

New Americans in Lancaster County

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County¹

MARCH 2022



Population

25,600

immigrants lived in Lancaster County, Nebraska, in 2019.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in the county in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the county increased by



The immigrant population increased by



during the same time period.



of the total population growth in the county was attributable to immigrants.

Demographics



of immigrants in Lancaster County are recent arrivals, with no more than 5 years of residency in the United States, meaning



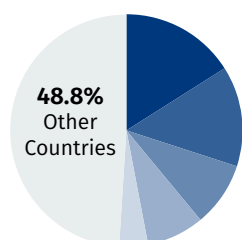
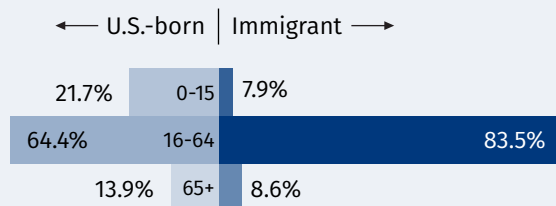
of immigrants in the county have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years.

In the county, 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.²

Shares of population by age groups:³



The top five countries of origin for immigrants living in the county:

- Mexico (15.9%)
- Vietnam (13.5%)
- China (9.4%)
- Iraq (8.4%)
- Sudan (4.0%)

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

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

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

Demographics

5,600

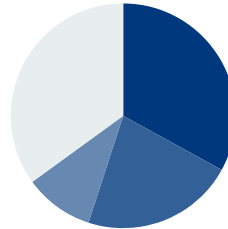
immigrants living in the county had limited English language proficiency, making up



of the immigrant population.

The top languages spoken at home other than English were:

- Spanish (33.4%)
- Vietnamese (21.9%)
- Chinese (10.4%)
- Other (34.3%)



180,800

immigrant workers worked in the county in 2019.

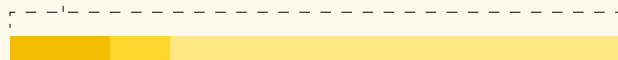


or **15,900** immigrant workers in the county were foreign-born.

Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

In 2019, immigrant households in Lancaster County earned **\$605.1 million**



■ **\$89.2 million**

went to federal taxes⁴

■ **\$60.1 million** went to state & local taxes⁵

■ **\$455.7 million** left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held



of all spending power in the county.

In 2019, foreign-born residents in the county contributed

\$1.5 billion

to the county's GDP, or **7.8%** of the total.⁶

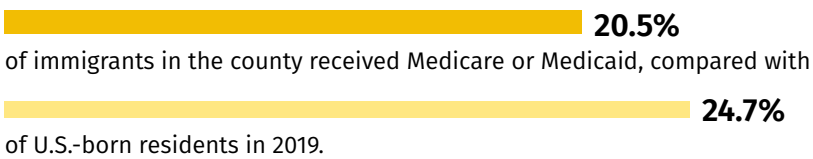
4 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

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

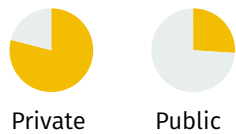
6 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2019 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Spending Power & Tax Contributions *(continued)*

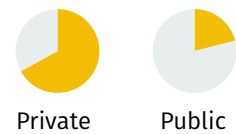
Immigrants in the county also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed



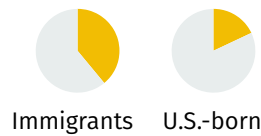
About **79.1%** of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage, while **25.6%** had public healthcare coverage.⁷



About **66.5%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **20.6%** had public healthcare coverage.



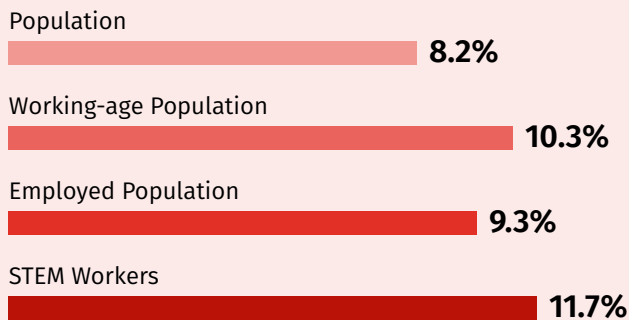
Given their household incomes, **38.8%** of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to **18.4%** of U.S.-born residents.



Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **8.2%** of the county's overall population, they represented **10.3%** of its working-age population, **9.3%** of its employed labor force, and **11.7%** of its STEM workers in 2019.⁸

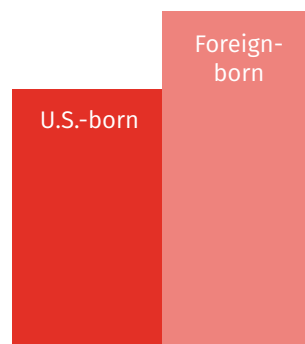
Immigrant shares of the...



Immigrants in the county are

29.7%

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



⁷ Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

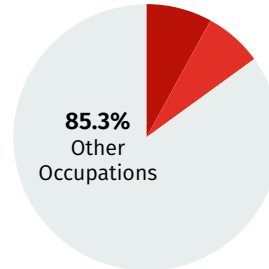
Workforce

The immigrant working-age population was **48.8%** female and **51.2%** male.



Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in Lancaster County in 2019:

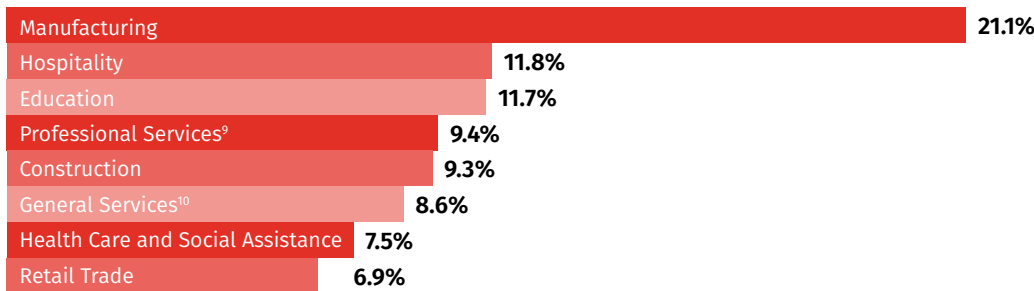
- Postsecondary Teachers (7.8%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (6.9%)



The employed immigrant population was **43.4%** female and **56.6%** male.



Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the county. This included:



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 county continue working in these frontline and essential industries:

Food Service

Immigrants made up



Construction

Immigrants made up



Healthcare

Immigrants made up



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

1,200 manufacturing jobs

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹¹

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

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

10 Professional services mostly include industries that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.

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

Workforce *continued*

SPOTLIGHT ON Job Demand In Lancaster County In 2021

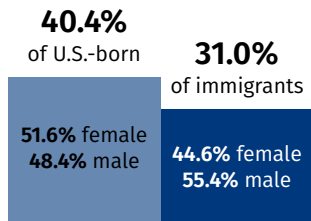
Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the county, but they are also a crucial part of the county's economy, and could help us meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare increases.

The top 5 industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers:¹²

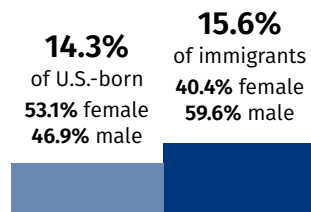
1. Public Administration
2. Information
3. Finance and Insurance
4. Health Care and Social Assistance
5. Accommodation and Food Services

Education

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



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



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



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

SPOTLIGHT ON University Population

2,638

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Lancaster County in fall 2019 were temporary residents.¹³

308

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

982

jobs in higher education were supported by international students in the 2019-2020 academic year. International students contributed

\$98.6 million

during the same year.¹⁴

¹³ 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.

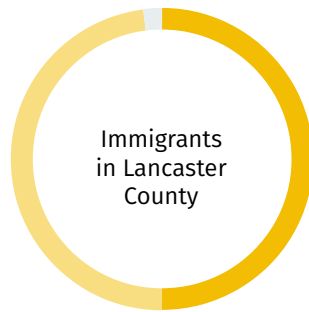
¹⁴ Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

Housing

In 2019, **40.0%** of immigrant households in Lancaster County owned their own homes, compared to **62.1%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born



- Lived in Houses **5,300, or 50.0%**
- Lived in Apartments **5,100, or 48.0%**
- Lived in Other Types of Housing **2.0%**

The total property value of immigrant households was

\$719 million



60.0% of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was

\$50.1 million

77.0% of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their homes as compared to **87.9%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born

Naturalization



- **46.2%** Naturalized Citizens (11,800)
- **14.3%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize (3,700)
- **39.5%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (10,100)



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



of households in Lancaster County 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

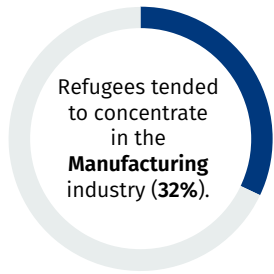
+8.9%¹⁵

¹⁵ Enchautegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. "The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities." Urban Institute.

Refugees

7,300

residents, or **28.4%** of the foreign-born population in Lancaster County, were likely refugees.¹⁶



70.6%

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

17.9%

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

In 2019, refugee households in the county earned **\$185.5 million**

■ **\$24.6 million**

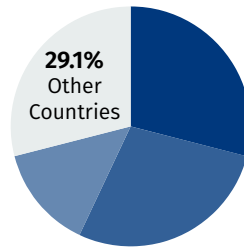
went to federal taxes¹⁷

■ **\$18.5 million** went to state & local taxes¹⁸

■ **\$142.4 million** left in spending power

The top countries of origin for the refugee population in the county:

- Vietnam (28.8%)
- Iraq (28.1%)
- Sudan (14.0%)



Undocumented Immigrants

5,000

undocumented immigrants in Lancaster County in 2019. They made up

19.6%

of the immigrant population.

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. About

82.7%

are of working-age in the county.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households earned **\$78.5 million**

■ **\$4.2 million**

went to federal taxes¹⁹

■ **\$4.0 million** went to state & local taxes²⁰

■ **\$70.2 million** was left in spending power

The top country of origin for undocumented immigrants in the county was **Mexico (36.9%).**

¹⁶ *New American Economy*. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

¹⁷ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

¹⁸ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

¹⁹ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

²⁰ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

New Americans in the City of Lincoln

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the City

Population

23,300

immigrants lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2019.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in the city in 2019.

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



The immigrant population increased by

+15.7%

during the same time period.

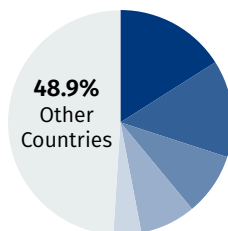


of the total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants.

Demographics

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

- Mexico (16.0%)
- Vietnam (13.6%)
- China (9.6%)
- Iraq (8.3%)
- India (3.6%)



Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

In 2019, immigrant households in Lincoln earned **\$546.3 million**

■ **\$80.3 million**

went to federal taxes²¹

■ **\$54.3 million** went to state & local taxes²²

■ **\$411.7 million** left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held



of all spending power in the city.

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."

SPOTLIGHT ON

David Manzanares

In 2017, David Manzanares moved to Lincoln with his Nebraskan-born wife and two sons, then ages 3 and 1. Manzanares is a mural and sculpture artist whose work often revolves around his Oaxacan heritage. He hoped America would help expand his audience and provide more job opportunities.

But Manzanares found it difficult to navigate the bureaucracy of the immigration process. “Many people don’t realize how long it takes,” he says. “It was a stressful time.” While waiting for his work permit and green card, he wasn’t allowed to earn a paycheck or get a driver’s license. That essentially stranded him at home and put the burden of supporting the family on his wife, a biologist. He also struggled to find his footing as an artist. Back home in Mexico, he was well established. In Lincoln, curators and museums seemed unwilling to give him a chance.

Over time, he began doing public art installations and gained recognition. A recent mural reflects the disproportionate toll Covid has taken on communities of color and features portraits of pandemic victims, including Manzanares’ father. “It helped me cope with my grief,” he says. He finished it a few days before Dia de Los Muertos when dozens of community members placed “ofrendas” or offerings in front of the mural to honor the dead. “Art is related to the community, and it’s important for me to address the things I want to see changed,” he says.

For instance, Manzanares believes there should be more teacher diversity at local public schools, given the large non-white student population. He has advocated for this, along with more ESL classes and services in Spanish at schools like Everett Elementary in South Lincoln, where he teaches art through an after-school program. “It’s important for students to see people in authority who look and talk like their parents,” he says.

One thing Lincoln has done well is My City Academy. Through the program, Manzanares has been able to advocate for his community: helping immigrants get driver’s licenses and requesting more Spanish signs and instructions around the city. “It’s an opportunity for city officials to look beyond their bubble,” he says.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Maysoon Shaheen

Maysoon Shaheen fled Iraq in 1998 during Saddam Hussein’s regime, a move that likely saved her life. In order to receive her bachelor’s in education, Shaheen was required to sign a form saying she supported Saddam. She refused and escaped to Jordan. “I couldn’t receive my diploma or any paperwork proving I’d earned my degree, but we had to leave the country just to feel safe,” she said.

During her two and a half years in a refugee camp, Shaheen met her husband, a former math teacher from Iraq. They married a few days before they left for America as refugees. But the transition wasn’t easy. Shaheen had left behind family, friends, culture and language – and each day presented new challenges. Her husband found work as a machine operator at a mail sorting center. Catholic Services connected her to a job agency, but they didn’t have placements for anyone with a higher education. Instead, Shaheen worked at the same mail sorting center as her husband. But through volunteering to translate for friends at their doctor appointments, she was hired as a medical interpreter a year later. She returned to school, graduating from University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2017 with a master’s in ESL teaching.

Today, Shaheen works as an interpreter at the local company LanguageLinc, teaches ESL online through Southeast Community College, and is a doctoral student of education at Doane University. She often advises immigrant women with higher education degrees from their home countries on how to navigate the American job market. “I want them to feel confident in their educational journeys,” she says. “Once a woman decides to start this journey, nothing can stop her.”

Over the years, she’s seen Lincoln offer more services to newcomers. She’s particularly impressed with a program called My City Academy, which is run by the City of Lincoln Commission on Human Rights and teaches immigrants how to utilize local government services. Through the program, she became an ambassador for her local Arabic community, connecting people with education, job assistance and healthcare. “We had to do everything ourselves when we arrived,” she says. “I only wish we had this back then.”