In 2014, the total GDP for Allegheny County was $89.6 billion; immigrants contributed $6.8 billion to that GDP.\(^1\)

The foreign-born population in the county wields considerable economic power. In 2014, immigrants held

\[ \text{\$1.8 billion in spending power,} \]

6.3% of the county’s total spending power, with Asian immigrants alone contributing $912 million and Latino immigrants contributing $108 million.\(^2\)

Given their income, we estimate that the foreign-born population in Allegheny County contributed

\[ \text{\$217 million in state and local taxes in 2014,} \]

including property, income, sales, and excise taxes levied by either the State of Pennsylvania or by municipal governments.

Asian immigrants accounted for nearly half of that amount, 49.3%, and Latino immigrants accounted for 6.4%.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Unless otherwise specified, data comes from one-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2000, 2009, and 2014, and figures refer to Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

\(^2\) These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the one-year ACS sample from 2014 and the statistics of GDP by the National Association of Counties.


The Pittsburgh region’s population slightly declined by 0.1% between 2009 and 2014, decreasing from 2,571,680 to 2,569,558. However, during this time the foreign-born population increased by 7.9%, from 76,286 to 82,308, helping offset this decline.

Looking at the population data at the regional, county, and city levels shows that the closer you get to the metropolitan core of the region, Pittsburgh, the larger the foreign-born population is. Distribution of the foreign-born population in the metro area is as follows:

- **Allegheny County**: 62,881 (5.1%)
- **Armstrong County**: 349 (0.5%)
- **Beaver County**: 2,511 (1.5%)
- **Butler County**: 3,293 (1.8%)
- **Fayette County**: 588 (0.4%)
- **Greene County**: 432 (1.2%)
- **Indiana County**: 451 (0.5%)
- **Lawrence County**: 786 (0.9%)
- **Washington County**: 5,614 (2.7%)
- **Westmoreland County**: 5,403 (1.5%)

As a result of the increase in the immigrant population — and the increased economic opportunity and job creation associated with this rise — it is estimated that: 4,875 U.S.-born residents were attracted to the area between 2000 and 2014.

Between 2000 and 2014, the growth in the foreign-born population increased the total housing value in Allegheny county by more than $1 billion. Looking at the period after the Great Recession, between 2009 and 2014, the growth in the foreign-born population increased the total housing value in Allegheny County by $367 million.

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5. The Pittsburgh region includes the 10 counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland.

6. Vigdor, Jacob. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." Partnership for a New American Economy (2013). A national calculation developed by Jacob Vigdor estimates that for every 1,000 immigrants that move to a county, 270 U.S.-born residents move there in response within the next decade. With an increased immigrant population comes increased economic opportunity and job creation, as well as increased service and consumer-oriented businesses, all of which are attractive and draw new residents to the area.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2014, while immigrants were only 5.1% of the county’s total population, they made up 8.6% of its self-employed population.

Foreign-born residents are more likely to start new businesses than the U.S.-born in Allegheny County. In 2014, while only about 1 in 15 U.S.-born workers was self-employed, 1 in 10 foreign-born residents in Allegheny County was self-employed.

This is higher than the national average of about 1 in 13.

In Allegheny County in 2012, businesses owned by Latino residents had $248 million in sales, and 1,216 paid employees.

In the City of Pittsburgh, such businesses had $109 million in sales, and 268 paid employees.

In 2014, self-employed immigrants in Pittsburgh generated $5 million in business income.

In the county, 3,705 foreign-born people worked for their own businesses, generating $120 million in business income.

LABOR FORCE GROWTH

While just 5.1% of the population, Allegheny County’s foreign-born residents accounted for 6.2% of its working-age population and 6% of its employed labor force in 2014.

5.1% of the overall population is foreign-born

6% of the employed labor force is foreign-born

Immigrants are overrepresented in several key industries in the county. This includes:

- Education Services .................................................. 9.3%
- General Services8 .................................................. 8.2%
- Recreation and Accommodation ................................. 7.7%
- Manufacturing ......................................................... 6.9%
- Professional Services9 ............................................. 6.6%
- Finance and Real Estate ............................................. 5.8%
- Health Care and Social Assistance ............................. 5.8%

Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants in Allegheny County helped create or preserve 2,893 local manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.10

2,893 manufacturing jobs

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

9 These industries include professions that require a degree or a license such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.

In 2014, a vast majority (83.5%) of the foreign-born had been in the county for more than a year. 16.5% of foreign-born residents had recently arrived in the county. 83.5% of foreign-born residents had been in the county for more than a year.

- 46.7% came from other U.S. states
- 3.8% moved from other parts of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- 49.5% came from abroad
- 18% Wisconsin
- 12.2% Ohio
- 7.8% Missouri
- 8.4% Virginia
- 24.6% other states
- 29% North Carolina

TOP FIVE DOMESTIC SOURCES (2014)
North Carolina 1,538
Wisconsin 876
Pennsylvania, outside region 776
Ohio 591
Virginia 405
EDUCATIONAL AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

In 2014, close to 56% of immigrants in Allegheny County held at least a bachelor’s degree — nearly double the number of U.S.-born (29%) with the same degree.

More than 85% of immigrants held at least a high-school diploma, compared with 78% of the U.S.-born population.

If Allegheny County retains one half of its international students with a bachelor’s degree or higher after graduation this year, 1,652 local jobs will be created within six years. If the City of Pittsburgh could increase its population of international students by 10%, the number of patents granted to its universities would be expected to rise by about 5%.

In fall 2014, 45,704 students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania held temporary resident visas. These students supported 22,565 local jobs and contributed 1.6 billion in spending to their local economies in that academic year.

In the fall of 2014, the City of Pittsburgh hosted 8,857 students on temporary resident visas. These students supported 5,624 local jobs and contributed $338 million in spending to the city’s economy.

If Allegheny County retains one half of its international students with a bachelor’s degree or higher after graduation this year, 1,652 local jobs will be created within six years.

Such retention will also boost the metro area’s GDP per capita by $385 within the next 30 years, and increase the population by 12,507 people within the next 50 years.

From 2010 to 2013, 4,914 H-1B visas were allocated to Allegheny County.

Data on total student enrollment in the metro area is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics.

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

To derive the patent counts, we used the data on patent assignees available from Patent Full-Text and Image Database maintained by the US Patent and Trademark Office.


About 46% of the county’s immigrant population (28,936 foreign-born residents) have become naturalized citizens.

Of the 33,945 foreign-born people in the county who are not citizens, which includes international students, individuals on work visas, and other types of status, 17,865 foreign-born residents are potentially eligible for citizenship.

Numerous studies have documented that naturalized citizens out-earn non-citizens by as much as 16%, giving them more income to contribute to taxes and to spend in the local economy.  

And due to the increased ease with which they can apply for licenses and insurance, naturalized citizens are also more likely to establish U.S.-based businesses, creating jobs that support the local economy in the process.

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