

New Americans in Portland, ME

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Metro Area¹



State & Local

POPULATION GROWTH



Immigrant share of the population, 2016

Between 2011 and 2016, the population in the metro area grew 1.6%.

The immigrant population increased 3.9%.

Total population

515,604 → 524,052



Immigrant population

23,372 → 24,277



In 2016, **258,901** commuters worked in metro Portland. Of these,

4.7%, or **12,213**, were foreign-born.

Growth in the foreign-born population accounted for



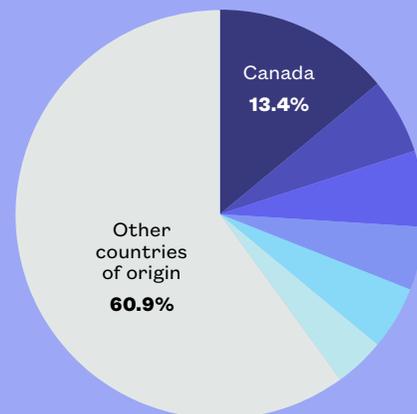
of overall population growth between 2011 and 2016.

Number of immigrants living in the Portland metro area in 2016:

24,277

Top six places of origin for immigrants living in metro Portland:

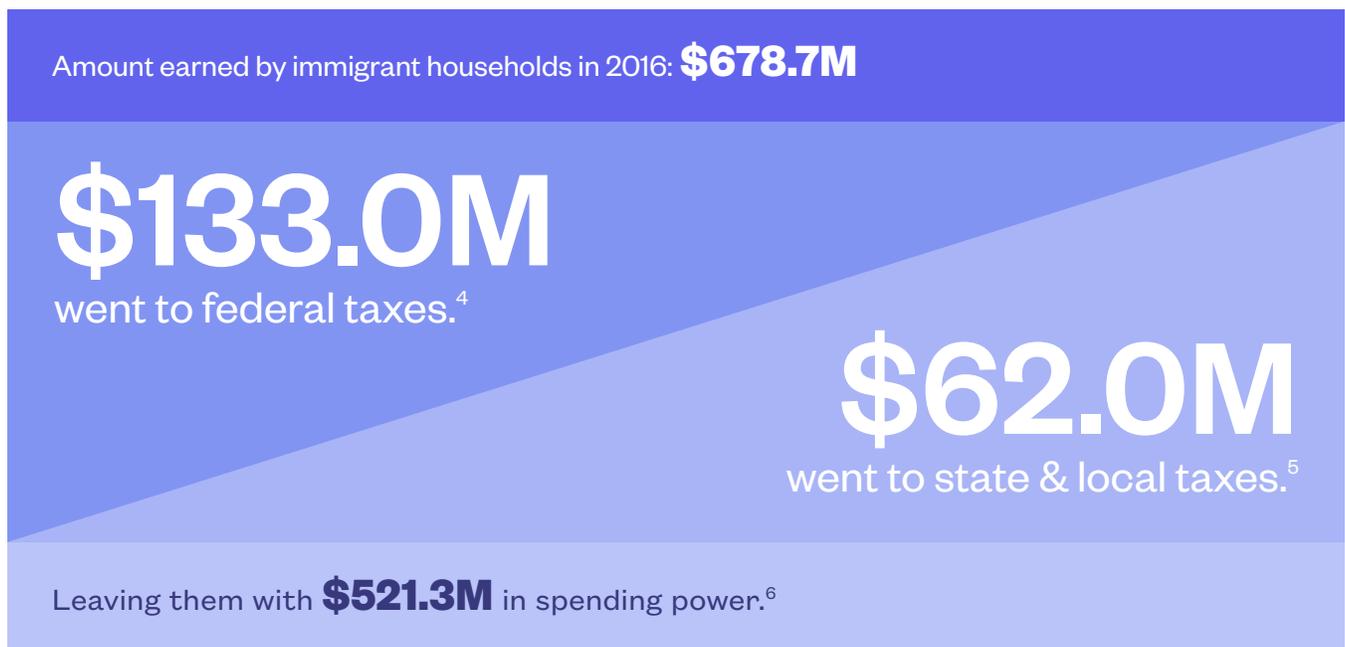
- 1 Canada13.4%
- 2 Eastern Africa² 6.4%
- 3 China 5.6%
- 4 Philippines 4.8%
- 5 Somalia4.7%
- 6 Iraq 4.2%



SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2016, foreign-born residents in metro Portland contributed **\$1.2B** to the metro area's GDP.³

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



Immigrants also support federal social programs.

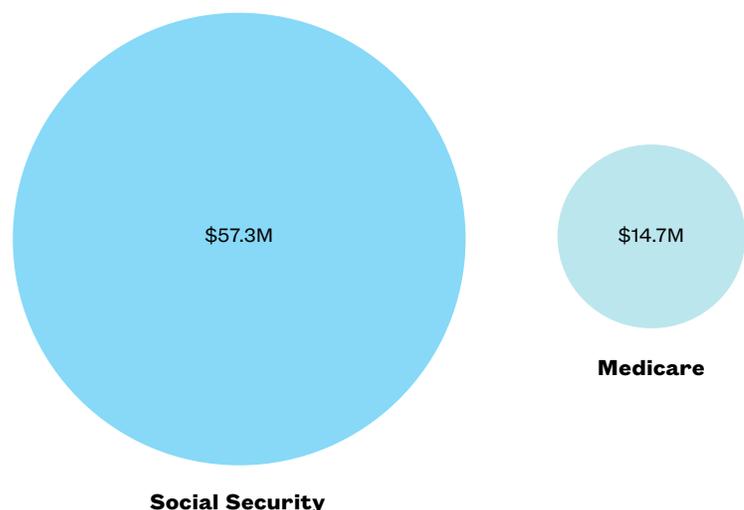
In 2016, they contributed

\$57.3M

to Social Security and

\$14.7M

to Medicare.



LABOR FORCE GROWTH

Although the foreign-born made up **4.6%** of the metro area's overall population, they represented **5.1%** of its working-age* population, **4.6%** of its employed labor force, and **6%** of its STEM** workers in 2016.

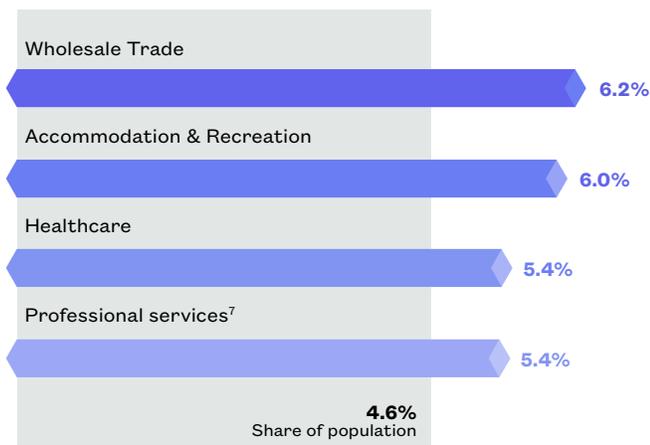
Immigrant shares of the...



* Working-age refers to people ages 16-64 years old

** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

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



SPOTLIGHT ON

Parivash Rohani

Nurse and Community Volunteer

When Islamic revolutionaries overthrew the Shah of Iran in 1979, members of the Baha'i faith once again faced persecution. On a single night in December, 500 Baha'i homes were burned to the ground. One belonged to the family of Parivash Rohani, an 18-year-old girl preparing for college.

"My parents were very concerned," Rohani says. "They were very worried about what would happen to me in this new, fanatical regime." They sent their only daughter to India with two cousins, and when by 1982 the regime had yet to fail, Rohani, by then married, became a refugee—stateless. A year later, 10 of her Baha'i friends were executed in Iran.

"I always say, coming to America, for us it's like a kid in a candy shop, because although we liked Iran, we never enjoyed the same life as other Iranians because of our religious beliefs," says Rohani, who resettled in the United States in 1985 and moved to Maine. "In America, we have the same rights as everyone else."

In America, the couple needed U.S. credentials. So Rohani, who had planned to study law in Iran, became a nurse, working for years in intensive care. Her husband, who had been completing a PhD in economics in India, became a computer analyst. "A lot of options were open to us," she says. "We just had to manage our situation." They raised four children, all of whom have pursued higher education in medical fields.

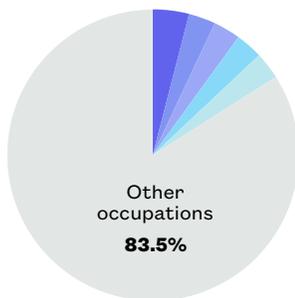
After moving from Auburn to Portland three years ago, Rohani has dedicated herself to volunteerism. She presents documentaries on the Baha'i, a centuries' old religion that accepts the divine origin of all faiths but that is labeled heretical by the Islamic Republic of Iran. She advocates for educational and employment opportunities for female immigrants, volunteers at naturalization ceremonies, helps in a soup kitchen, and works in high schools as a regional advisor for the Olympia Snowe Women's Leadership Institute.

"I always say to my husband, I don't know how to give back to this amazing community who were there for us when we needed them," she says. "We have to do more, because we have received so much."

LABOR FORCE GROWTH CONT.

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

- 1 Maids & Housekeepers 4.1%
- 2 Production Workers 3.3%
- 3 Postsecondary Teachers 3.1%
- 4 Nurses & Home Health Aides. 3.0%
- 5 Food Preparation Workers. 3.0%



Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that by 2016, immigrants living in the metro area helped create or preserve

1,117

local manufacturing jobs

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.⁸

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Despite making up **4.6%** of the overall population in Portland...

4.6%
Share of population

7.8% of the metro area's immigrants were entrepreneurs in 2016.

7.8%
Share of immigrants who were entrepreneurs

SPOTLIGHT ON

Alba Zakja & Mateo Hodo

Owners, *Coffee ME Up*

The chance of winning the diversity visa lottery is bitterly low—about one percent. Mateo Hodo’s family won the lottery, granting them U.S. residency, in 2002, and moved from Albania to Michigan and, later, Maine. Alba Zakja won the lottery in 2009, and moved to Maine to be near Mateo, a high school friend whom she had recently begun dating. Today the couple is married and lives in Portland. “Yes,” says Zakja, “I guess it was meant to be.”

In January 2017, the couple opened a cafe where they can share, if not their good luck, then surely their good cheer. Coffee ME Up, on east Cumberland Avenue, serves a mix of Albanian and American sandwiches, soups, and pastries, and hews to a mission to generate warmth and goodwill. Zakja and her mother make the baklava, 100 layers of handmade phyllo dough crafted over four days’ time and lightly sweetened with homemade sugar syrup. Hodo gives hugs to any customer in need.

“The thing that we wanted most when we opened this coffee shop was to create a ripple effect, so that people would leave happy,” Zakja says. “We’re strong believers that if you start your day right that’s going to carry on through the day and maybe make so many more people happier, and have a good impact throughout the whole community.”

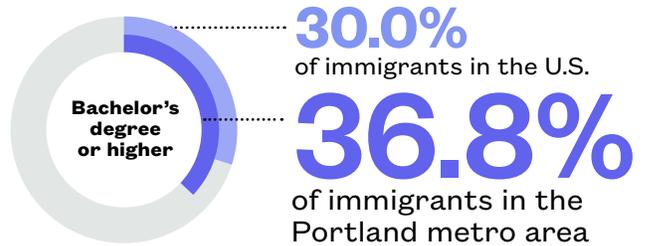
Zakja arrived in the United States at the height of the Great Recession with a finance degree from the University of New York Tirana, a SUNY affiliate in Albania. With work scarce, she landed a server job at Dunkin’ Donuts, quickly moving into management and gaining an unintended education in the restaurant business. “Sometimes things are meant to be that way, because it shifts your interest somewhere else,” she says. Hodo, meanwhile, worked in construction and became a contractor.

Today the couple owns a residential fourplex and, after years of 100-hour work weeks each, now has four full-time employees at Coffee ME Up. “We worked hard, we saved, and we have loans,” Zakja says. “It had to be hard work from both of us.”

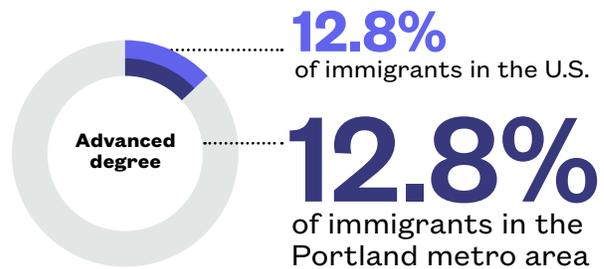
EDUCATION

Immigrants in metro Portland were more likely than the average immigrant in the U.S. to have a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2016.

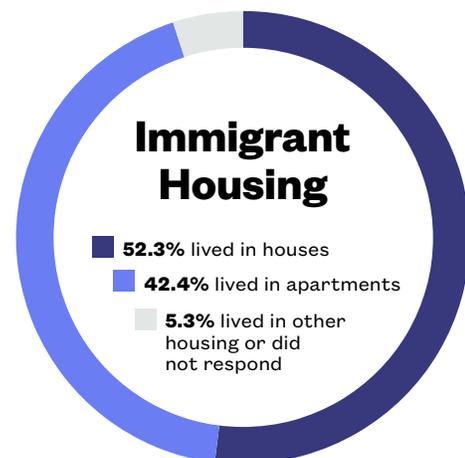
Share of population aged 25 and up with a bachelor’s degree or higher:



Share of population aged 25 and up with an advanced degree:



HOUSING WEALTH



HOUSING WEALTH CONT.

56.6%

Share of immigrants in the Portland metro area who owned their own homes in 2016, compared to **70.6%** of the U.S-born.

\$1.6B

Total property value of immigrant households

40.8%

Share of immigrants in the Portland metro area who were renters in 2016.

\$42.0M

Total annual rent

NATURALIZATION

55.6%
Naturalized

Share of immigrants in metro Portland who were naturalized citizens in 2016.

24.2%
Potentially eligible

Share among those who were not citizens but potentially eligible for naturalization in 2016.

REFUGEES

The median household income of the refugees in the metro area was **\$21,400** in 2016.

19.3%⁹
Likely refugees

Share of immigrants in metro Portland who were likely refugees in 2016.

60.9%
Naturalized

Share of likely refugees who were naturalized citizens.

CITY OF PORTLAND AND SURROUNDING CITIES¹⁰

Population

Number of immigrants living in the Portland region in 2016:

11,063

Immigrant share of the regional population in 2016:

10%

Top four countries of origin for immigrants living in the region:

- 1 Somalia 10.3%
- 2 Iraq 6.3%
- 3 Vietnam 6.3%
- 4 Cambodia 5.5%

Economic Contributions

Amount contributed by immigrants in the region to Social Security in 2016:

\$23.4M

Amount contributed to Medicare in 2016:

\$5.8M

Education



Share of immigrants aged 25 and up with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2016



Share of immigrants aged 25 and up with an advanced degree in 2016

Population Growth

Between 2011 and 2016, the population in the region grew 1.5%. The foreign-born population increased by 12.2%.

Total population

108,765 → 110,370



Immigrant population

9,856 → 11,063



Share of overall population growth attributed to immigrants between 2011-2016

Labor Force

Immigrant shares of...



Refugees

Number of likely refugees living in the Portland region in 2016:¹¹

3,399

Refugee share of the immigrant population in 2016:

30.7%

CITY OF PORTLAND AND SURROUNDING CITIES¹⁰

Housing Wealth

Share of immigrants in the region who owned their own homes in 2016:

35.3%

Share of U.S.-born who owned their own homes in 2016:

47.6%



Share of immigrants who were renters in 2016

Total property value of immigrant households:

\$434.4M

Total annual rent paid by immigrants:

\$25.2M

Naturalization

Number of immigrants in the region who were naturalized citizens in 2016:

5,480

Naturalized share of immigrants



Number among non-citizens who were potentially eligible for naturalization in 2016:

1,502

Share of non-citizens who were potentially eligible for naturalization



For more city, district, and state-level data, visit MapTheImpact.org and explore our interactive map.



- 1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2011 and 2016 and figures refer to the Portland-South Portland, ME Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- 2 Eastern Africa refers to Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. For respondents who answered the Census with a specific country as their country or birth, they are listed separately.
- 3 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2016 and the statistics of GDP from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- 4 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 5 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 6 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates are from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- 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 Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." New American Economy.
- 9 New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."
- 10 For the purpose of this report, this region includes the cities of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, as well as Long Island town, in Maine. While the decennial U.S. Census divides the country up into census tracts that can hold as few as a few hundred people, the American Community Survey is a much smaller survey, and the units it uses to divide the country, called Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMA), usually must contain at least 100,000 people in order to generate accurate estimates. The size of these PUMA limits how closely data analysis can be carried out geographically. To reach minimum population requirements for PUMA, the PUMA containing the city of Portland needed to include the town of Long Island as well as some of Portland's neighboring cities.
- 11 New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."