

Economic Impact Report of New Americans in Kent County

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants¹ in the County²

POPULATION



8.9%

Immigrant share of the
county's population, 2019

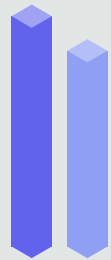
57,400

Number of immigrants living
in Kent County, Michigan in 2019.³

The **Diversity Index Score**
for Kent County in 2020 was

47.4%,

an increase of **7.1 percentage points**⁴ from 2010.⁵



POPULATION GROWTH

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population
of the county increased by **5.2%**.

During the same period, the immigrant
population increased by **27.2%**.

Total population growth

5.2%

Immigrant population growth

27.2%



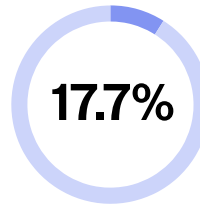
38.2%

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

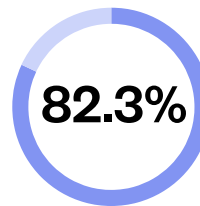
DEMOGRAPHICS

11.7%

of households in Kent County in 2019 had at least one immigrant.

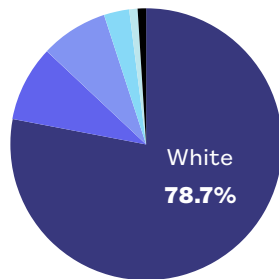


Approximate share of immigrants in Kent County who were recent arrivals, with five years of residency in the United States or less.



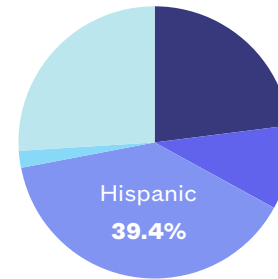
Share of immigrants in the county who resided in the United States for more than five years.

Share of the **U.S.-born population** by race:



- 1 White78.7%
- 2 Black/African American 9.0%
- 3 Hispanic.....7.8%
- 4 Mixed/Other Race3.5%
- 5 Asian American/Pacific Islander .. 0.8%
- 6 Native American 0.2%

Share of the **immigrant population** by race:



- 1 Hispanic..... 39.4%
- 2 Asian American/Pacific Islander . 25.6%
- 3 White 23.2%
- 4 Black/African American9.7%
- 5 Mixed/Other Race 2.1%

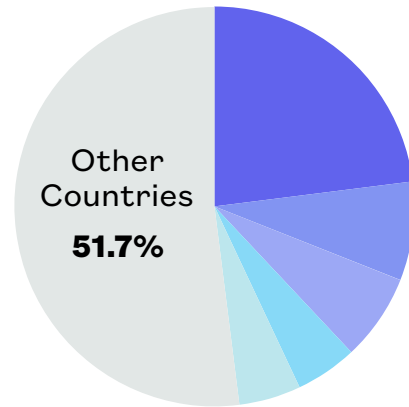
The top regions of origin for immigrants living in the county:



DEMOGRAPHICS (CONTINUED)

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

| | | |
|---|-----------|-------|
| 1 | Mexico | 23.1% |
| 2 | Guatemala | 8.2% |
| 3 | Vietnam | 7.1% |
| 4 | Bosnia | 5.2% |
| 5 | India | 4.7% |



The top languages spoken at home other than English among immigrants:



IMMIGRANTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The number of immigrants living in Kent County with limited English language proficiency was more than

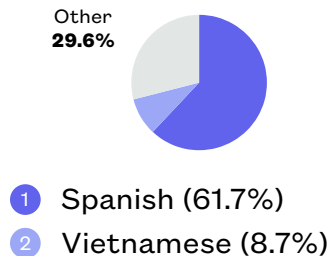
15,700

This represented

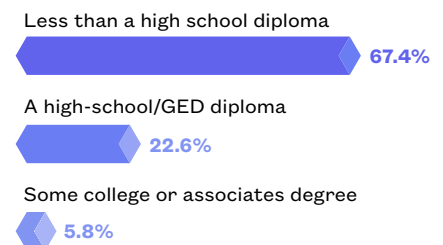
27.8%

of the immigrant population.⁶

Among those with limited English language proficiency, the top languages spoken at home other than English were:



Among those with limited English language proficiency aged 25 or above, educational attainment was as follows:



SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

The median household income in Kent County was:

\$67,100

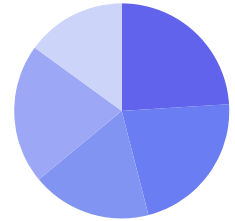
for U.S.-born residents

\$57,000

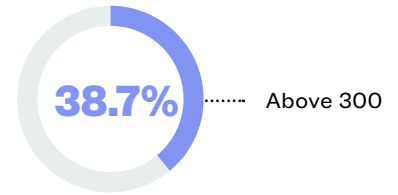
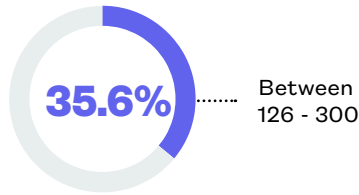
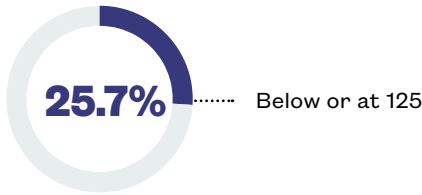
for immigrant residents

Distribution of immigrant households by (regional) income quintile:

- 1 Quintile 1 (<\$28,550) 24.0%
- 2 Quintile 2 (\$28,551 - \$50,906) .21.9%
- 3 Quintile 3 (\$50,907 - \$76,980) .18.5%
- 4 Quintile 4 (\$76,981 - \$117,200) . 21.1%
- 5 Quintile 5 (>\$117,200)14.5%



Immigrant household income relative to federal poverty thresholds:



In 2019, immigrant residents in Kent County contributed **\$5.0B** to the county’s gross domestic product (GDP), or **9.1%** of total GDP that year.⁷

Immigrants paid a significant amount in federal, state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments.

In 2019, immigrant households⁸ in Kent County earned:

\$1.7B

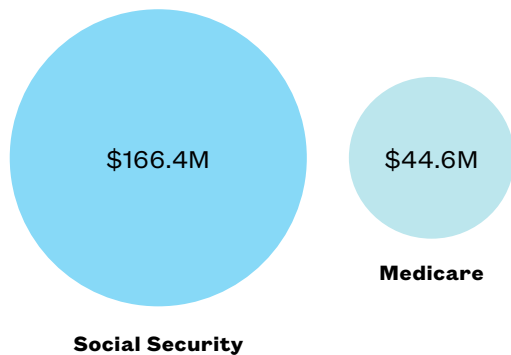
\$266.3M went to federal taxes.⁹

\$142.0M went to state & local taxes.¹⁰

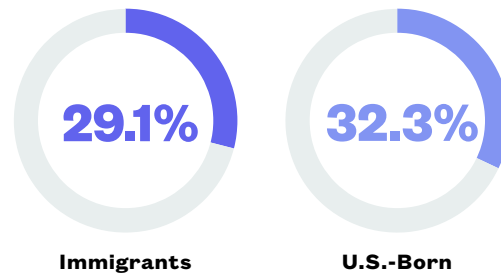
Leaving them with **\$1.3B** in spending power, or 8.4% of all the spending power in the county.

SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

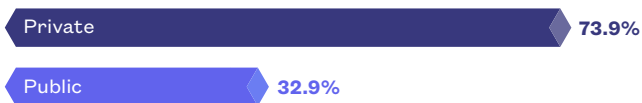
Immigrants in Kent County also support federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed **\$166.4M** to Social Security and **\$44.6M** to Medicare.



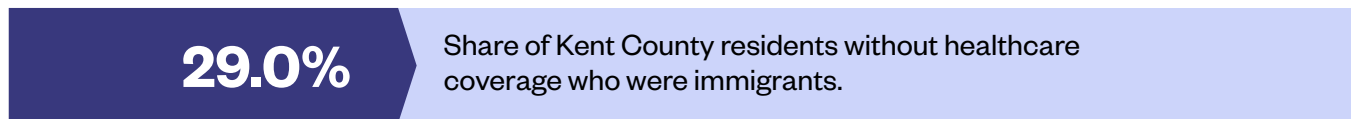
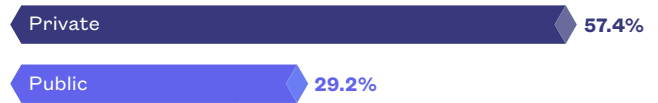
29.1% of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **32.3%** of U.S.-born residents in 2019.



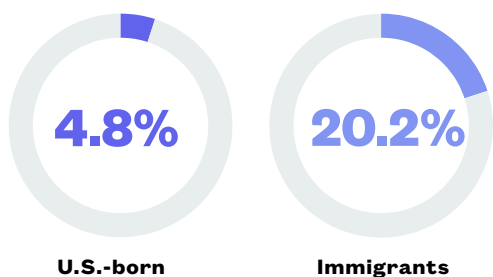
About **73.9%** of U.S.-born residents had private healthcare coverage, while **32.9%** had public healthcare coverage.¹¹



About **57.4%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **29.2%** had public healthcare coverage.



Approximately **4.8%** of US-born residents and **20.2%** of immigrant residents had no healthcare coverage.



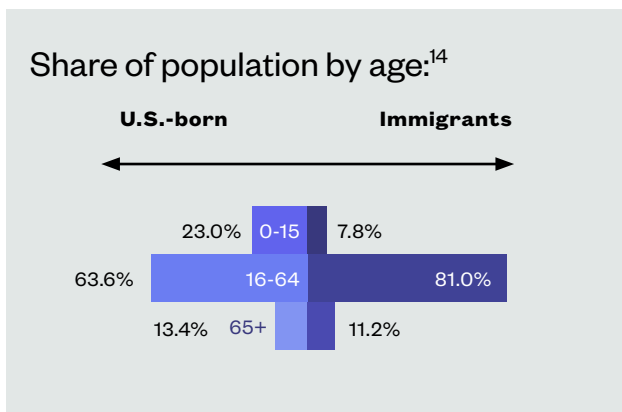
WORKFORCE

Although immigrants made up **8.9%** of the county’s total population, they represented **11.0%** of its working age population, **10.5%** of its employed labor force, and **12.1%** of its workers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in 2019.¹²

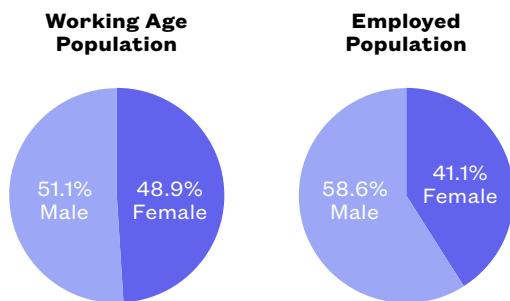
In the county, immigrants were

27.3%

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.¹³



Immigrants by sex:



While **95.5%** of U.S.-born working age residents were employed in 2019, **96.6%** of immigrants the same age were employed.

SPOTLIGHT

Natalia Kovicak

President, *The Economic Club of Grand Rapids*

When Natalia Kovicak moved from Argentina to Spring Lake, Michigan, at age 25, she quickly realized the challenges of starting a new career as an immigrant. It didn’t matter that she had a resume that included a good job with Coca-Cola in Buenos Aires and her own event-planning company. Kovicak lacked a network. Without strong personal and professional connections, she worried it would be difficult to find her footing. “As a woman from a different country, I had to work extra hard to pave my own way and prove to others that I was equally as capable and reliable as someone who didn’t have a strong accent,” she says.

After working for nearly six years in Grand Rapids as a corporate trainer, Kovicak got back into the event-planning business and realized her own power to create networking opportunities. As the vice president of conferences and events at [The Right Place](#), an economic development organization in Grand Rapids, she focused on organizing industry summits for companies throughout West Michigan. The region includes some of the nation’s largest clusters in automotive, biopharmaceuticals, metals, plastics and manufacturing. “We want to connect them to the right people in the community to keep those jobs in West Michigan,” she says.

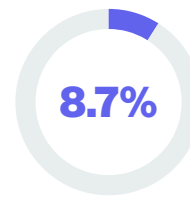
In the summer of 2020—just as the world was closing down due to the COVID-19 pandemic— Kovicak took the helm of [The Economic Club of Grand Rapids](#). The organization has 1,300 members and includes leaders from across West Michigan industries. Educational programming and networking opportunities, including 14-16 luncheons for over 500 people every year, provide a way for people to connect and learn. In addition, Kovicak encourages the city to participate in forums on fostering economic development among diverse populations. “The city is becoming more inclusive and welcoming and is having the right conversations to continue to grow as a community, but there’s still a lot of work to be done,” she says.

For her part, Kovicak is helping to make all kinds of connections, especially with people who are new to the area and the country. “As an immigrant, it’s harder to enter the right circles and connect with the right people,” she says. “I want to bring people together in a community where they feel they belong.”

WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

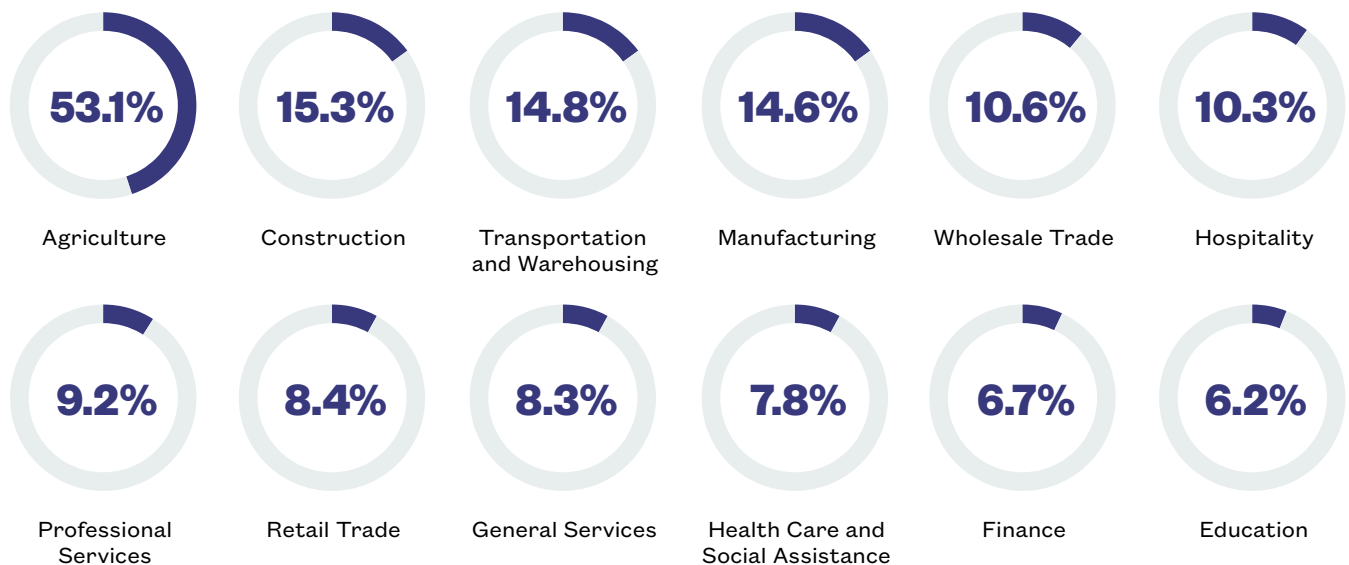
387,100
people worked in Kent County in 2019.

Of those who worked in the county,
33,500
workers were immigrants.

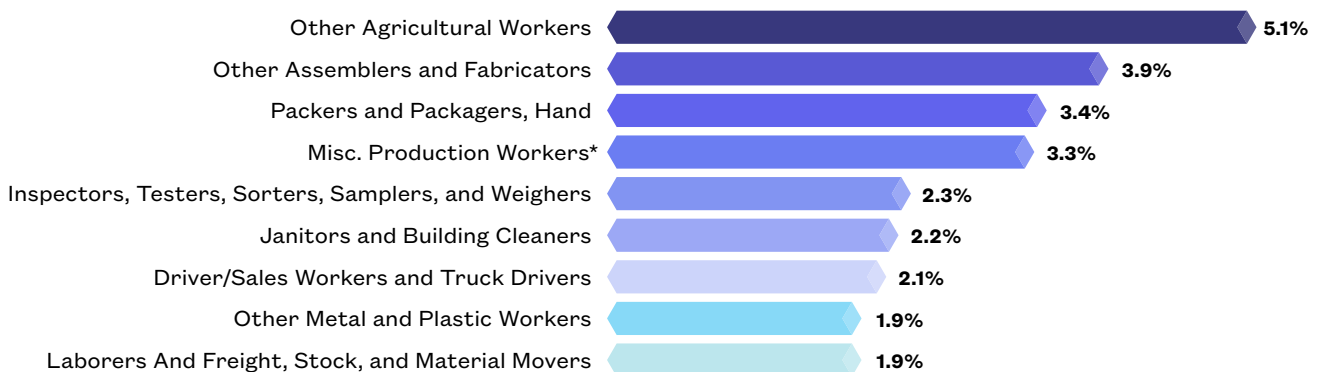


Share of workers in the county who were immigrants

Immigrants played a critical role in several **key industries** in the county. The industries with the largest number of immigrant workers were:



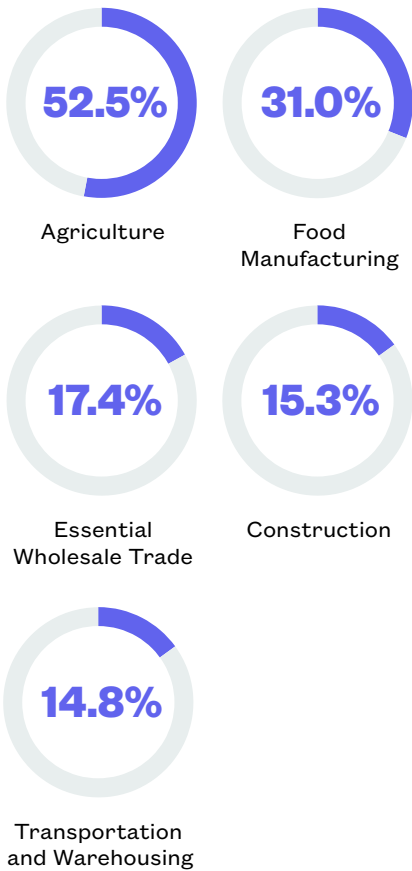
The **occupations** with the largest number of immigrant workers were:



* Including equipment operators and tenders

WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

In 2019, immigrants in Kent County represented the following share of workers in these **essential industries**.¹⁵



Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, our research shows that immigrants living in the county helped create or preserve **2,600 manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹⁶

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in Kent County in 2022

Not only were immigrants more likely to be of working age than the U.S.-born, but they were also a crucial part of the county’s economy, and helped meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields.¹⁷

The top in-demand jobs in the county were:

- Registered Nurses
- Retail Salespersons
- First-line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand

The top skills listed for these in-demand jobs were **Sales, Customer Service, Communications, Management, and Registered Nurse (RN)**.

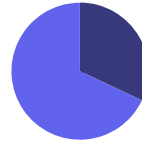
Immigrants help fill many high-demand roles, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare workers increases.

The top five industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers were:¹⁸

1. Educational Services
2. Social Assistance
3. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
4. Food and Beverage Retailers
5. Motor Vehicle Parts Dealers

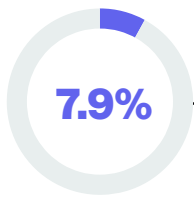
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Nearly **2,300** immigrant entrepreneurs generated **\$48.1M** in business income in Kent County.

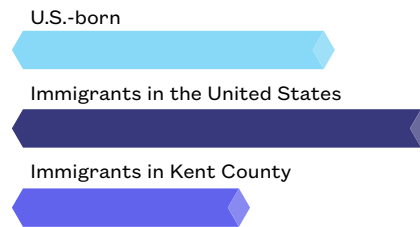


Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **32.0%** female and **68.0%** male.

In the county, immigrants were **27.2% less likely** to be an entrepreneur than their U.S.-born counterparts. Nationally, immigrants are **31.2% more likely** to be self-employed than U.S.-born.¹⁹

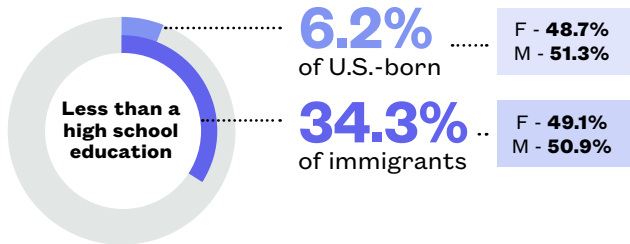


Immigrants represented **7.9%** of the business owners in the county in 2019.

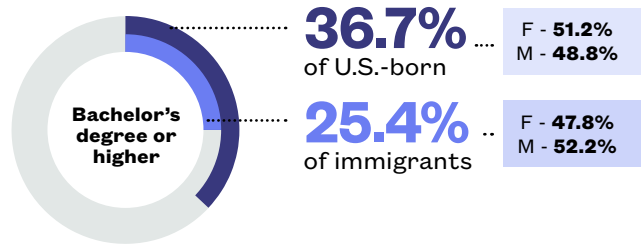


EDUCATION

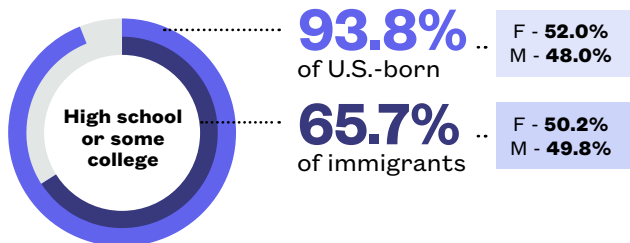
Share of the county's population aged 25 or above with **less than a high school education** in 2019:



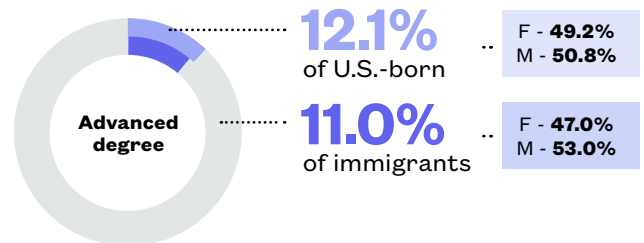
Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that held a **bachelor's degree or higher** in 2019:



Share of the county's population aged 25 or above with at least a **high school education or some college** in 2019:



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



SPOTLIGHT

University Population

In fall 2021,

757

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Kent County were temporary U.S. residents.²¹

The universities with the largest international student populations were:

Calvin University

382 students

Davenport University

173

Cornerstone University

119

The breakdown of international students is as follows:

605 full-time undergraduate students

100 full-time graduate students

45 part-time undergraduate students

7 part-time graduate students

International students supported...

125

local jobs and contributed...

\$26.8M

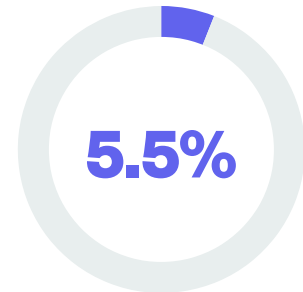
in the 2021-22 academic year.²²

56

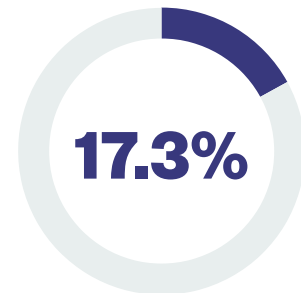
international students graduated with a primary major in STEM from colleges and universities in the county in the 2020-21 academic year.

3 international students graduated with a secondary major in STEM.

EDUCATION (CONTINUED)



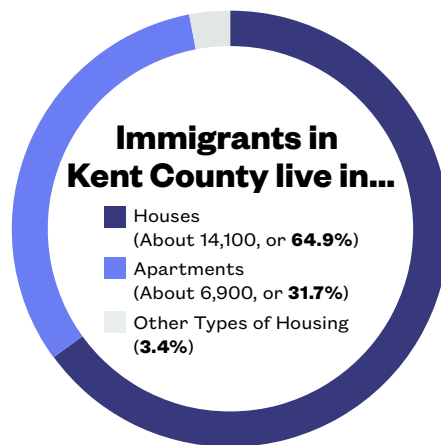
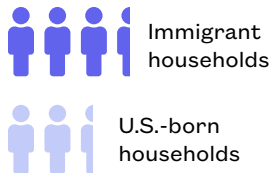
Share of K-12 students in Kent County who were immigrants in 2019.



Share of K-12 students in Kent County who were children of immigrants in 2019.²⁰

HOUSING

The average household size for immigrant households in Kent County was **3.2** compared with **2.5** for U.S.-born households.



43.1% of immigrant households were renters.

Their total annual rent paid was **\$85.2M**

81.6% of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared with **84.2%** of U.S.-born households in 2019.²³



Immigrant U.S.-born

In 2019,

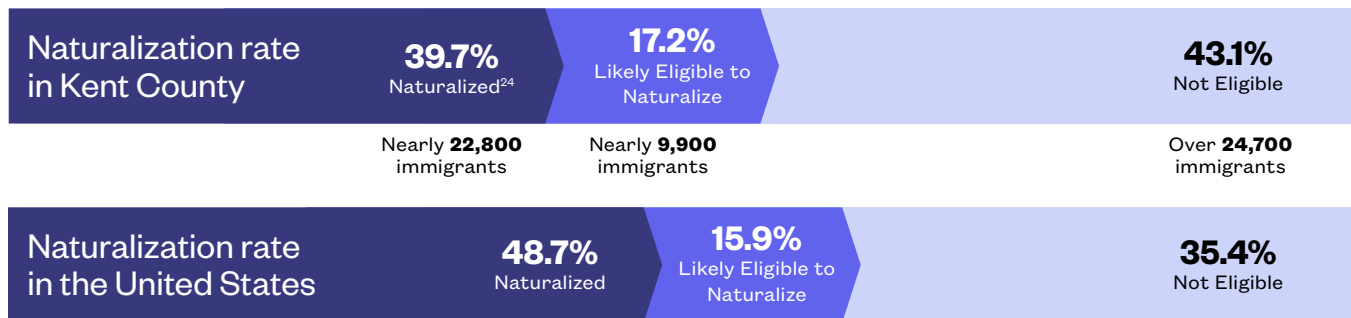
56.9%

of immigrant households in Kent County owned their own homes, compared to **70.5%** of U.S.-born households.

In 2019, the total property value of immigrant households was

\$2.3B

NATURALIZATION



Of those who are not eligible to naturalize, **1.2%** are refugees, and **1.0%** are undocumented.

The top five countries of origin for naturalized citizens in Kent County were:

- 1 Vietnam 12.9%
- 2 Mexico 11.9%
- 3 Bosnia 9.0%
- 4 China 5.5%
- 5 India 5.4%

When eligible immigrants naturalize, their income increases by **8.9%** on average.²⁵

REFUGEES

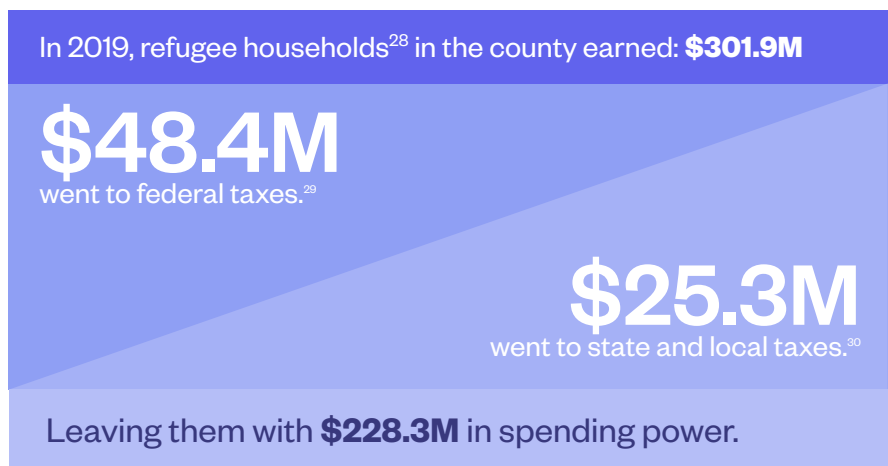
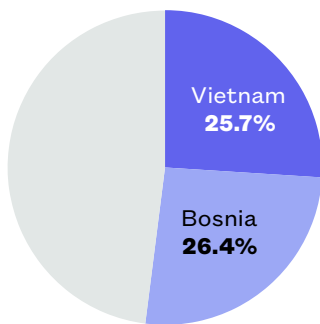
Number of immigrants who were likely refugees²⁶ in Kent County in 2019:²⁷

9,200

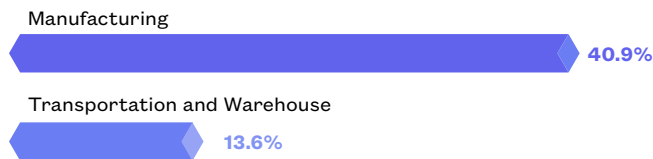
Refugee share of the immigrant population:

16.1%

Top countries of origin for the refugee population in the county:



The industries with the largest number of refugee workers were:



22.1%
of refugees had at least a bachelor's degree.

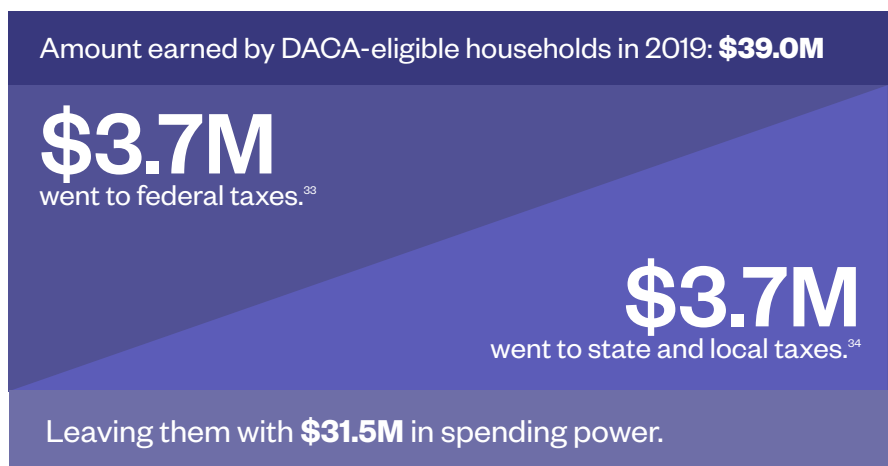
65.5%
of refugees in the county were naturalized U.S. citizens.

DACA-ELIGIBLE POPULATION

Approximately,

2,100

immigrants, or **3.7%** of the immigrant population in Kent County, were eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)³¹ in 2019.³²



UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Number of undocumented immigrants³⁵ in Kent County in 2019 was nearly

14,700

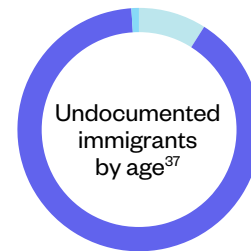
Share of immigrants who were undocumented:

25.6%

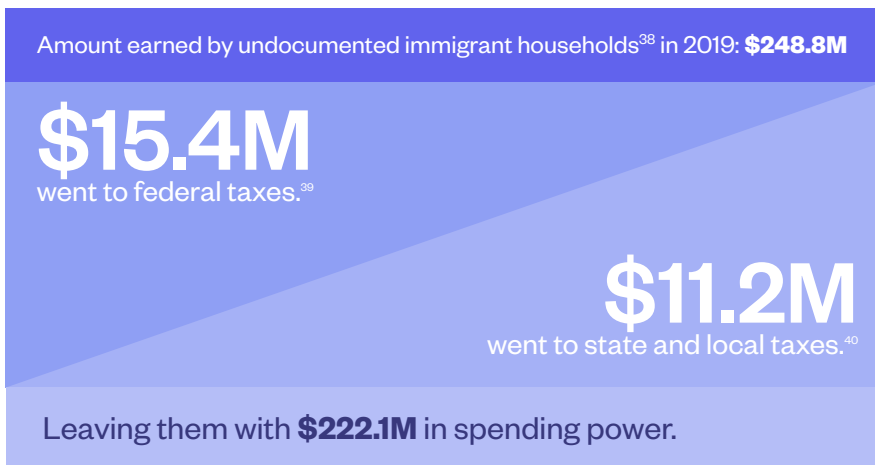
About

90.2%

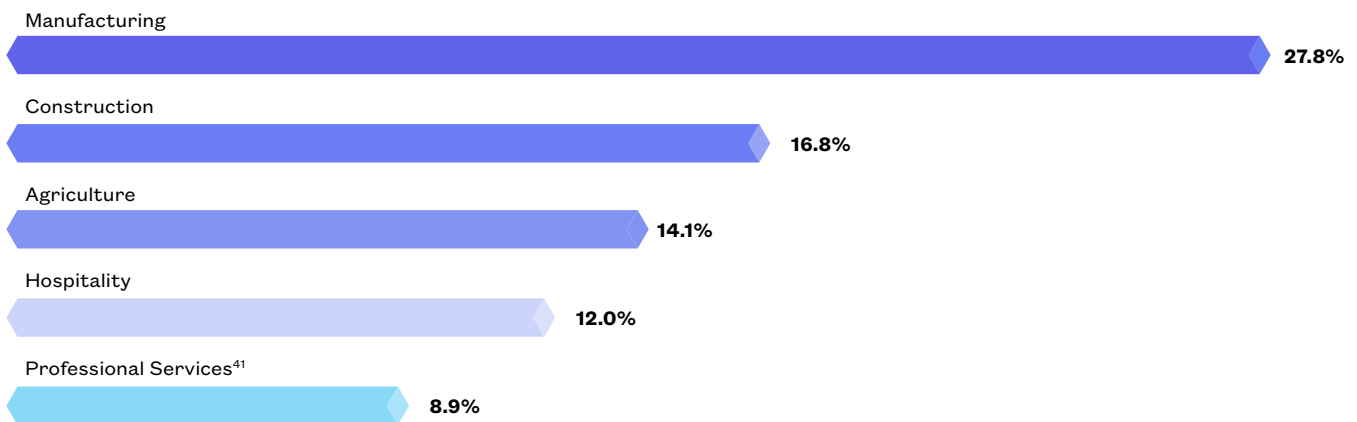
of undocumented immigrants were of working age in the county.³⁶



- 1 0-15 8.6%
- 2 16-64 . . . 90.2%
- 3 65+ 1.2%



Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. The industries with the largest number of undocumented immigrant workers were:



SPOTLIGHT

Romel “RC” Caylan

Fashion Designer and Owner of RC Caylan Atelier

Romel “RC” Caylan is an internationally celebrated fashion designer who has dressed more than 100 celebrities and has a showroom in Beverly Hills. Yet he proudly runs [his business](#) out of Grand Rapids, at a studio in the Breton Village Shopping Center alongside Lululemon, Anthropologie, and other big-name retailers. “I’m always asked ‘Why Grand Rapids?’ I have the opportunity to go to New York or LA to build my brand,” he says. “But I feel I belong here. I love Grand Rapids. If America is the land of dreams, Grand Rapids is the city of opportunity.”

Caylan was born in Iligan City and raised in Batangas City, both in the Philippines. He studied accounting, became licensed in cosmetology, and was working in a salon on an international cruise ship when he met his future husband, a passenger originally from Detroit. “I hadn’t planned to come to America,” he says. “But I am proud to say it was meant to be.”

In 2012, Caylan moved to Grand Rapids. Three years later, he graduated from Grand Rapids Community College with an associate degree in fashion design and merchandising. As a boy, he had loved spending time in his grandmother’s sewing room, marveling at how simple tools turned lines on paper into flowing gowns.

Today, Caylan’s business specializes in custom, high-end bridal, evening, and prom dresses. Caylan has participated in Paris and Milan fashion weeks and won numerous awards, including regional “Fashion Designer of the Year,” from Fashion Group International, in 2023. He also hosts an annual charity show in Grand Rapids, where this year’s closing ceremony is at ArtPrize, an international art competition and cultural event.

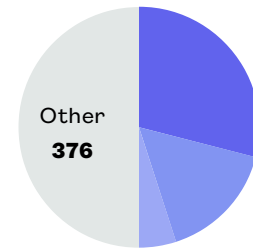
Caylan says that having his business based in a small city benefits his career by limiting competition. He adds that the growth of Grand Rapids and its support of small businesses make the city an ideal place, where small immigrant-led enterprises like his can thrive. “The development downtown gives opportunities for anyone to have any job they want,” he says. “Grand Rapids may look small, but we’re building big things.”

H-1B AND H-2B VISAS

766

H-1B visas were certified in Kent County during Fiscal Year 2022.⁴²

The top occupations among certified H-1B visa applications were:



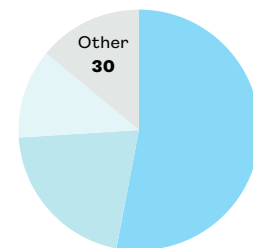
of certifications

- 1 Software Developers, Applications 228
- 2 Physical Therapists 120
- 3 Software Developers 42

231

H-2B visas were certified in Kent County during Fiscal Year 2022.⁴³

The top occupations among certified H-2B visa applications were:



of certifications

- 1 Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers . . 123
- 2 Team Assemblers 50
- 3 Structural Iron and Steel Workers 28

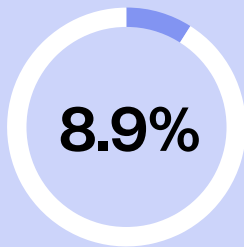
SPOTLIGHT

Kent County in 2021

POPULATION

58,400

The number of immigrants living in Kent County, Michigan in 2021.⁴⁴



Immigrant share of the county's total population in 2021

Between 2016 and 2021, the total population of the county increased by **2.4%**.

During the same period, the immigrant population increased by **8.5%**.

Total population



Immigrant population



29.4%

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

SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

The median household income in Kent County in 2021 was:

\$73,800

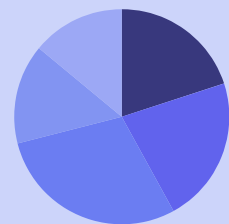
for U.S.-born residents

\$65,000

for immigrant residents

Distribution of immigrant households by (regional) income quintile:

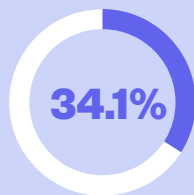
- 1 Quintile 1 (<\$31,411) 20.3%
- 2 Quintile 2 (\$31,411 - \$56,300) . 22.4%
- 3 Quintile 3 (\$56,301 - \$83,500) 28.9%
- 4 Quintile 4 (\$83,501 - \$127,999) .14.6%
- 5 Quintile 5 (>\$128,000)13.8%



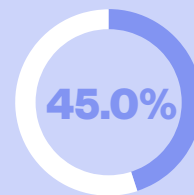
Immigrant household income relative to federal poverty thresholds:



Below or at 125



Between 126 - 300



Above 300

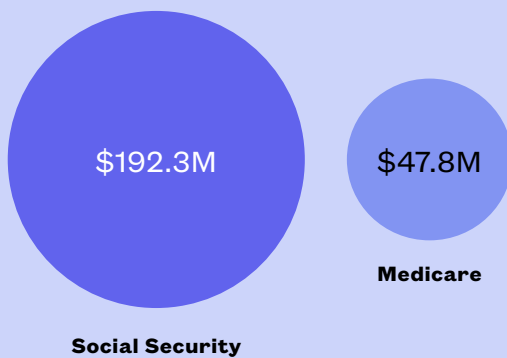
SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

In 2021, immigrant residents in Kent County contributed **\$4.9B** to the area's gross domestic product (GDP), or **9.0%** of the total GDP for that year.⁴⁵

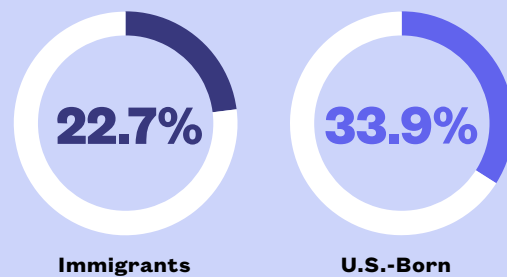
Immigrants paid a significant amount in federal, state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments.



Immigrants in Kent County also support federal social programs. In 2021, they contributed **\$192.3M** to Social Security and **\$47.8M** to Medicare.



22.7% of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **33.9%** of U.S.-born residents in 2021.



SPOTLIGHT

Sonal & Ramesh Patel

Indian Food Entrepreneurs

When Sonal and Ramesh Patel built a house in the town of Cascade in 2011, they quickly noticed something missing: an Asian grocer on the southeast side of Grand Rapids.

The Patels are from a small town in Gujarat, a state in western India. They moved to West Michigan in 2004, when Ramesh was hired by a rural clinic unable to find a physical therapist in the United States. Sonal, an electrical engineer in India, followed a few months later. When her engineering credits didn't transfer, she earned an associate degree in nuclear medicine technology—while raising three young children and managing a hotel.

In 2015, the couple found a space on 28th Street Southeast and opened India Market. About 40 percent of its customers are non-Asian. "They want to learn Indian cooking, but they don't know what to buy," Sonal says. Interest surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when more Americans were experimenting in the kitchen.

As the popularity of Indian cuisine grew in the United States, the Patels noticed increasing demand for Indian groceries in mainstream supermarkets. So last year they launched [Rani Foods](#), a supplier of Indian staples, such as basmati rice, chicken tandoori spice mixes, and pickled mangos. Sonal is the face of Rani Foods, and her profile graces the company's logo. Rani Foods are now carried in 260 Meijer stores, a Grand Rapids grocery chain that serves the Midwest. Although the company imports its products from India, it depends on local labor to thrive. "Our business pumps money back into Grand Rapids," Ramesh says. That includes hiring warehouse workers to package the items and contracting trucking companies for shipping.

Both the Patels continue to work other jobs while they grow their business, Sonal at Spectrum Hospital, and Ramesh at Mary Free Bed at Home as a physical therapist. Ramesh says their success is proof that anyone can succeed in Grand Rapids. For example, the city supports immigrant businesses by hosting local ethnic festivals that celebrate diversity. "It educates the community about different cultures' foods and communities," he says. "The city sends a message that people might look different, but everyone is still part of Grand Rapids."

SPOTLIGHT

Ruben Ramos

Co-owner, *R & R Mechanical Services*

Although Ruben Ramos was born in the United States, he moved with his family to their village in the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico when he was a baby. When the family moved to Grand Rapids in 1990, the Hispanic population was small. Ramos was 10 years old. "I consider myself an immigrant because I basically had to learn the language and the culture and felt like an outsider," he says.

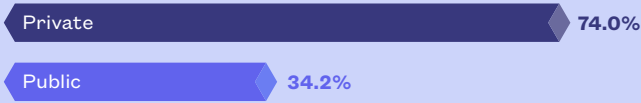
Now, 33 years later, Ramos runs a business in Grand Rapids with his twin brother that trains and hires dozens of tradespeople. [R & R Mechanical Services](#), launched in 2008, installs and services heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems in residential and commercial buildings, and has 30 full-time employees with benefits.

"There hasn't been a year that we haven't grown," says Ramos. One of the biggest challenges has been finding qualified applicants, as workers in the trades are in short supply across the nation. The brothers found a solution by providing entry level on-the-job training. Not only does the model create a pool of dedicated workers, but it also gives the brothers a chance to invest in their community. "We give back by providing a career path for a lot of people," he says. "They give back to us because they stay for longer."

The Ramos brothers have stayed longer, too, in Grand Rapids, which has developed a reputation for welcoming immigrants from around the world. The Hispanic community has grown over the past three decades, and Ramos says he appreciates how the community and local government acknowledge Hispanic Heritage Month. He encourages the city to empower immigrant communities by supporting programs that give entrepreneurs access to funding. "A lack of capital is a hurdle for new startups," he says. "Finding ways to connect investors with entrepreneurs would make Grand Rapids a stronger hub for development."

SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

About **74.0%** of U.S.-born residents had private healthcare coverage, while **34.2%** had public healthcare coverage.⁴⁹



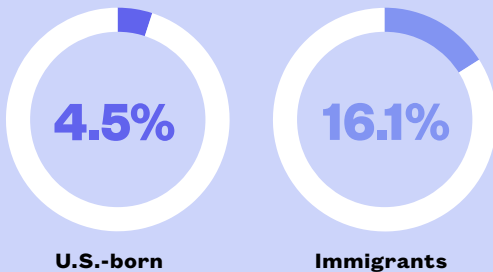
About **68.6%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **22.8%** had public healthcare coverage.



26.0%

Share of Kent County residents without healthcare coverage who were immigrants.

Approximately **4.5%** of U.S.-born residents and **16.1%** of immigrant residents had no healthcare coverage.



WORKFORCE

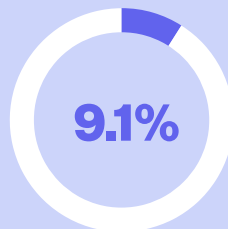
391,500

people worked in Kent County in 2021.

Of these, approximately

35,700

workers were immigrants.



Share of workers in the county who were immigrants in 2021

Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, our research shows that immigrants living in the county helped create or preserve **2,700 manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2021.⁵⁰

HOUSING

In 2021,

63.9%

of immigrant households in Kent County owned their own homes, compared to **71.1%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant **U.S.-born**

In 2021, the total property value of immigrant households was

\$3.5B

NATURALIZATION

Naturalization rate in Kent County, 2021

48.8%
Naturalized

Nearly **28,500** immigrants

20.4%
Likely Eligible to Naturalize

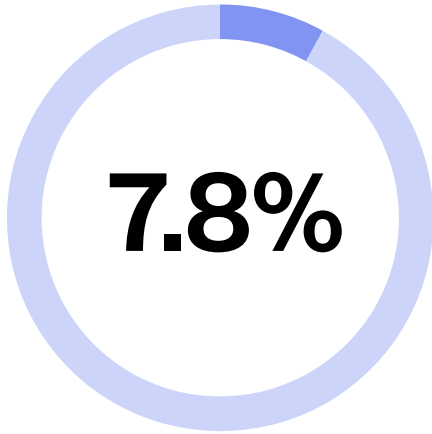
30.8%
Not Eligible to Naturalize

Nearly **18,000** immigrants

New Americans in Kent & Ottawa Counties

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants⁵¹ in the Region⁵²

POPULATION



Immigrant share of the region's population, 2019

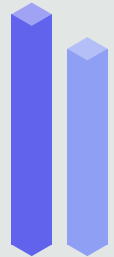
72,900

The number of immigrants living in Kent and Ottawa Counties, Michigan in 2019.⁵³

The **Diversity Index Score** for Kent and Ottawa Counties in 2020 was

43.1%

an increase of **6.9%** from 2010.⁵⁴



POPULATION GROWTH

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population of the region increased by **5.6%**.

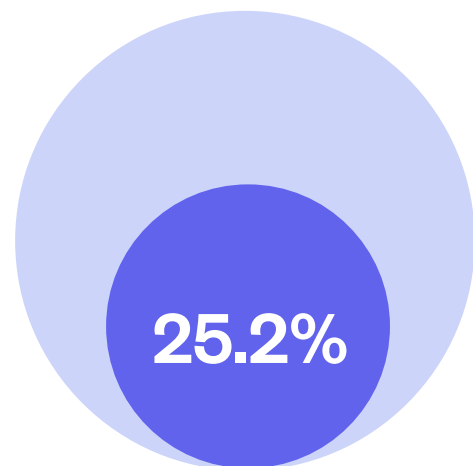
During the same period, the immigrant population increased by **20.6%**.

Total population growth

5.6%

Immigrant population growth

20.6%

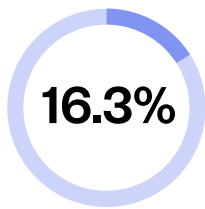
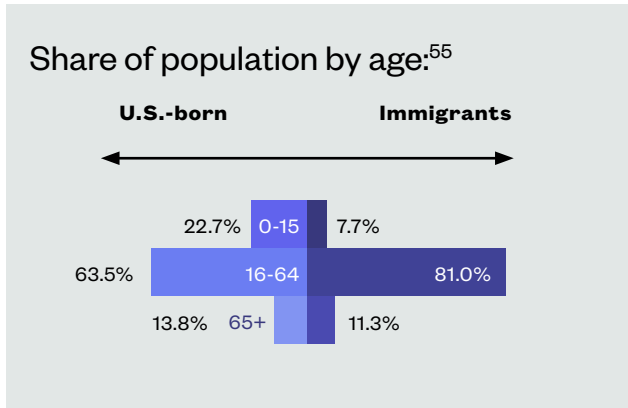


Share of the total population growth in the region that was attributable to immigrants.

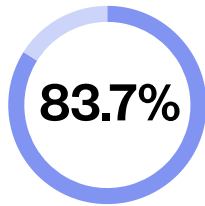
DEMOGRAPHICS

10.7%

of households in Kent and Ottawa Counties in 2019 had at least one immigrant.

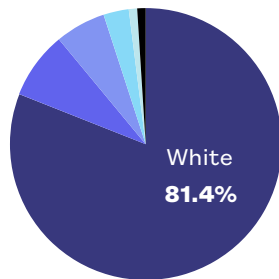


Approximate share of immigrants in Kent and Ottawa Counties who were recent arrivals, with five years of residency in the United States or less.



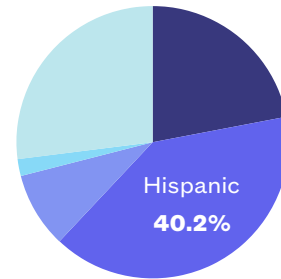
Share of immigrants in the region who resided in the United States for more than five years.

Share of the U.S.-born population by race:



- 1 White81.4%
- 2 Hispanic7.8%
- 3 Black/African American 6.6%
- 4 Mixed/Other Race 3.0%
- 5 Asian American/Pacific Islander .. 0.8%
- 6 Native American 0.2%

Share of the immigrant population by race:

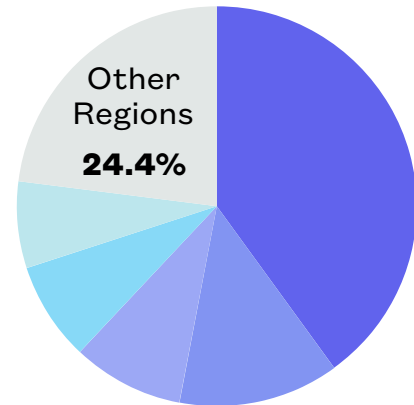


- 1 Hispanic 40.2%
- 2 Asian American/Pacific Islander .. 27.1%
- 3 White 22.3%
- 4 Black/African American 8.4%
- 5 Mixed/Other Race 1.9%

DEMOGRAPHICS (CONTINUED)

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

- 1 Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean 39.6%
- 2 Southeast Asia 12.5%
- 3 India/Southwest Asia..... 9.1%
- 4 Central/Eastern Europe..... 7.8%
- 5 East Asia..... 6.6%



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



The top languages spoken at home other than English among immigrants:



IMMIGRANTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The number of immigrants living in Kent and Ottawa Counties with limited English language proficiency⁵⁶ was nearly

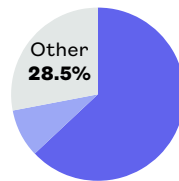
19,600

This represented

27.2%

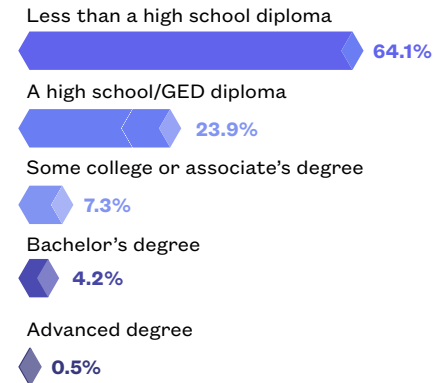
of the immigrant population.

Among those with limited English language proficiency, the top top languages spoken at home other than English were:



- 1 Spanish (63.0%)
- 2 Vietnamese (8.5%)

Among those with limited English language proficiency aged 25 or above, educational attainment was as follows:



SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

The median household income in Kent and Ottawa Counties was:

\$68,200

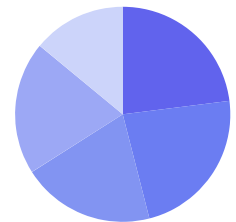
for U.S.-born residents

\$60,100

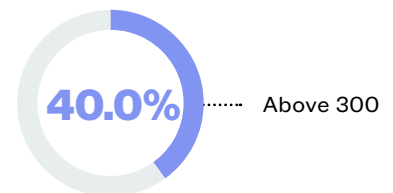
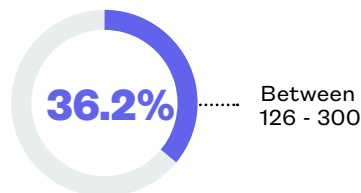
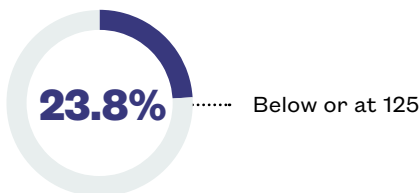
for immigrant residents

Distribution of immigrant households by (regional) income quintile:

- 1 Quintile 1 (< \$30,097) 22.9%
- 2 Quintile 2 (\$30,097 – \$52,203) 23.2%
- 3 Quintile 3 (\$52,204 - \$78,775) .19.5%
- 4 Quintile 4 (\$78,776 - \$119,090) 20.2%
- 5 Quintile 5 (> \$119,090)14.3%



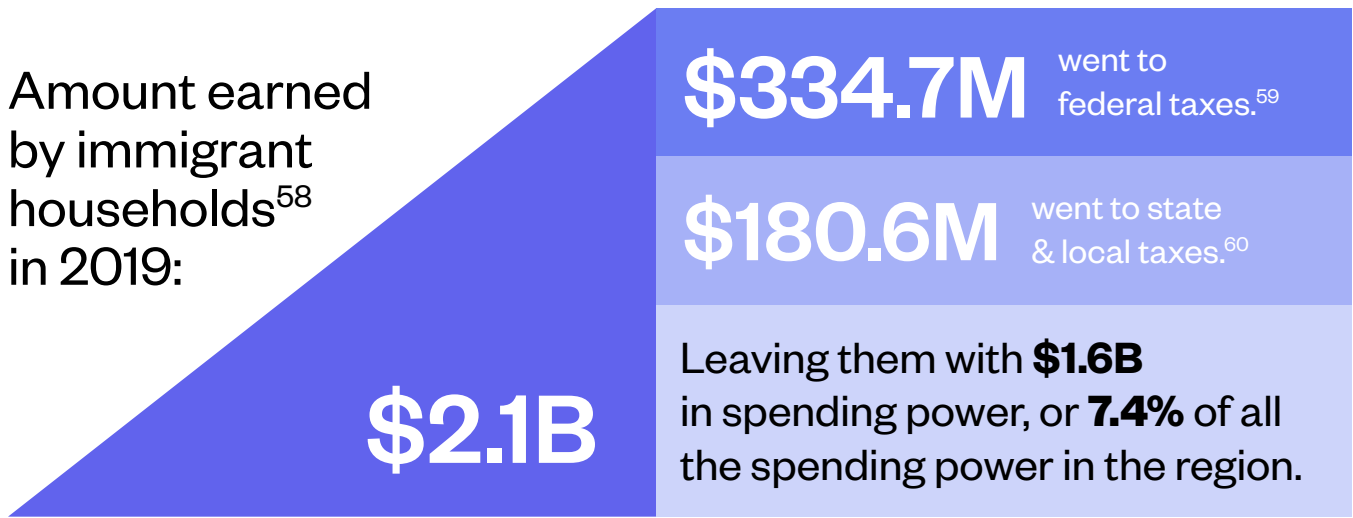
Immigrant household income relative to federal poverty thresholds:



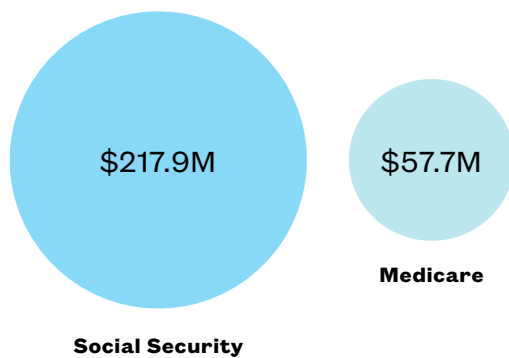
SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

In 2019, immigrant residents in the region contributed **\$5.7B** to the region’s gross domestic product (GDP), or **8.3%** of the total GDP for that year.⁵⁷

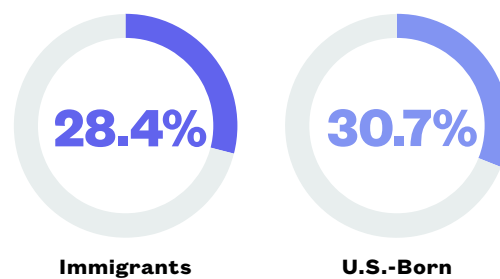
Immigrants paid a significant amount in federal, state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments.



Immigrants in Kent and Ottawa Counties also support federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed **\$217.9M** to Social Security and **\$57.7M** to Medicare.

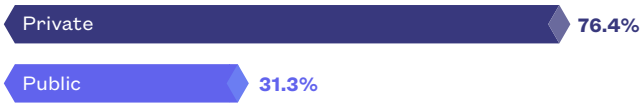


28.4% of immigrants in the region received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **30.7%** of U.S.-born residents in 2019.

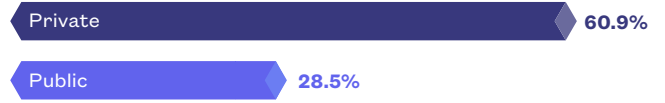


SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

About **76.4%** of U.S.-born residents had private healthcare coverage, while **31.3%** had public healthcare coverage.⁶¹



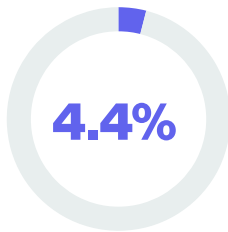
About **60.9%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **28.5%** had public healthcare coverage.



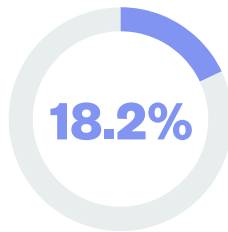
25.9%

Share of Kent and Ottawa Counties' residents without healthcare coverage who were immigrants.

Approximately **4.4%** of U.S.-born residents and **18.2%** of immigrant residents had no healthcare coverage.



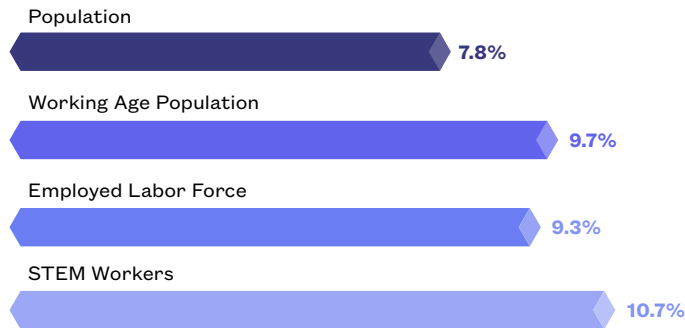
U.S.-born



Immigrants

WORKFORCE

Although immigrants made up **7.8%** of the region's total population, they represented **9.7%** of its working age population, **9.3%** of its employed labor force, and **10.7%** of its workers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in 2019.⁶²



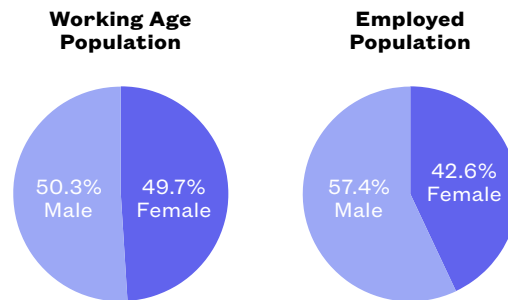
While **95.8%** of U.S.-born working age residents were employed in 2019, **96.8%** of immigrants the same age were employed.

In the region, immigrants were

27.6%

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.⁶³

Immigrants by sex:



In 2019, approximately

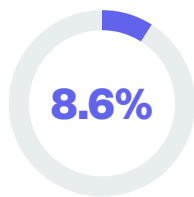
523,300

people worked in the region.

Of these,

45,000

workers were immigrants.



Share of workers in the region who were immigrants

In 2019, there were

20.1

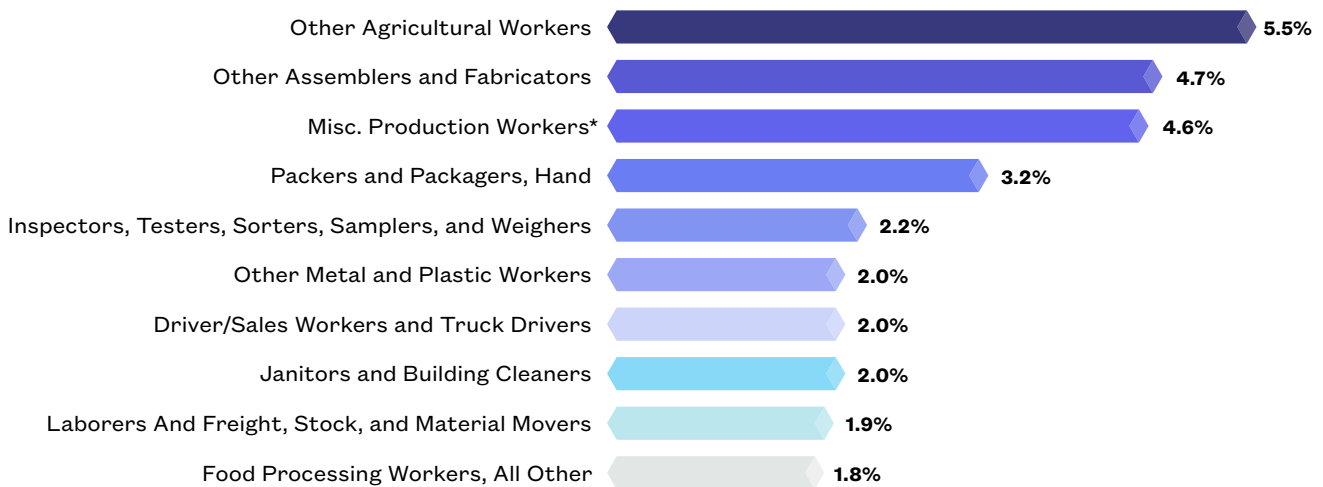
open STEM job postings for every available unemployed STEM worker in the region.⁶⁴

WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

Immigrants played a critical role in several **key industries** in the region. The industries with the largest number of immigrant workers in 2019 were:



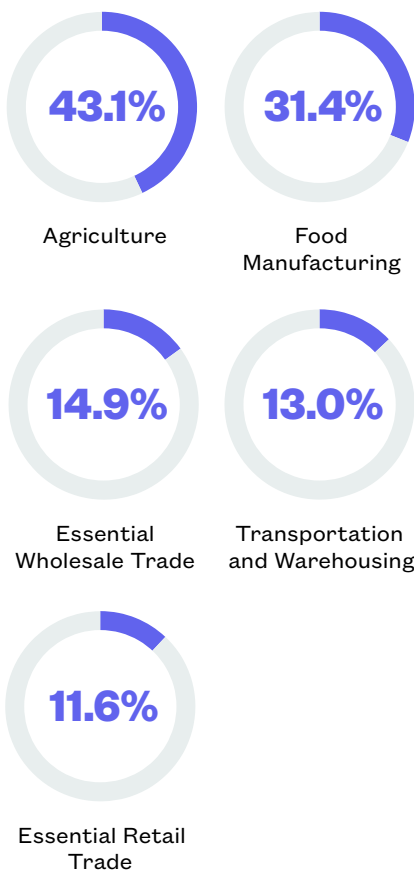
The **occupations** with the largest number of immigrant workers were:



* Including equipment operators and tenders

WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

In 2019, immigrants in the region represented the following share of workers in these **essential industries**.⁶⁵



Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, our research shows that immigrants living in the region helped create or preserve **3,400 manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.⁶⁶

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in Kent & Ottawa Counties in 2022

Not only were immigrants more likely to be of working age in the region, but they were also a crucial part of the region’s economy, and could help it meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields in the future and helped meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields.⁶⁷

The top in-demand jobs in the region were:

- Registered Nurses
- Retail Salespersons
- First-line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand

The top skills listed for these in-demand jobs are **Sales, Customer Service, Communications, Management, and Registered Nurse (RN)**.

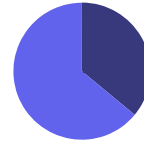
Immigrants help fill many high-demand roles, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare workers increases.

The top five industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers were:⁶⁸

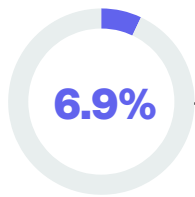
1. Educational Services
2. Miscellaneous Manufacturing
3. Food and Beverage Retailers
4. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
5. Social Assistance

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Nearly **2,800** immigrant entrepreneurs earned **\$56.1M** in business income in Kent and Ottawa Counties.

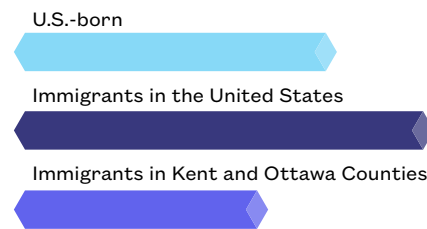


Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **36.1%** female and **63.9%** male.



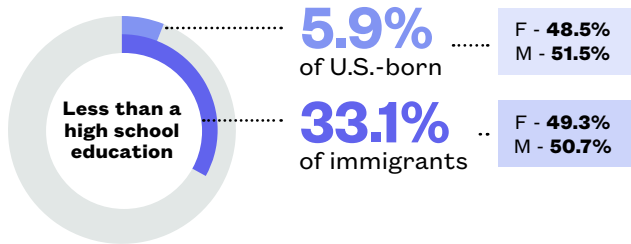
Immigrants represented **6.9%** of the business owners in the region in 2019.

In the region, immigrants are **28.1% less likely** to be an entrepreneur than their U.S.-born counterparts. Nationally, immigrants are **31.2% more likely** to be self-employed than U.S.-born.⁶⁹

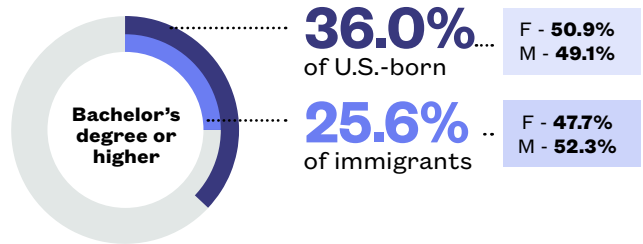


EDUCATION

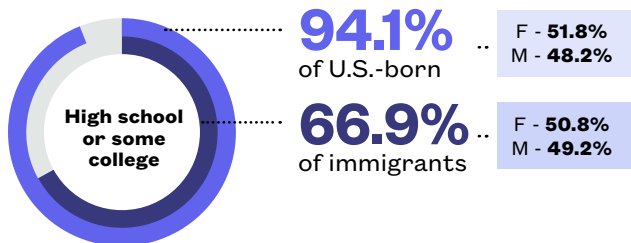
Share of the region's population aged 25 or above with **less than a high school education** in 2019:



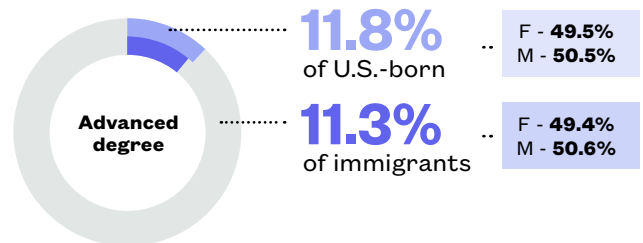
Share of the region's population aged 25 or above that held a **bachelor's degree or higher** in 2019:



Share of the region's population aged 25 or above with at least a **high school education or some college** in 2019:



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



SPOTLIGHT

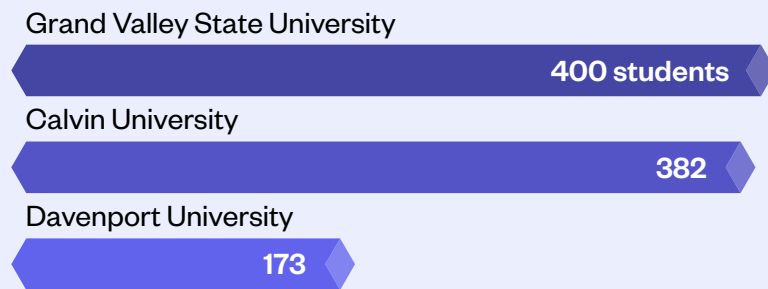
University Population

In fall 2021,

1,328

students enrolled in colleges and universities in the region were temporary U.S. residents.⁷¹

The universities with the largest international student populations were:



The breakdown of international students is as follows:

865 full-time undergraduate students

262 full-time graduate students

66 part-time undergraduate students

135 part-time graduate students

95

international students graduated with a primary major in STEM from colleges and universities in the region in the 2020-21 academic year.

4 international students graduated with a secondary major in STEM.

International students supported...

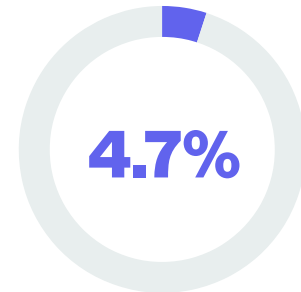
245

local jobs and contributed...

\$40.5M

in the 2021-22 academic year.⁷²

EDUCATION (CONTINUED)



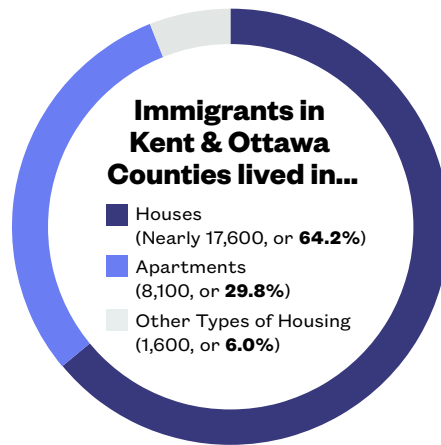
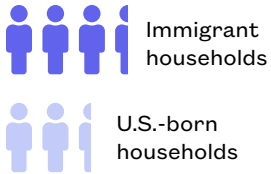
Share of K-12 students in the region who were immigrants in 2019.



Share of K-12 students in the region who were children of immigrants in 2019.⁷⁰

HOUSING

The average household size for immigrants in Kent and Ottawa Counties was **3.2** compared with **2.5** for U.S.-born households.



40.3% of immigrant households were renters.

Their total annual rent paid was **\$100.3M**

83.0% of immigrant households in the region had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared with **84.3%** of U.S.-born households in 2019.⁷³



Immigrant U.S.-born

In 2019,

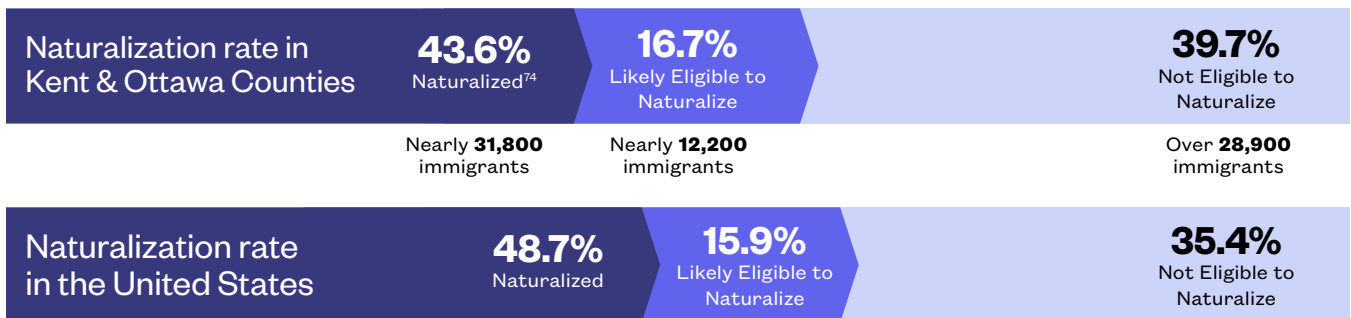
59.7%

of immigrant households in the region owned their own homes, compared to **72.8%** of U.S.-born households.

In 2019, the total property value of immigrant households was

\$3.0B

NATURALIZATION



Of those who were not eligible to naturalize, **1.1%** were refugees, and **0.8%** were undocumented.

Top five countries of origin for naturalized citizens in Kent and Ottawa Counties were:

- 1 Mexico 14.1%
- 2 Vietnam 11.7%
- 3 Bosnia 6.5%
- 4 Netherlands 5.4%
- 5 China 4.9%

When eligible immigrants naturalize, their income increases by **8.9%** on average.⁷⁵

REFUGEES

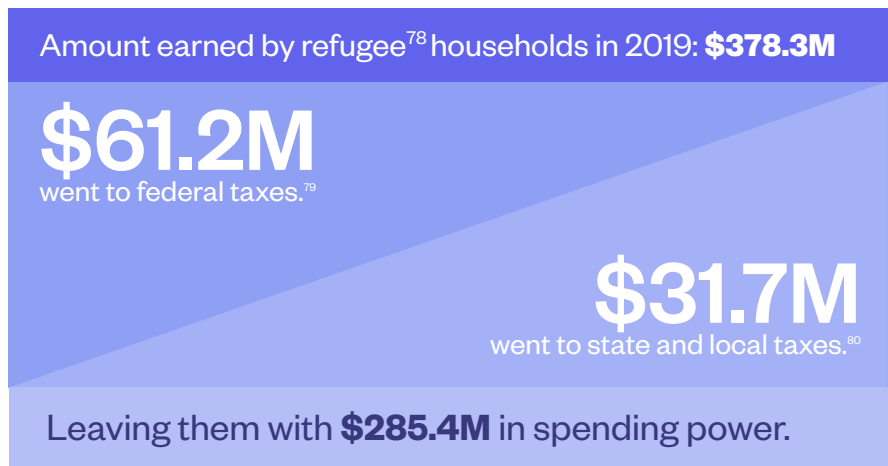
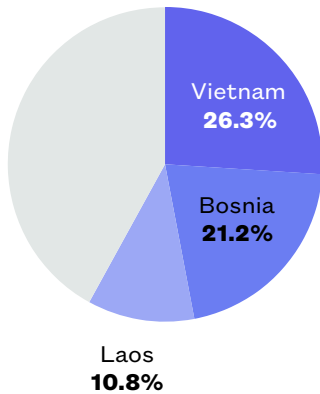
Number of immigrants who were likely refugees⁷⁶ in Kent and Ottawa Counties in 2019:⁷⁷

11,500

Refugee share of the immigrant population:

15.8%

Top countries of origin for the refugee population in the region:



The industries with the largest number of refugee workers were:



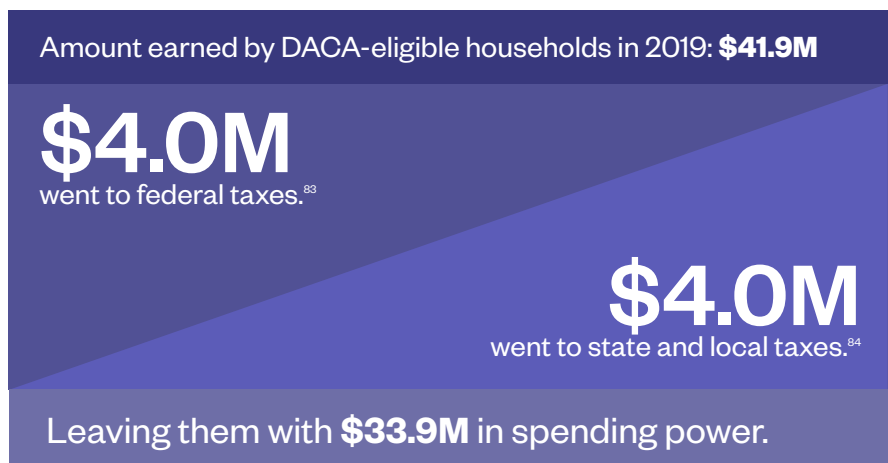
20.1% of refugees held at least a bachelor's degree.

69.6% of refugees in the region were naturalized U.S. citizens.

DACA-ELIGIBLE POPULATION

2,200

immigrants, or **3.1%** of the immigrant population in Kent and Ottawa Counties, were eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)⁸¹ in 2019.⁸²



UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Number of undocumented immigrants⁸⁵ in Kent and Ottawa Counties in 2019 was nearly

17,200

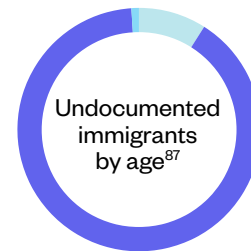
Share of immigrants who were undocumented:

23.5%

About

89.7%

of undocumented immigrants were of working age in the region.⁸⁶



- 1 0-15 8.8%
- 2 16-64 89.7%
- 3 65+ 1.4%

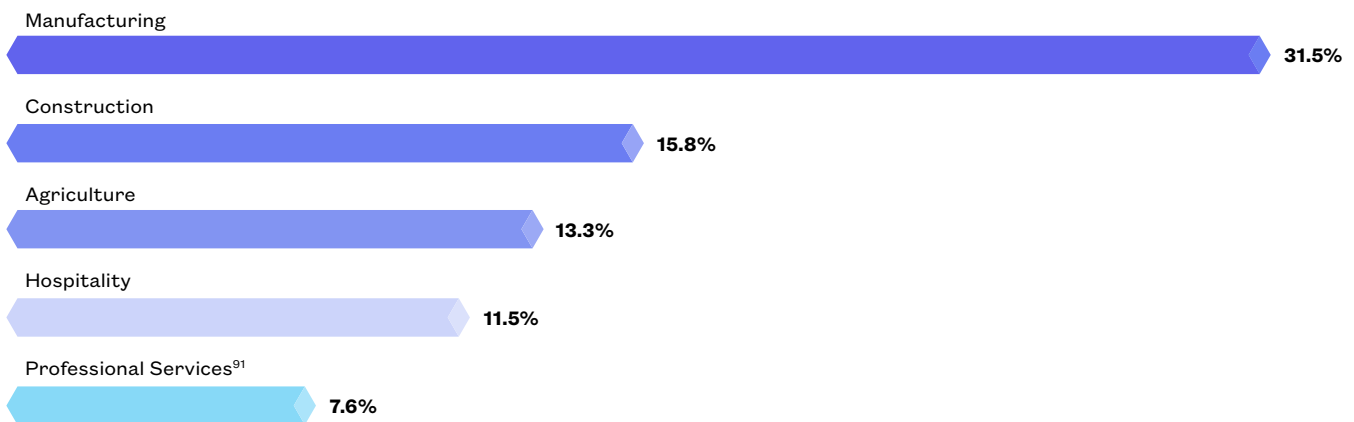
Amount earned by undocumented immigrant households⁸⁸ in 2019: **\$300.7M**

\$18.3M
went to federal taxes.⁸⁹

\$13.6M
went to state and local taxes.⁹⁰

Leaving them with **\$268.8M** in spending power.

Undocumented immigrants were highly active in the labor force. The occupations with the largest number of undocumented immigrant workers were:

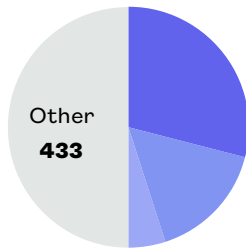


H-1B AND H-2B VISAS

874

H-1B visas were certified in Kent and Ottawa Counties during Fiscal Year 2022.⁹²

The top occupations among certified H-1B visa applications were:



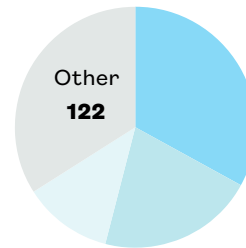
of certifications

- 1 Software Developers, Applications 238
- 2 Physical Therapists 160
- 3 Software Developers 43

375

H-2B visas were certified in Kent and Ottawa Counties during Fiscal Year 2022.⁹³

The top occupations among certified H-2B visa applications were:



of certifications

- 1 Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers . . 123
- 2 Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders 80
- 3 Team Assemblers 50

ENDNOTES

- 1 Estimates provided in this report may slightly undercount the immigrant population. The American Community Survey historically undersamples the foreign-born population.
- 2 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Kent County, Michigan.
- 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 Percentages may not add up due to rounding.
- 5 The Diversity Index is a metric developed by the Census Bureau that shows the likelihood that two residents chosen at random in a given area will be of different races and/or ethnicities.
- 6 For the purpose of this report, we define people with limited English language proficiency as those who do not speak English at all or do not speak English well.
- 7 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.
- 8 Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.
- 9 U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019 (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
- 10 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2018), <https://itep.org/whopays>.
- 11 Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.
- 12 STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in science, technology, engineering, and/or math.
- 13 We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
- 14 Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
- 15 Essential industries are defined differently than the industry totals listed above. They include only workers employed in sections of the overall industry that are deemed essential in states of emergency, such as during the COVID-19 crisis.
- 16 Jacob Vigdor, Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market (New York, NY: AmericasSociety/ Council of the Americas and New American Economy, 2013), <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/revival-of-american-cities.pdf>
- 17 Data is obtained from Lightcast for the time period between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022.
- 18 Data is obtained from Lightcast for the time period between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022.
- 19 Data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 for the United States.
- 20 Children of immigrants includes both U.S.-born and foreign-born people who are under the age of 18 with at least one foreign-born parent.
- 21 Data on total student enrollment in the county 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.
- 22 Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA: the Association of International Educators.
- 23 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.
- 24 Naturalization is the process through which one can become a U.S. citizen, dependent on certain eligibility requirements. Learn more here: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works>.
- 25 Maria E. Enchautegui and Linda Giannarelli, The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities, Urban Institute, 2015, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/economic-impact-naturalization-immigrants-and-cities>.
- 26 Refugees are admitted to the United States based upon an inability to return to their home countries because of a “well-founded fear of persecution” due to their race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. Learn more here: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works>.
- 27 New American Economy, From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America, (New York, NY: 2017), https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NAE_Refugees_V5.pdf.
- 28 Refugee households refer to those with a refugee as head of the unit.
- 29 U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019 (Washington, DC: 2021), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
- 30 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2018), <https://itep.org/whopays/>.
- 31 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program established in 2012 which permits certain individuals who were brought to the United States while under the age of 16 and who have resided continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007, to remain in the U.S. and work lawfully for at least two years, so long as they meet certain eligibility requirements. Learn more here: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works>.

- 32 Due to ongoing legal challenges to the DACA program, any first-time DACA applications not granted as of July 16, 2021 are unable to be processed, though the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can still accept these applications. The current court ruling alongside the ongoing uncertainty about the future of the DACA program has resulted in a lack of afforded protections for those who are DACA-eligible but are unable to apply.
- 33 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."
- 34 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 35 Undocumented immigrants are identified by applying the methodological approach outlined by Harvard University economist George Borjas in his work: George Borjas, The Labor Supply of Undocumented Immigrants (Harvard University, Labour Economics, volume 46, pages 1-3, 2017), <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gborjas/files/le2017.pdf>. Immigrants who do not meet a set of criteria for legal status are identified as being undocumented. More on our methodology here: <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/methodology/>.
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- 41 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.
- 42 Before an employer can file a petition with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to hire an employee using an H-1B visa, the employer must take steps to ensure that hiring the foreign worker will not adversely affect U.S. workers. To do this, employers file a labor condition application (LCA) to be certified by the Department of Labor (DOL), which ensures that employment of the H-1B worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. The number of certified H-1B visas is therefore a good indication of the demand for foreign-born workers of a given occupation in a given region. More information on the H-1B process can be found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/h-1b-specialty-occupations>.
- 43 Similar to the H-1B process, in order for an employer to obtain an H-2B certification, the DOL must determine that there are not enough U.S. workers available to do the temporary job being petitioned for, and that employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similar workers. Additionally, the need for the worker must be temporary. Certified jobs are not necessarily the jobs filled, though they do indicate a level of demand for temporary foreign-born workers in a particular occupation. More information on the H-2B process can be found here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/programs/h-2b>.
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