant shares of the...



Immigrants in the city are

28.8%

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

Working-age immigrants in the labor force are more likely than their U.S.-born counterparts to be employed.

As of 2019,

95.2%

of immigrants in the labor force were employed, compared to

94.3%

of U.S.-born residents.

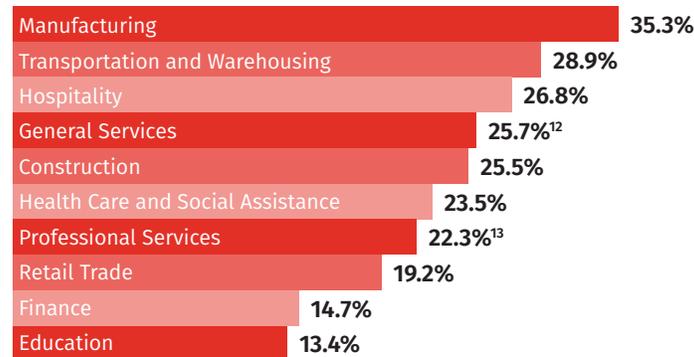
The immigrant working-age population was **47.8%** female and **52.2%** male.



The employed immigrant population was **43%** female and **57%** male.



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



¹⁰ At the state level, immigrants make up 10.2 percent of the employed labor force

¹¹ STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.

¹² General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.

¹³ 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.

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 the city continue working in these frontline and essential industries:

Essential Services

2,100
immigrants made up



Food Service

3,300
immigrants made up



Transportation & Warehousing

Immigrants made up



Construction

Immigrants made up



Essential Retail Trade

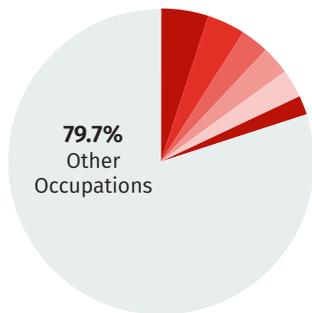
1,200
immigrants made up



In Healthcare,
3,800 immigrants made up



Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the city in 2019:



- Other Assemblers and Fabricators (**4.6%**)
- Nursing Assistants (**3.6%**)
- Janitors & Building Cleaners (**3.4%**)
- Personal Care Aides (**3.2%**)
- Cooks (**3.1%**)
- Customer Service Representatives (**2.4%**)

Top occupation for female workers:



Nursing Assistants

Top occupation for male workers:



Other Assemblers and Fabricators

Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the city had helped create or preserve

2,800

manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹⁵

¹⁴ These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.

¹⁵ Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

SPOTLIGHT ON Job Demand (Local) In 2021

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the city, 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:¹⁶

- 1. Health Care & Social Assistance
- 2. Finance & Insurance
- 3. Information
- 4. Retail Trade
- 5. Manufacturing

Entrepreneurship

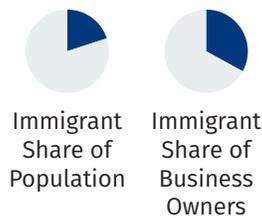
4,000

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

\$43.8 million

in business income for Saint Paul in 2019.

Immigrants account for **33.2%** of the city's business owners, and **13.5%** of the total business income in Saint Paul.



While **6.6%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs,

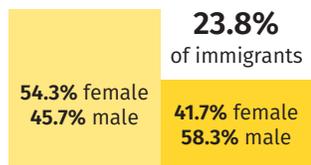


of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses.

Education

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

47.1%
of U.S.-born



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

19.3% of U.S.-born
56% female
44% male

9.3% of immigrants
47.1% female
52.9% male



of K-12 students in the city were foreign-born in 2019.



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

¹⁶ Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

SPOTLIGHT ON

University Population

1,554

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Saint Paul in fall 2019 were temporary residents.¹⁷

187

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

International students supported

3,251 jobs

and contributed

\$288.9 million

in the 2019-20 academic year.¹⁸

Housing

In 2019, **32.5%** of immigrant households in Saint Paul owned their own homes, compared to **54.4%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born



- Lived in Houses **9,000** or **41.8%**
- Lived in Apartments **12,500** or **57.9%**
- Lived in Other Types of Housing **0.3%**

The total property value of immigrant households was

\$1.5 billion

67.5% of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was

\$152.1 million



of immigrant households in the city had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared to **84.1%** of U.S.-born households in 2019.

Naturalization



- **50.2%** Naturalized Citizens (30,400, nationally **48.7%**)
- **15.1%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize (9,100, nationally **15.9%**)
- **34.7%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (21,00, nationally **35.4%**)

If all immigrants who are eligible to naturalize became U.S. citizens, their earning potential would increase by **8.9%**.¹⁹

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

¹⁹ Enchautegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. "The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities." Urban Institute.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Abraham & Aster Giorgis Dalu

Owners of A&A Reliable Home Health Care

In the 1970s, Abe and Aster Giorgis Dalu attended the same high school in Ethiopia — then, a decade later, they reunited by chance in the United States, where they had both settled. Now married, the pair run A&A Reliable Home Health Care, employing 70 people and providing in-home care for scores of senior and disabled people across Saint Paul.

Abe first left Ethiopia to study agronomy in the former Soviet Union. As a Christian, he struggled in the USSR and would have faced persecution in his native country. “It was completely incompatible with my faith, so I decided not to go back,” Abe says. In 1984, after receiving an MS in Agronomy, he walked through a Berlin Wall checkpoint and requested asylum in West Berlin. Eventually, he came to the U.S. with the help of American missionaries.

Upon his arrival, Abe reconnected with Aster, who had arrived a few years earlier to train as a nurse. They married in 1986, and after Abe gained a PhD in pharmacology and toxicology, they settled in Minnesota, where Abe worked for federal and private-sector research laboratories, while Aster worked as an RN at a local hospital.

When Abe was laid off in 2012, the pair decided to launch their own business. “Home-care is something we had the knowledge and experience for — and it was an area where we felt we could make a difference,” Aster explains.

The pair took a 10-week Neighborhood Development Center course to learn the basics of entrepreneurship, and received tech support and book-keeping training advice from African Economic Development Solutions, a local nonprofit that assists African immigrants. “Any time we needed help, we were able to get it,” Abe says. “Knowing we had these groups on our side was a real morale-booster.”

Running a healthcare business during the pandemic was challenging. “We got a forgivable PPP loan and some other financial support, and we’d love to see the City doing even more to help businesses,” Abe says. Abe and Aster say they’re upbeat about the future and determined to keep working to support those in need. “There’s an assumption that immigrants and refugees want hand-outs,” Abe says. “But the reality is that we’d all 100% prefer to be working to support ourselves, building businesses, and making a productive contribution to our community.”

SPOTLIGHT ON

Souk & Youa Her

Owners of Elder Care Day Services

Souk and Youa Her are high-school sweethearts who bonded over their families’ shared background as Hmong refugees: Souk was born in a refugee camp in Thailand, while Youa was born in America soon after her parents left a Laotian refugee camp in the late 1970s. “It’s like living in two worlds — we both grew up feeling fully American, but we’re also deeply connected to the Hmong community here in Saint Paul,” Youa explains.

Both Souk and Youa’s parents worked hard to build a new life in Minnesota. Souk’s father worked for a non profit called Catholic Charities, and the family invested in real estate and a clothing alteration store, and opened an Asian grocery store. Youa’s family was part of the Hiawatha Valley Farm Cooperative Project, a local initiative that gave refugees agricultural training, and ran a business supplying cucumbers to local food manufacturers. Later, the family opened Saint Paul’s first Hmong grocery store on Selby Avenue in the late 1980’s. Youa’s mother also took factory jobs and her father was a community liaison officer for the Department of Natural Resources. “They were very entrepreneurial and wanted to improve our quality of life and gain financial freedom,” Souk says. “That made us want to start something of our own too.”

After finishing college, Youa became a social worker and Souk took a job in corporate communications. But in 2015, after Souk was laid off, the pair took the plunge and launched their own business: Elder Care Day Services (ECDS), which now provides care, meals, and activities for the elderly and adults with special needs such as chronic illnesses or mental health challenges. “It wasn’t easy figuring out how to launch a business,” Youa says. “There wasn’t any guidance to help us tap into support programs, so we built everything with our own hands.”

Before COVID-19, ECDS employed eight people and cared for more than 60 local adults, mostly referrals from local case managers and Hmong community groups. The business closed for four months during the pandemic, when vulnerable clients weren’t able to attend group activities.

Luckily, PPP loans enabled them to pay their workers during the furlough. “Coming from a refugee background gives you a lot of resilience,” Souk explains. “Our families experienced war, persecution and death, and that gives us a drive to keep working to make something better for ourselves.” Now, the couple are hoping to expand by opening a residential care center to deliver services to even more elderly and disabled people.

Souk and Youa’s families seldom talked about their experiences as refugees, but instead focused on building for the future. That mindset has influenced Souk and Youa, too, as they’ve overcome adversity to keep their business operational. “We came from nothing, so the only way was up,” Youa explains. “We’re going to keep climbing and keep on investing in our community.”

Refugees

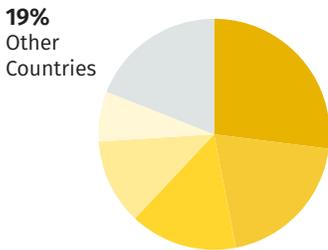
26,700

refugees, or



of the foreign-born population, were likely refugees.²⁰

Top countries of origin for the refugee population in Saint Paul were Laos (26.5%), Burma (Myanmar) (20.1%), Thailand (14.9%), Somalia (12.1%), and Ethiopia (7.4%).



In 2019, refugee households earned

\$541.3 million

■ **\$68.5 million**

went to federal taxes²¹

■ **\$51.5 million** went to state & local taxes²²

■ **\$421.3 million** left in spending power

About **14.3%** of refugees held at least a bachelor's degree...



...and about **4.4%** held an advanced degree.

Refugees tended to work in these industries in the city in 2019:



55.2%

of refugees in the area were naturalized U.S. citizens.

DACA-Eligible Population

In 2019, DACA-eligible people made up



of the foreign-born population.

²⁰ New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

²¹ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

²² Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

Undocumented Immigrants

7,400

Number of undocumented immigrants in Saint Paul in 2019

They made up



of the foreign-born population in Saint Paul in 2019.

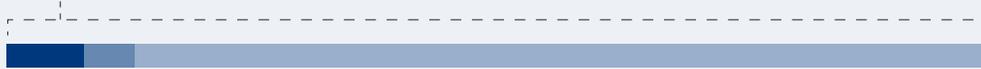
Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. About



are of working-age in the city.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households earned

\$159.8 million



■ **\$12.3 million**

went to federal taxes²³

■ **\$7.6 million** went to state & local taxes²⁴

■ **\$139.9 million** left in spending power

²³ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

²⁴ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

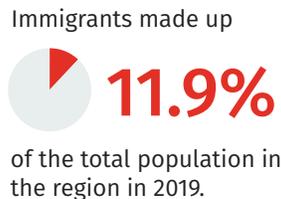
New Americans in East Metro Area, MN

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Region²⁵

Population

144,900

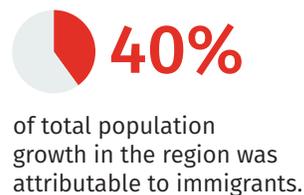
immigrants lived in the East Metro Area, Minnesota, in 2019.



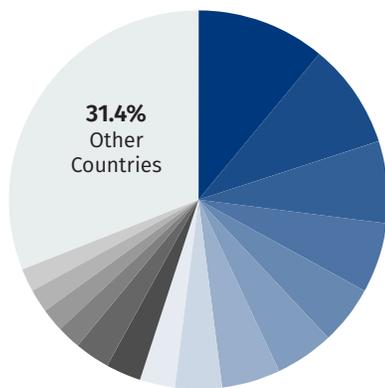
Between 2014 and 2019, the population in the region increased by



The immigrant population increased by **+16.2%** during the same time period.



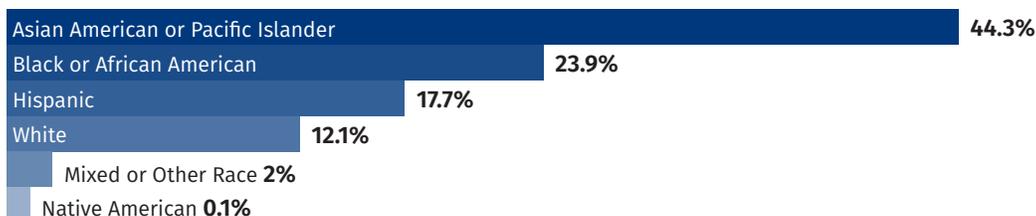
Demographics



The top countries of origin for immigrants living in the region:

- Mexico (11.1%)
- Laos (8.5%)
- Thailand (6.8%)
- Ethiopia (6.2%)
- India (5.3%)
- Somalia (4.9%)
- Burma (Myanmar) (4.7%)
- Vietnam (4%)
- Korea (3.4%)
- China (3.3%)
- Philippines (3.2%)
- Eritrea (2.2%)
- Kenya (1.7%)
- El Salvador (1.7%)
- Canada (1.6%)

The immigrant population by race and ethnicity:



²⁵ East Metro Area refers to Ramsey, Dakota and Washington counties in Minnesota.

Demographics *continued*

30,700

immigrants living in the region had limited English language proficiency, making up



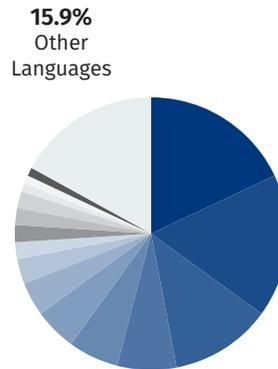
of the immigrant population.

Among them, the top languages spoken at home other than English were:

Spanish	29.2%
Hmong	19.7%
Karen	14.7%
Vietnamese	7.3%
Somali, Oromo, Beja, and other Cushite language	5.9%
Chinese	2.9%

The top languages spoken for immigrants living in the region

English (17.7%)	Amharic and related (5.7%)	French (2.3%)
Spanish (16.5%)	Karen (5.3%)	Russian (1.8%)
Hmong (12.4%)	Vietnamese (3.7%)	Arabic (1.6%)
Somali, Oromo, Beja, and other Cushite language (7.4%)	Chinese (3.4%)	Telugu (1.4%)
	Filipino, Tagalog (2.3%)	Nepali (1.4%)
		Mon-Khmer, Cambodian (1.2%)



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 the region.

In 2019, immigrant households in East Metro Area earned **\$4.6 billion**

■ **\$811.8 million**

went to federal taxes²⁶

■ **\$443.3 million** went to state & local taxes²⁷

■ **\$3.4 billion** left in spending power

In 2019, foreign-born residents in the region contributed

\$9.6 billion

to the county's GDP, or **11.5%** of the total²⁸

26 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

27 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

28 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.