New Americans in Houston
A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Metro Area

**POPULATION**

6.8M
Total population in 2016

1.6M
Immigrant population

23.3%
Immigrant share of the population

**Population growth 2011-2016**

16.9%
Immigrant population growth: 1.3M → 1.6M

11.7%
Total population growth: 6.1M → 6.8M

**Top five countries of origin:**

1. Mexico .................. 40.2%
2. El Salvador ............... 7.6%
3. Vietnam .................. 5.9%
4. India ..................... 5.5%
5. Honduras ................. 3.6%

Share of total population growth in Houston attributed to immigrants
Foreign-born residents in the metro area hold significant economic power. In 2016, immigrant households in Houston earned $50.9B.

$9.2B went to federal taxes.\textsuperscript{2} Immigrant households held $38.2B in spending power in 2016.

$3.5B went to state and local taxes.\textsuperscript{3}

Total GDP in the Houston metro area was $478.6B in 2016. $124.7B of that was contributed by foreign-born residents. This means Houston immigrants contributed 26.1% of the metro area’s GDP.\textsuperscript{4}

Foreign-born residents also support federal social programs. In 2016, immigrants in the Houston metro area contributed $5B to Social Security and $1.4B to Medicare.

17.4% of immigrants in the area received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with 29.4% of U.S.-born residents in 2016. About 51% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while 17.5% had public healthcare coverage.\textsuperscript{5}
Although the foreign-born made up **23.3%** of the metro area’s overall population, they represented **30%** of its working-age* population, **30.6%** of its employed labor force, and **33.9%** of its STEM** workers in 2016.

* Working-age refers to people ages 16-64 years old.
** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

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**Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the metro area. This includes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Foreign Born Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Services*</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Recreation</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services*</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Immigrants in the metro area tend to concentrate in these occupations:**

1. Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners... **3.7%**
2. Construction Laborers.......... **3.4%**
3. Cooks................................ **3.0%**
4. Janitors & Building Cleaners.... **2.8%**
5. Truck Drivers .................... **2.7%**
6. Carpenters........................ **2.6%**
7. Ground Maintenance Workers ..... **2.4%**
8. Registered Nurses ............... **2.2%**
9. Cashiers ........................... **2.2%**
10. Miscellaneous Managers*........ **1.9%**

**Other occupations 73.1%**
Immigrants fill critical gaps in the workforce, allowing companies to keep jobs on U.S. soil. By 2016, immigrants had helped create or preserve

**72,576 local manufacturing jobs**

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.\(^9\)

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Immigrants in the area were **53.2%** more likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts.

In 2016, **13.4%**, or **131,535**, of employed immigrants in Houston were **self-employed**.

Compared to...

- **11.9%** Immigrant national average
- **8.8%** U.S.-born average

That year, they generated **$3.2B** in business income.

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\(^9\) Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.
Immigrant entrepreneurs tend to own businesses in these key industries in the metro area:

1. Professional Services .......... 22.4%
2. General Services .............. 20.2%
3. Construction .................. 20.0%
4. Healthcare ...................... 7.6%
5. Retail Trade .................... 6.4%

In 2012...

- African American-owned businesses in the metro area generated $4.4B in sales and paid 38,862 employees.
- Asian-owned businesses generated $26.9B in sales and paid 122,315 employees.
- Hispanic-owned businesses generated $22.7B in sales and paid 105,700 employees.

Housing

In 2016, 53.9% of immigrant households owned their homes in the metro area. That’s 359,440 homes. 46.1% of immigrant households were renters. 59.2% of immigrant households lived in houses, while 33.6% lived in apartments.

Total property value $78.4B
Total Annual Rent $3.1B
In fall 2015, there were 20,063 international students at colleges and universities in the Houston metro area.\textsuperscript{11}

International students supported

5,255 local jobs...

And spent

$509.9M

in the 2016-17 academic year.\textsuperscript{12}

Students under 18 who attended public schools in the area in 2016:

- 6.8% were immigrants
- 43.4% were either immigrants or children of immigrants
594,921
Number of foreign-born residents in Houston who had naturalized as of 2016

586,171
undocumented immigrants

Share of immigrant population in Houston metro area that was undocumented in 2016

37.2%

Share of foreign-born residents who had naturalized as of 2016

37.7%

Among the 982,813 immigrants who were not citizens... 22.2%, or 217,815, were likely eligible to naturalize.

6.1%, or 96,669, undocumented immigrants were likely to be DACA-eligible.

Undocumented immigrant households in Houston earned $11B in total income in 2016.

$742.0M went to federal taxes.\(^{13}\)

This left them with $9.8B in spending power.\(^{14}\)

$448.4M went to state and local taxes.\(^{15,16}\)
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS CONT.

**UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

**Top Countries of Origin:**

1. Mexico ......................... 51.6%
2. El Salvador ........................ 11.1%
3. Honduras .......................... 5.9%
4. Guatemala .......................... 4.9%
5. India .............................. 3.7%

**Concentrated in the Following Industries:**

1. Construction ...................... 25.6%
2. Accommodation & Recreation ... 15.4%
3. Professional Services .......... 12.2%
4. General Services ................ 10.9%
5. Retail Trade ...................... 10.4%

**DACA-ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS**

**Top Countries of Origin:**

1. Mexico ............................... 72.6%
2. El Salvador .......................... 9.5%
3. Honduras ............................ 4.1%
4. Guatemala ............................ 3.9%
5. India ................................. 1.5%

**Concentrated in the Following Industries:**

1. Construction ...................... 25.8%
2. Accommodation & Recreation ... 17.3%
3. Professional Services .......... 11.0%
4. Retail Trade ...................... 10.0%
5. General Services ................ 7.0%
In 2016, **81,131 people**, or **5.1%** of the immigrant population in the area, were likely refugees.17

**Share of immigrants in Houston who were likely refugees**

- **5.1%**

**Share of likely refugees who had naturalized as of 2016**

- **77.0%** or **62,494 people**

**Refugees in the Metro Area Work in the Following Industries:**

1. Manufacturing ................. 17.5%
2. Healthcare ........................ 15.0%
3. General Services ................. 14.4%
4. Retail Trade ....................... 9.4%
5. Professional Services .......... 8.4%
6. Other industries .................. 35.3%

**Education in the Refugee Community:**

- **26.8%**

**Compare to...**

- **34.0%** U.S.-born average
- **30.0%** National average
1 Unless otherwise specified, data are estimated from the 1-year sample of the American Community Survey from 2016 and figures refer to the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, Texas, Metropolitan Statistical Area.


4 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the 1-year ACS sample from 2016 and GDP statistics from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

5 The percentage of immigrants who had private healthcare coverage includes immigrants who had only private healthcare coverage and those who had both private and public healthcare coverage; likewise, for the percentage of immigrants who had public healthcare coverage.

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

7 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.

8 Miscellaneous managers include funeral service managers and postmasters and mail superintendents.


11 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Center for Educational Statistics

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


14 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.

