

# New Americans in Washoe County

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County<sup>1</sup>

SEPTEMBER 2021



## Population

**63,400**

immigrants lived in Washoe County, Nevada, in 2019.

Immigrants made up

 **13.9%**

of the total population in the county in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the population in the county increased by

 **6.2%**

The immigrant population increased by

**+1.3%**

during the same time period.

 **3.1%**

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

## Demographics

 **7.6%**

of immigrants in Washoe County are recent arrivals, with no more than 5 years of residency in the United States, meaning

 **92.4%**

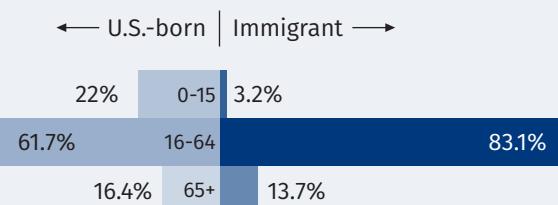
of immigrants in the county have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years.

In the county, immigrants are

 **34.8%**

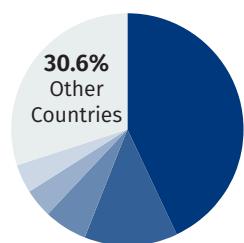
more likely to be of working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.<sup>2</sup>

### Shares of population by age groups.<sup>3</sup>



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

Mexico (43.3%)	El Salvador (6.2%)	India (3.5%)
Philippines (12.7%)	Guatemala (3.7%)	



<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Washoe County, Nevada.

<sup>2</sup> We define working age as 16-64 years of age.

<sup>3</sup> Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



## Demographics *continued*

**13,700**

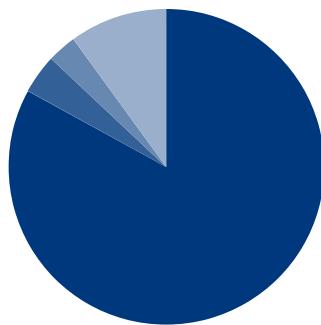
immigrants living in the county had limited English language proficiency, making up

 **21.6%**

of the immigrant population.

The top languages spoken at home other than English were:

- Spanish (83%)
- Chinese (4.4%)
- Filipino, Tagalog (2.9%)
- Other (9.7%)



**230,300**

commuters<sup>4</sup> worked in the county.

 **18.4%**

or **42,500** commuters, were foreign-born.

## Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

In 2019, immigrant households in the county earned  
**\$2 billion**

■ **\$321.6 million**

went to federal taxes<sup>5</sup>

■ **\$125.3 million** went to state & local taxes<sup>6</sup>

■ **\$1.5 billion** left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held

 **12.9%**

of all spending power in the county.

Given their household incomes, **24.3%** of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold as compared to **20.2%** of U.S.-born residents.



Immigrants U.S.-born

<sup>4</sup> Commuter refers to a person that works for an employer located within Washoe County, regardless of their place of residence.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

<sup>6</sup> Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

## Spending Power & Tax Contributions *continued*

In 2019, foreign-born residents in the county contributed

**\$4.1 billion**

to the county's GDP, or **14.5% of the total.<sup>7</sup>**

Immigrants in the county also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed

**\$206.3 million to Social Security**

**\$51.6 million to Medicare**

 **21.7%**  
of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with  
 **32.6%**  
of U.S.-born residents in 2019.

About **70.7%** of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage, while **34.2%** had public healthcare coverage.<sup>8</sup>



Private



Public

About **63.3%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **22.3 %** had public healthcare coverage.



Private

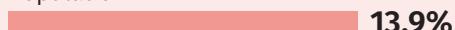


Public

## Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **13.9%** of the county's overall population, they represented **17.8%** of its working-age population, **18.6%** of its employed labor force, and **12.4%** of its STEM workers in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

### Immigrant shares of the...

Population  **13.9%**

Working-age Population  **17.8%**

Employed Population  **18.6%**

STEM Workers  **12.4%**

Immigrants in the county are

**34.8%**

more likely to be working age than their U.S.-born counterparts.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

<sup>9</sup> STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.

## Workforce *continued*

The immigrant working-age population was **50.2%** female and **49.8%** male.



The employed immigrant population was **44%** female and **56%** male.



### Top Occupations for Female Workers:

Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners .....	9.6%
Janitors and Building Cleaners .....	4.4%
Cashiers .....	3.7%

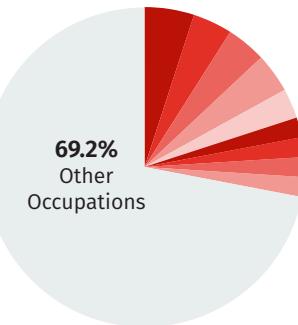
### Top Occupations for Male Workers:

Construction Laborers.....	5.1%
Cooks .....	5%
Laborers and Hand Movers .....	4.5%

Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the county in 2019:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (5%)
- Cooks (4.1%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (3.7%)
- Cleaners (3.7%)
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (3.6%)
- Cashiers (3%)

- Construction Laborers (2.8%)
- Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (2.4%)
- Stockers and Order Fillers (2.2%)
- Carpenters (2%)
- Food Preparation Workers (2%)

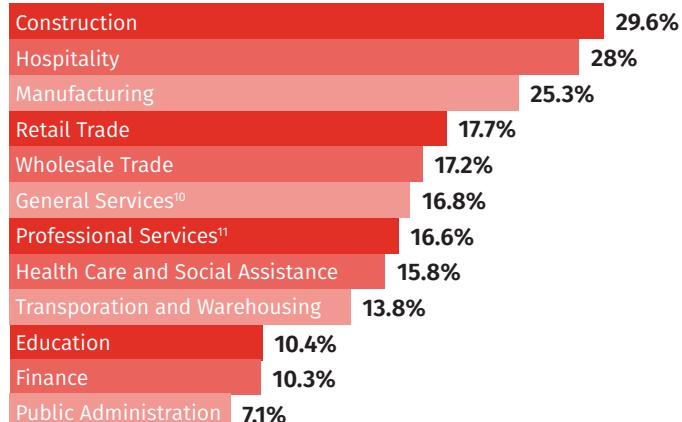


Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the county had helped create or preserve

**2,900**  
manufacturing  
jobs

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.<sup>12</sup>

Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the county.



<sup>10</sup> General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

## Workforce *continued*

### SPOTLIGHT ON Immigrant Essential Workers

Immigrants have also been playing vital roles in critical industries that have kept the country functioning throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Immigrants in the county continue working in these frontline and essential industries:



### SPOTLIGHT ON Job Demand In Washoe County In 2021

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the county, but they are also a crucial part of the county's economy, and could help us meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields. Immigrants have helped fill many of these roles, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare increases.

#### The top 5 industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers:<sup>14</sup>

1. Health Care & Social Assistance	2. Finance & Insurance	3. Retail Trade
4. Information	5. Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	

<sup>13</sup> These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.

<sup>14</sup> Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies for the time period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

## Entrepreneurship

Immigrants made up



of the business owners in the county in 2019.

**2,800**

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

**\$78.1 million**

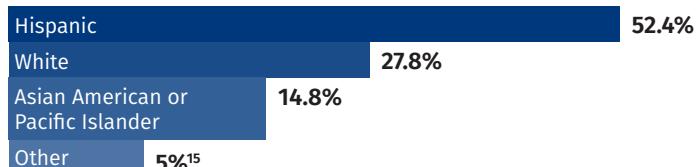
in business income for Washoe County.

Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **36.8%** female and **63.2%** male.



Immigrant entrepreneurs tended to work in **Professional Services (26.2%)**

Immigrant entrepreneurs by race and ethnicity:



While **9%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs, **6.5%** of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses.

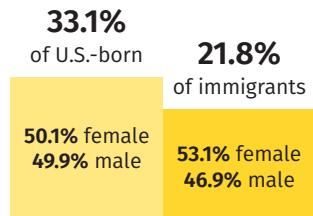
<sup>15</sup> Because of limitations with small sample size, we are unable to provide estimates for other racial and ethnic groups, including Black or African American, mixed race, and other races and ethnicities.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

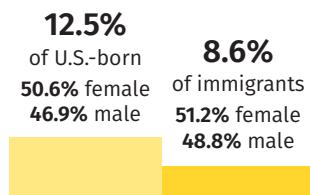
<sup>17</sup> Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

## Education

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 that held an **advanced degree** in 2019:



4.4% of K-12 students in the county were foreign-born in 2019.

31.1% of K-12 students in the county were children of immigrants in 2019.

### SPOTLIGHT ON

### University Population

**699**

students enrolled in colleges and universities in Washoe County in fall 2019 were temporary residents.<sup>16</sup>

**91**

international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities in the county in the 2018-19 academic year.

International students supported

**246**

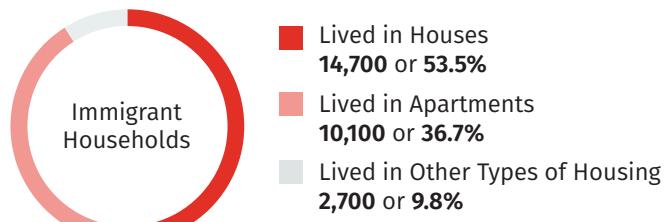
jobs and contributed

**\$24.1 million**

million in the 2019-20 academic year.<sup>17</sup>

## Housing

In 2019, **50.7%** of immigrant households in Washoe County owned their own homes, compared to **59.1%** of U.S.-born households.



The total property value of immigrant households was

**\$4.4 billion**  
**\$141.9 million**

**49.3%** of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was

**81.4%**

of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their place of residence as compared to **86.2%** of U.S.-born households in 2019.

## Naturalization



Category	Count	Percentage
Naturalized Citizens	30,100	47.4%
Likely Eligible	10,900	17.2%
Not Eligible	22,400	35.4%



Nationally, **48.7%** of immigrants are naturalized citizens, **15.9%** are likely eligible to naturalize, and **35.4%** are not yet eligible.

**19.8%**  
of households in Washoe County had at least one foreign-born resident.

If all immigrants who are eligible to naturalize became U.S. citizens, their earning potential would increase by

**+8.9%<sup>18</sup>**

## Refugees

**1,100**

refugees, or **1.8%** of the foreign-born population in Washoe County, were likely refugees.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Enchautegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. *The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities.* Urban Institute.

<sup>19</sup> New American Economy. 2017. *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America.*

## DACA-Eligible Population

**2,300**

DACA-eligible people lived in Washoe County in 2019.

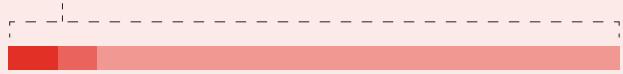
They made up

 **3.7%**

of the immigrant population.

In 2019, DACA-eligible households earned

**\$42.6 million**



**■ \$4.8 million**

went to federal taxes<sup>20</sup>

**■ \$3.7 million** went to state & local taxes<sup>21</sup>

**■ \$34.1 million** left in spending power

## Undocumented Immigrants

**18,600**

undocumented immigrants in Washoe County, 2019.

They made up

 **29.4%**

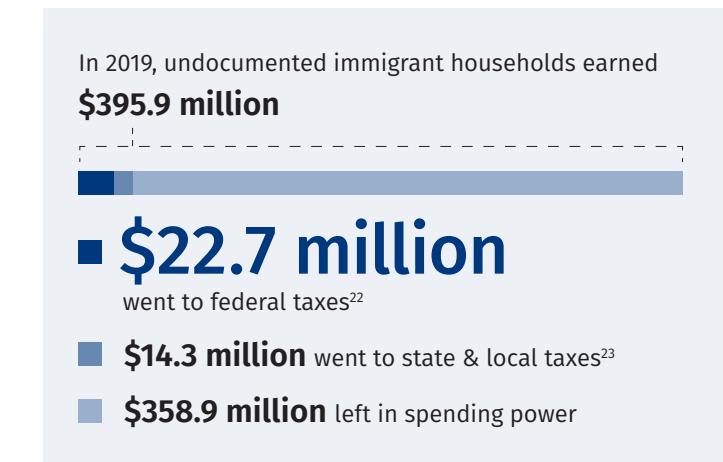
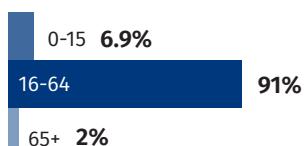
of the immigrant population.

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force.

 **91%**

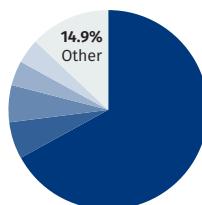
are of working-age in the county.

Undocumented immigrants by age groups:



Top countries of origin for the undocumented in the county:

- Mexico (65.8%)**
- El Salvador (5.9%)**
- Philippines (5.8%)**
- Guatemala (4.1%)**
- India (3.5%)**



Undocumented immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the county.



20 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

21 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

22 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

23 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

## SPOTLIGHT ON

# Eugene Nduwimana

Refugee

I learned that Reno would be my new home 30 days before my flight was scheduled to leave Nairobi, Kenya. In fact, I didn't even know that I, my wife and two sons would be coming to America. That's something many people don't know about refugees: you apply through a resettlement agency, and your host country offers to accept you and then assigns you to a city.

I'd never even heard of Reno because there are few refugees here. But my family was very lucky. The kind people of the Northern Nevada International Center picked us up from the airport carrying flowers. They helped us find housing and furniture and everything we needed. They showed us how to take the city bus and call 911 during an emergency.

We took English classes at Truckee Meadows Community College, and all of us had jobs within four months. My wife works in a hospital as a housekeeper. One son works in a company that makes ventilators. The other works with me at a company that makes herbal supplements. There I was quickly promoted from assistant machine operator to the processing department.

Today, we are homeowners and will be eligible to apply for citizenship within five years. I'm still surprised how our lives could change so dramatically after leaving our embattled lives in Kenya. That's where we had lived for nine years after fleeing the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I had managed to support us with a small barber and wig shop, but our family was targeted because we were refugees. After my business was looted and I was attacked, I began to fear for all our safety and applied for resettlement.

Living in Reno wasn't easy at first, especially learning to live with winter. But now we can't imagine living anywhere else. I'm glad the city will be accepting more refugees in the future, and I hope they will have access to the same generosity and services that we received. They helped us quickly transform from nervous and anxious refugees to proud and confident Renoites.

## SPOTLIGHT ON

# Gustavo Velasco

Owner, GUsto Catering and Meals

Gustavo Velasco had just graduated from Reed High School when a family friend asked him what he wanted to study in college. As a recent immigrant who'd moved to Reno from Mexico with his mother in 1999 at age 14, Velasco assumed he should focus on making money.

"I like to eat!" he joked. So she pushed him to study at the culinary arts program at Truckee Meadows Community College, while he worked in catering at the convention center.

A year after graduation, Velasco became the lead chef for the Chocolate Bar franchise. Although he loved the work, he hated the industry's reputation for high stress, low pay, burnout and alcohol abuse.

Velasco worked as a bartender for the next several years, but he missed cooking. "I love the way food brings people together," he says. During this time, he also became eligible for the DACA program that gives young immigrants the right to work and live in the United States. His new status gave him the confidence to put down roots, and Velasco decided to start his own business. He named it GUsto Catering, in a play of words on his first name Gustavo.

Although he had a binder of recipes, Velasco wanted guidance to make sure he was approaching his startup wisely. In 2016, he contacted the Northern Nevada SCORE chapter, a nonprofit organization that offered classes to help entrepreneurs. He was also connected to Sandra Rentas who worked for the Nevada Small Business Development Center. "She told me I that I had the right mentality of starting slowly," he says. Today, he works as a personal chef hosting dinner parties in clients' homes and offering corporate cooking classes via Zoom.

Velasco appreciates Reno's business resources and surging growth, especially as more high-profile companies, including Tesla and Microsoft, set up shop. "They create jobs and giving me opportunities to cook." Although he's still part of the DACA program, he'd like to see reform that gives immigrants like him a pathway to citizenship. "I've been here 22 years now. All I want to do is be a part of Reno's success story."

# New Americans in Reno

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the City.

## Population

**36,400**

immigrants lived in the City of Reno, Nevada in 2019, making up

 **15%**

of the total population.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the city increased by

 **+5.3%**

The immigrant population decreased by

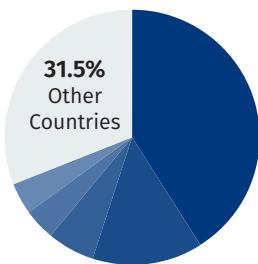
**-1.4%**

during the same time period.

## Demographics

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

- Mexico (41%)
- Philippines (13.8%)
- El Salvador (5.8%)
- India (4.4%)
- Guatemala (3.5%)

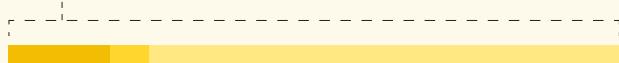


## Spending Power & Tax Contributions

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

In 2019, immigrant households in the county earned

**\$1.1 billion**



**\$185.6 million**

went to federal taxes<sup>24</sup>

**\$71.2 million** went to state & local taxes<sup>25</sup>

**\$877.6** left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held

 **13.7%**

of all spending power in the city.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

<sup>25</sup> Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."