

New Americans in Southwest Kansas

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Region ^{1,2}

MARCH 2022



Population

29,600

immigrants lived in the Southwest Kansas region in 2019.³

Immigrants made up



of the total population in the region in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the region decreased by



The immigrant population increased by



during the same time period.

Without the growth in the immigrant population, the decline in the region's population would have been greater, falling by



The overall population in the region was **138,232** in 2010, and by 2020, had decreased by **1.8%** to **135,811**.⁴

Demographics



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



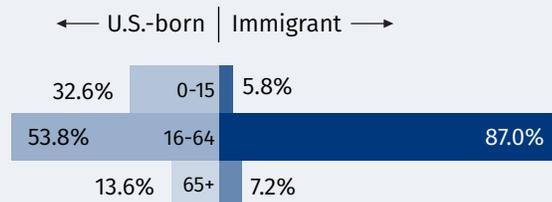
of immigrants in the region have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years.

In the region, 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.⁵

Shares of population by age groups:⁶



Among the U.S.-born residents, age group of 0 - 15,



were children of immigrants.

1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to the Southwest Kansas region, including the counties of Clark, Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Meade, Morton, Seward, Stanton, and Stevens in Kansas.

2 Estimates provided in this report may slightly undercount the immigrant population. The American Community Survey historically undersamples the foreign-born population, especially among lower income, more recently arrived, and less English-fluent immigrant populations.

3 We define "immigrant" as any non-citizen or any naturalized U.S. citizen. They include naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.

4 U.S. Census Bureau, 2020.

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

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

Demographics *continued*

13,200

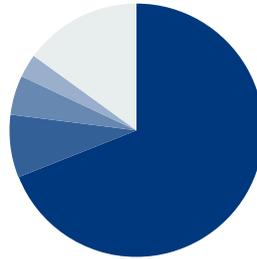
immigrants living in the region had limited English language proficiency, making up



of the immigrant population.⁷

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

- Mexico (68.7%)
- Guatemala (7.7%)
- El Salvador (5.4%)
- Vietnam (2.9%)
- Other Countries (15.3%)



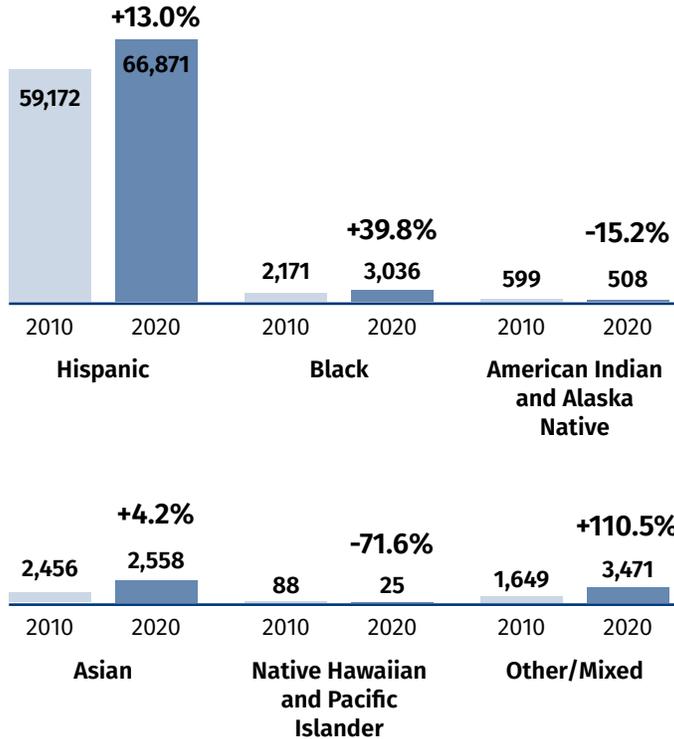
67,900

commuters worked in the region in 2019. Of these,



or **19,900** commuters, in the region were foreign-born.

Share of population by ethnic groups⁸:

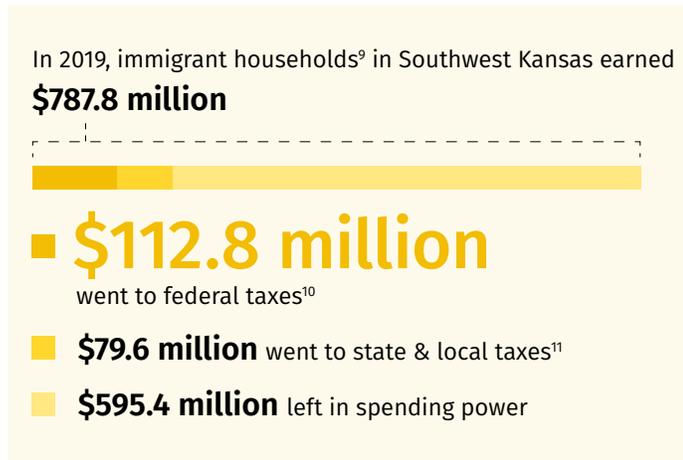


⁷ For the purpose of this report, we define people with limited English language proficiency as the ones who do not speak English at all or do not speak English well.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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



This means that foreign-born households held

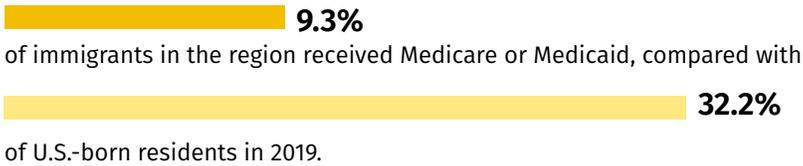


of all spending power in the region.

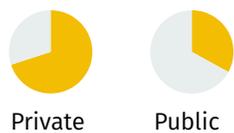
In 2019, foreign-born residents in the region contributed



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



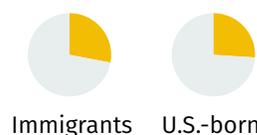
About **69.6%** of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage¹³, while **32.6%** had public healthcare coverage.



About **65.2%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **9.5%** had public healthcare coverage.



Given their household incomes, **27.6%** of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to **25.5%** of U.S.-born residents.



⁹ Immigrant households refer to people living in a housing unit with an immigrant being the head of their unit.

¹⁰ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017"

¹¹ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

¹² 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.

¹³ Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Ehlam Abdalla

Sudanese Refugee

Ehlam Abdalla grew up as a child of farmers in rural Sudan. She remembers her early life as happy but, when she was still a young child, violence from the Second Sudanese Civil War hit their village. Many families were dispersed. “We spent years moving from safe area to safe area,” she said. Eventually, they fled to Jordan. In November 2016, after three years in a refugee camp, Abdalla learned she was being resettled in the United States. She was 30 by then, married with a family of her own. “I didn’t know what to expect in America,” she said. “But I knew it would be a safe place to provide a better future for my children.”

When they landed in Kansas, a case manager from the International Rescue Committee met them at the airport and took them to a hotel. Over the next several weeks, they helped Abdalla and her family secure housing, medical care and social security cards. Later, Catholic Charities stepped in to connect Abdalla to the Kansas Works Office, a local workforce development organization that partners with various state agencies. Through KWO, Abdalla found a job at Walmart and her husband found employment at the Tyson meatpacking plant.

Today, after a lifetime of instability, Garden City has given the family the safety and stability she only dreamed of having during the Sudanese Civil War. “Garden City is a small town,” says Abdalla, who just welcomed her fourth child. “It’s very safe here and the people are very nice. Especially the people working for Catholic Charities. I never imagined that there would be as nice people as those. They helped me with everything.”

And now, in return, Abdalla is helping the community that helped her. Her role at Walmart is in the pharmacy department, stocking over-the-counter medications to ensure the health of her neighbors. “It’s a very good place to work,” she says. “I hope one day other refugees abroad will have the opportunity to come live here safely too.”

SPOTLIGHT ON

Jesus Carlos Rivera

First Generation Immigrant

In 1993, Jesus Carlos Rivera, his wife and their four children, ages 12 through three, immigrated from their native Mexico to Dodge City. Rivera’s sister-in-law is a U.S. citizen and was already living in Kansas. She told the family that the United States offered more opportunities and offered to sponsor them. Rivera was hesitant at first; he worked in a bottle factory for Coca-Cola making \$60 per week, which afforded the family “a decent living,” he says. And he’d already been with the company for 18 years, working his way up to sales supervisor, so the prospect of starting over in a new country was daunting. “But I decided to put it in God’s hands,” he says.

Acclimating to life in their new hometown was challenging. The cost of living was higher than in Mexico. So, after years working as a stay-at-home mother, Rivera’s wife rejoined the workforce. Both she and Rivera work at Cargill Meat Solution. Rivera pulled double shifts, preparing and packaging beef for sale. Meanwhile, their children missed their friends and struggled with the language barrier in school.

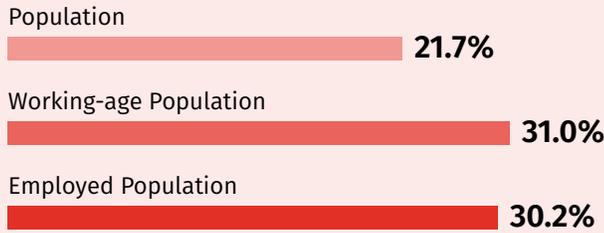
Luckily, after months of hard work, the Riveras began to see progress. They saved up and moved out of their in-law’s home and into their own rental. Their children learned English, made new friends and earned good grades. And the family joined a Christian church, where they found community and support. In 1997, Rivera got a new job working for National Beef packaging meat for distribution to stores and restaurants and for export. Five years later, the family purchased their first home.

Now in his sixties, Rivera still works for National Beef — although he no longer has to work double shifts to make ends meet. His career made it possible for his four children to go to college. “I take a look back and see if we had not moved here, I would not have been able to provide the same opportunities to my children they’d had here,” he says. “My daughter often tells her siblings ‘thanks to the sacrifice my dad made for us, we have a better future.’ Hearing her say that affects me deeply emotionally,” Rivera says. “Without me saying anything, she recognizes our sacrifice.”

Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **21.7%** of the region's overall population, they represented **31.0%** of its working-age population, and **30.2%** of its employed labor force.

Immigrant shares of the...



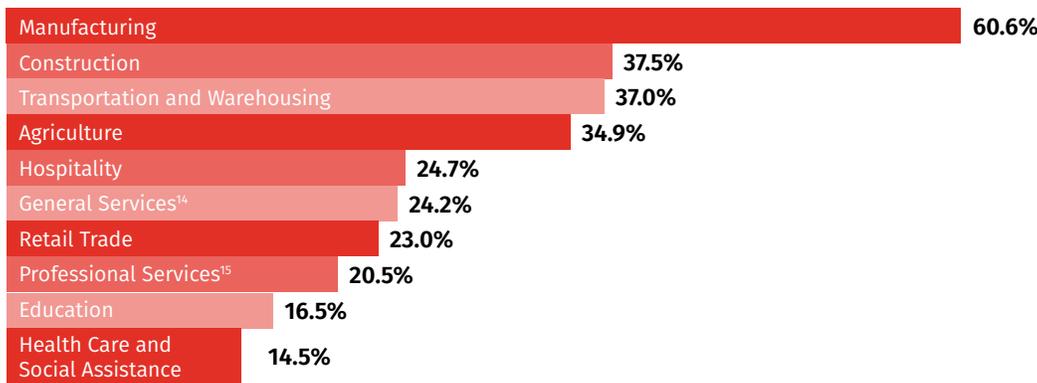
The immigrant working-age population was **45.3%** female and **54.7%** male.



The employed immigrant population was **34.9%** female and **65.1%** male.



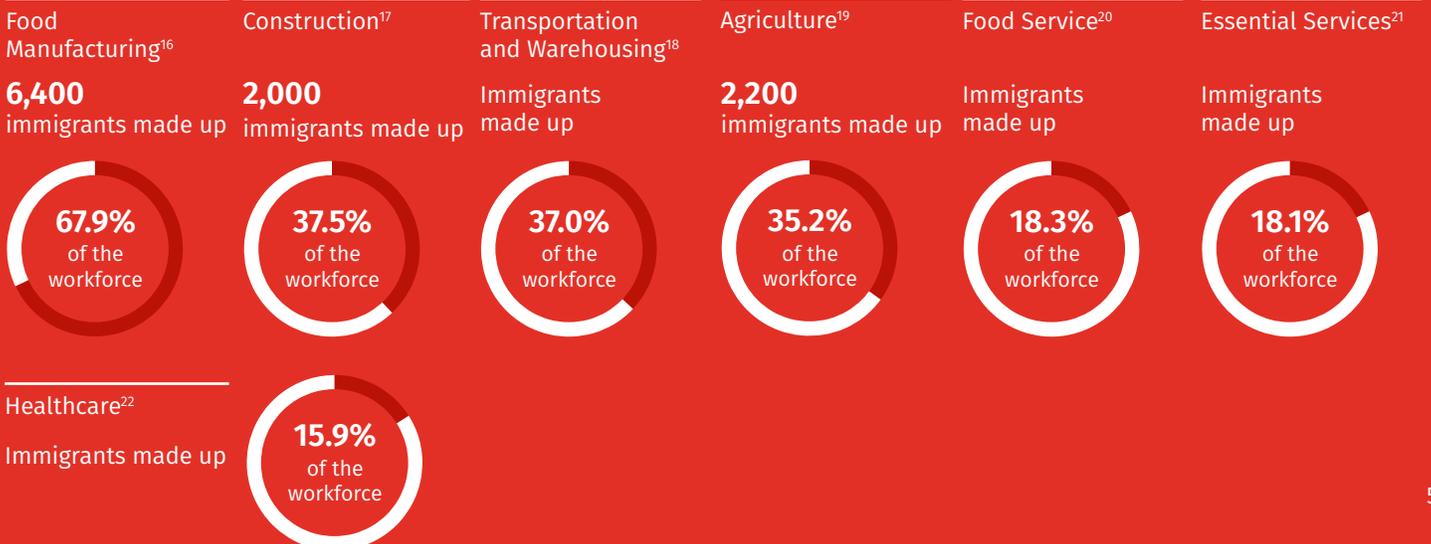
Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the Southwest Kansas region. Here are the percentages of workers in these industries that are immigrants:



- 14 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
- 15 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.
- 16 This includes food industries such as dairy product manufacturing, animal slaughtering and processing, and fruit and vegetable preserving.
- 17 This includes industries engaged in the construction of buildings or non-building projects (such as highways, bridges, and railroads), and related specialty trade contractors.
- 18 This includes transportation industries including air, rail, water, and truck transportation, bus services and urban transit, and taxi service, as well as postal service and warehousing and storage.
- 19 This includes crop production, animal production, and aquaculture.
- 20 This includes restaurants, drinking places, and other food services.
- 21 These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.
- 22 This includes healthcare facilities such as offices of physicians, hospitals, outpatient care centers, nursing care facilities, and home health care services.

SPOTLIGHT ON Immigrant Essential Workers

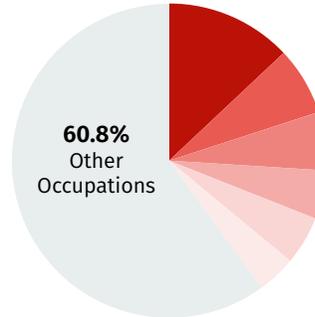
Immigrants have also been playing vital roles in critical industries that have kept the country functioning throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Immigrants in the Southwest Kansas region continue working in these frontline and essential industries:



Workforce *continued*

Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in Southwest Kansas in 2019. Here are the percentages of immigrants who work in these occupations:

- Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers (12.4%)
- Other Agricultural Workers (7.2%)
- Truck Drivers (5.9%)
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (5.2%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (4.9%)
- Construction Laborers (3.6%)



Top Occupations for Female Workers:

Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers 14.3%

Top Occupations for Male Workers:

Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers 11.5%
 Other Agricultural Workers 10.0%
 Truck Drivers 9.0%

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

1,400
manufacturing jobs

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.²³

Entrepreneurship

1,800

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

\$63.7 million

in business income for Southwest Kansas.

While making up 21.7% of the population, immigrants made up



of the business owners in the region in 2019.

While



of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs,



of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses.

²³ Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

Education

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

22.3%

of U.S.-born



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



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

SPOTLIGHT ON

University Population

90

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Southwest Kansas in fall 2019 were temporary residents.²⁴

International students supported

3 jobs

in higher education and other areas including accommodations, food, and transportation.

International students contributed

\$762,158

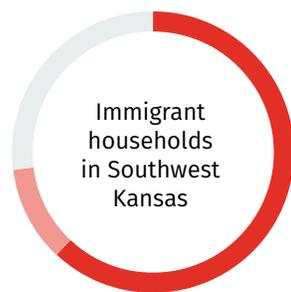
in the 2019-2020 academic year.²⁵

Housing

In 2019, **67.3%** of immigrant households in Southwest Kansas owned their own homes, compared to **67.2%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born



- Lived in Houses **7,800, or 61.8%**
- Lived in Apartments **10.5%**
- Lived in Other Types of Housing **3,500, or 27.7%**

The total property value of immigrant households was

\$997.0 million



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

\$27.5 million



of immigrant households in the Southwest Kansas region had access to broadband connection in their place of residence compared to



of U.S.-born households in 2019.²⁶

²⁴ 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. Temporary residents refer to people who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

²⁵ Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

²⁶ This data point reports whether the respondent or any member of their household subscribed to the Internet using broadband (high speed) Internet service such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL service.

Naturalization



of households in Southwest Kansas 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



- **33.5%** Naturalized Citizens (9,900)
- **14.4%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize²⁷ (4,300)
- **52.2%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (15,400)



- **48.7%** Naturalized Citizens
- **15.9%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize
- **35.4%** Not Eligible to Naturalize

Refugees



refugees, or



of the foreign-born population in Southwest Kansas, were likely refugees in 2019.^{29, 30}

DACA-Eligible Population



DACA-eligible³¹ people in Southwest Kansas in 2019.

They made up



of the foreign-born population.

²⁷ An immigrant is eligible to naturalize if they are documented, have resided in the United States for five years or more, and speak English well or fluently, as well as immigrants in military service who meet certain requirements such as speaking English well. Those who do not fit these criteria are deemed to be not eligible or currently ineligible to naturalize.

²⁸ Enchaetegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. "The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities." Urban Institute.

²⁹ New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

³⁰ Refugees are identified through an imputation method using information including their country of origin and the year of their arrival in the United States, similar to the work of Kallick and Mathema, "Refugee Integration in the United States," and Capps, R. and Newland K., et al. "The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees." More on our methodology here: <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/>

³¹ DACA-eligible population are identified as a subset of the total undocumented population, we apply the guidelines for DACA from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to determine the immigrants in Southwest Kansas who are potentially eligible for DACA. More on our methodology here: <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/>

Undocumented Immigrants

12,700³²

undocumented immigrants³³ lived in the Southwest Kansas region in 2019. They made up



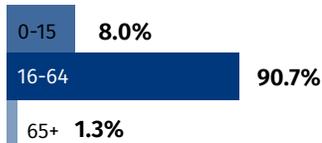
of the foreign-born population.

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. About

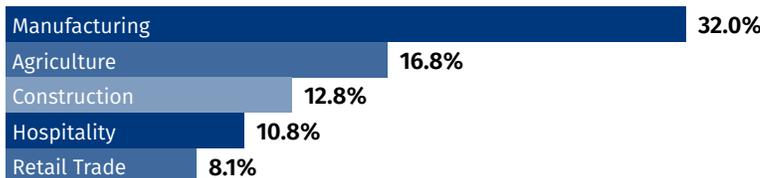


are of working-age in the region.

Undocumented immigrants by age group:



Undocumented immigrants tended to work in these key industries. Here are the percentages of undocumented workers in these industries:



In 2019, undocumented immigrant households³⁴ in the region earned

\$251.0 million

■ **\$15.2 million**

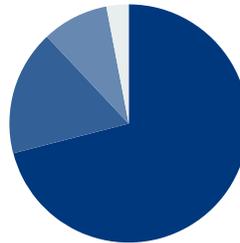
went to federal taxes³⁵

■ **\$12.8 million** went to state & local taxes³⁶

■ **\$223.0 million** left in spending power, or **9.2%** of total spending power in the region

The top countries of origin for the undocumented population in the region:

- Mexico (70.5%)
- Guatemala (16.5%)
- El Salvador (8.6%)
- Other Countries (4.4%)



³² The Pew Research Center estimates the undercount as 5% to 7% for undocumented immigrants and 2% to 3% for the overall immigrant population.

³³ Undocumented immigrants are identified by applying the methodological approach outlined by Harvard University economist George Borjas in his work, "The Labor Supply of Undocumented Immigrants." Immigrants who do not meet a set of criteria for legal status are identified as being undocumented. More on our methodology here: <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/>

³⁴ Undocumented immigrant households refer to people living in a housing unit with an undocumented immigrant being the head of their unit.

³⁵ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017"

³⁶ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

New Americans in Ford County

Population

8,800

immigrants lived in Ford County, Kansas, in 2019.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in the county in 2019.

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



The immigrant population decreased by

-3.8%

during the same time period.

Workforce



of immigrants in Ford County were employed in 2019.

Housing

In 2019,



of immigrant households in Ford County owned their own homes, compared to **40.5%** of U.S.-born households.