New Americans in Buffalo and Syracuse

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Foreign-Born Residents in the Metropolitan Areas

Across Upstate New York, New Americans are driving economic growth through regenerating the population, supporting the workforce, starting small businesses, and revitalizing Main Street. In Buffalo and Syracuse, the growing foreign-born community is contributing to the local economy in important—yet distinct—ways. In both metros the immigrant population is diverse, has long-standing ties to the community, and is highly entrepreneurial. Thousands of international students support local jobs and contribute millions in spending.

These strengths allow the immigrant communities of the greater Buffalo and Syracuse metro areas to contribute more than $2 billion in combined spending power to the region’s economy. This brief details the myriad ways in which new Americans are shaping the economic future of the region in two distinct contexts.
New Americans in Buffalo

SPENDING POWER AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2014, foreign-born residents contributed greatly to federal, state, and local taxes, including property, income, sales, and excise taxes levied by either the State of New York or by municipal governments.

- $223.3M — State & local tax contributions
- $408.7M — Federal tax contributions

Leaving them with more than $1.4B in remaining spending power, which supports small businesses and creates local jobs.

This constituted 6.1% of the metro area’s total spending power.

In 2014, foreign-born residents contributed $3.1B to the GDP of the metro area.

Foreign-born residents also support federal social programs. That same year, immigrants in the area contributed $146.4M to Social Security and $42.1M to Medicare.
POPULATION

Metro Buffalo has experienced depopulation for decades. Between 2000 and 2014, however, this trend slowed to a decline of **3.3%**.

During this period, the foreign-born population grew by a robust **32.3%**. Without it, the overall population would have decreased by **4.7%** instead of just 3.3%.

As a result of the new immigrants who came between 2000 and 2014, **4,467** U.S.-born residents were attracted to the metro area.8

**On refugees...**

**7,734** refugees resettled in the Buffalo metro area between 2009 and 2014.7

**22.9%** of metro Buffalo’s foreign-born—or **15,530** people—were refugees in 2014.

**On undocumented immigrants...**

**0.6%** of residents—or **6,900** people—were undocumented in the Buffalo metro area.

**6.0%** Share of immigrants in metro Buffalo, 2014
New Americans in Buffalo

**LABOR FORCE**

- **6%** Immigrants made up only 6.0% of the population in metro Buffalo...

- **6.4%** But they made up 6.4% of the area’s working-age population in 2014.

In fact, immigrants are overrepresented in key industries in metro Buffalo. This includes:

- **Manufacturing**: 8.4%
- **Recreation and Accommodation**: 8.0%
- **Health Care and Social Assistance**: 6.1%

Immigrants living in metro Buffalo in 2014 have helped companies fill their workforce needs and keep jobs on U.S. soil, creating or preserving an estimated...

**3,116** local manufacturing jobs that would have vanished or moved elsewhere.

**HOUSING WEALTH**

Between 2000 and 2014, immigration to metro Buffalo increased the total housing value in the region by **$964.5M**.

Looking at just the period after the Great Recession, 2009 to 2014, immigrants raised the total housing value in the region by **$61.2M**.
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2,691 immigrants in Buffalo metro area are self-employed. Their businesses generated $121M in business income in 2014.¹²

Foreign-born residents are more likely than U.S.-born residents to start their own businesses.

7.4% of the self-employed population is foreign-born, more than their share of the population at 6.0%.

In 2014, 6.5% of U.S.-born residents in metro Buffalo were self-employed. Meanwhile, 9.1% of foreign-born residents were self-employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Businesses Owned, 2012¹³</th>
<th>Sales Revenue, 2012</th>
<th>Number of Paid Employees, 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Residents in metro Buffalo¹⁴</td>
<td>2,615</td>
<td>$783M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Residents in metro Buffalo</td>
<td>1,487</td>
<td>$444M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDUCATIONAL AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Foreign-born residents tend to have higher levels of education than U.S.-born citizens in Buffalo metro area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER</th>
<th>ADVANCED DEGREE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign-Born</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-Born</td>
<td>U.S.-Born</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
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8,506 Number of students with temporary resident visas in the area enrolled in higher education during fall of 2014.\(^15\)

8,506 Number of students with temporary resident visas in the area enrolled in higher education during fall of 2014.\(^15\)

$200.5M Spending that academic year.\(^16\)

2,382 Local jobs they supported.

921 STEM degrees earned by international students graduating from higher education in 2014.

If metro Buffalo retains one-half of its international students after graduation with bachelor’s degrees or higher, 1,632 local jobs will be created within six years,\(^17\) boosting the area’s real GDP by $321.2M in 2014 terms within the next 30 years,\(^18\) and increasing its population by 12,823 people within the next 50 years.\(^19\)
New Americans in Buffalo

**LANGUAGE**

Share of metro Buffalo residents speaking a language other than English at home in 2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Citizenship Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Under 18</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>79.2% of them were citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>69.2% of them were citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NATURALIZATION**

31,302

Number of naturalized immigrants as of 2014.

Among the residents who were non-citizens, 39%, or 14,240 people, were eligible to naturalize.
In 2014, a vast majority, **89.5%**, of the foreign-born had lived in metro Buffalo for more than a year.

Of the **10.5%** of foreign-born residents who recently arrived to the metro area...

- **57.2%** came from abroad....
- **26.1%** came from within the state...
- And **16.7%** came from other U.S. states.*

Top Six Countries of Origin of the Foreign-Born Population:

1. Canada ................................................. 9.1%
2. India* .................................................... 7.1%
3. China ................................................. 6.6%
4. Germany* ........................................ 3.9%
5. Italy* .................................................. 3.3%
6. Burma* ............................................. 3.0%

* Number of unweighted observations within the sample is below 50.
In 2014, foreign-born residents contributed greatly to federal, state, and local taxes, including property, income, sales, and excise taxes levied by either the State of New York or by municipal governments.

$93.9M — State & local tax contributions

$140.4M — Federal tax contributions

Leaving them with more than $607.8M in remaining spending power, which supports small businesses and creates local jobs.

This constituted 4.9% of the metro area’s total spending power.

In 2014, foreign-born residents contributed $1.7B to the GDP of the metro area.

Foreign-born residents also support federal social programs. That same year, immigrants in the area contributed $89.2M to Social Security and $22.4M to Medicare.
POPULATION

Metro Syracuse has experienced depopulation for decades. Between 2000 and 2014, however, this trend reversed to a 1.8% increase in the overall population.

During this period, the foreign-born population grew by a robust 42.5%, including a sizeable number of resettled refugees. Without them, the overall population would have remained roughly unchanged.

On undocumented immigrants...

6.2%
Share of immigrants in metro Syracuse, 2014

0.4% of residents—or 2,449 people—were undocumented in the Syracuse metro area.

On refugees...

5,658 refugees resettled in metro Syracuse between 2009 and 2014.

26.2% of metro Syracuse’s foreign-born residents—or 10,707 people—were refugees in 2014.
Immigrants living in metro Syracuse in 2014 have helped companies fill their workforce needs and keep jobs on U.S. soil, creating or preserving an estimated 1,877 local manufacturing jobs that would have vanished or moved elsewhere.27

In fact, immigrants are overrepresented in key industries in metro Syracuse.25 This includes:

- **General Services**: 10.8%
- **Manufacturing**: 10%
- **Wholesale Trade**: 7.9%

Immigrants made up only 6.2% of the population in metro Syracuse...

But they made up 6.9% of the area’s working-age population in 2014.

Between 2000 and 2014, immigration to metro Syracuse increased the total housing value in the region by $406.5M.

Looking at just the period after the Great Recession, 2009 to 2014, immigrants raised the total housing value in the region by $233.5M.28
**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

1,681 immigrants in Syracuse metro area are self-employed. Their businesses generated $22.3M in business income in 2014.29

7.4% of the self-employed population is foreign-born, more than their share of the population at 6.2%.

Foreign-born residents are more likely than U.S.-born residents to start their own businesses.

In 2014, 7.2% of U.S.-born residents in metro Syracuse were self-employed. Meanwhile, 8.9% of foreign-born residents were self-employed.

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<td>$301.6M</td>
<td>2,228</td>
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<td>971</td>
<td>$95.1M</td>
<td>509</td>
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4,801
Number of students with temporary resident visas in the area enrolled in higher education during fall of 2014.31

$209.5M
Spending that academic year.32

640
STEM degrees earned by international students graduating from higher education in 2014.

2,815
Local jobs the supported.

If metro Syracuse retains one-half of its international students after graduation with bachelor’s degrees or higher, 912 local jobs will be created within six years,33 boosting the area’s real GDP by $180.6M in 2014 terms within the next 30 years,34 and increasing its population by 7,311 people within the next 50 years.35
New Americans in Syracuse

Number of naturalized immigrants as of 2014.

Among the residents who were non-citizens, 41.8%, or 18,209 people, were eligible to naturalize.
MIGRATION

In 2014, a vast majority, 90.4%, of the foreign-born had lived in metro Syracuse for more than a year.

Of the 9.6% of foreign-born residents who recently arrived to the metro area...

60.7% came from abroad....

32.5% came from other U.S. states...

And 6.7% came from within the state.*

**Top Six Countries of Origin of the Foreign-Born Population:**

1. China* ................................................ 8.2%
2. Canada* ............................................. 7.8%
3. Cuba* .................................................. 5.1%
4. India* .................................................. 4.3%
5. Ukraine* ........................................... 4.2%
6. Italy* ................................................... 3.7%

* Number of unweighted observations within the sample is below 50.
Endnotes

1 We use the Office of Management and Budget definitions of the Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the Syracuse MSA. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from one-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2009 and 2014, as well as the five-percent sample from 2000 census, and figures refer to these two metro areas.

2 For the purposes of this report, the terms “New American”, “foreign-born” and “immigrant” refer to anyone born outside of the United States residing in the metro areas of Buffalo and Syracuse. These terms are inclusive of refugee, documented and undocumented populations.


5 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. Case counts for Hispanic foreign-born are lower than 50.

6 These figures derive from our calculations based on foreign-born residents’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the one-year ACS sample from 2014 and the statistics of GDP by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.

7 U.S. Department of State’s Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System.

8 Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. “Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market.” Partnership for a New American Economy. Estimates of the increase in total housing value as a result of the rising immigrant population are derived from this report, which found that each immigrant moving in a county increased the value of each housing unit in that county by 11.6 cents. We apply this multiplier to the change in the foreign-born population between 2000 and 2014 and between 2009 and 2014 to produce our estimates.

9 These three industries have fewer than 50 cases observed in the sample.


12 Number of observations is below 50.

13 2012 Survey of Business Owners, U.S. Census Bureau

14 Data on businesses owned by Asian and Hispanic residents are inclusive of foreign-born and native-born populations.

15 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.


Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. Case counts for Asian foreign-born and Hispanic foreign-born are lower than 50.

These figures derive from our calculations based on foreign-born residents’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the one-year ACS sample from 2014 and the statistics of GDP by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.

U.S. Department of State’s Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System.

These three industries have fewer than 50 cases observed in the sample.

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


Number of observations is below 50.

2012 Survey of Business Owners, U.S. Census Bureau

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.


Want more information about this region? See our report:

The Contributions of New Americans in New York