NEW AMERICANS IN SALT LAKE COUNTY
A SNAPSHOT OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE COUNTY

POPULATION GROWTH

Between 2009 and 2014, the total population of Salt Lake County grew by 5.5%, from 1,035,063 to 1,091,838. The foreign-born population, however, grew by more than triple that — 19.6%, from 116,380 to 139,205.

Growth in the foreign-born population accounted for 40.2% of overall population growth during that period.

Between 2009 and 2014, the share of the foreign-born population in the county grew from 11.2% to 12.7% at an annual rate of 6.2%.

As a result of the influx of immigrants from 2000 to 2014, 12,726 U.S.-born residents were attracted to the county.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2014, while 12.7% of the county’s total population, immigrants made up 14.9% of its self-employed population. In the county, 6,783 foreign-born people worked for their own businesses, generating $145 million in business income.

1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from one-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2000, 2009, and 2014, and figures refer to Salt Lake County.

The foreign-born population of Salt Lake County wields considerable economic weight. In 2014, immigrants held $2.7 billion in spending power with Hispanic immigrants accounting for 44.8% of this amount and Asian immigrants accounting for 25.4%. In 2014, immigrants in Salt Lake City County contributed $8 billion to the metro area’s GDP. Given their income, we estimate that the foreign-born population contributed $236 million in state and local taxes in 2014, including property, income, sales, and excise taxes levied by either the State of Utah or by municipal governments. Foreign-born households also support federal social programs. In 2014, foreign-born households in the county contributed:

- $1.3 billion to Social Security
- $0.3 billion to Medicare

The influx of immigrants increased the total housing value in Salt Lake County by close to $1 billion after the financial crisis from 2009, and by more than $2 billion during the period of 2000 to 2014. From 1991 to 2001, foreign-direct investment in the metro area of Salt Lake City boosted the number of jobs at foreign-owned enterprises from 13,490 to 23,870 jobs, an increase of 77%. Salt Lake County’s exports reached $8.4 billion in 2014, with its top export markets:

- Hong Kong
- Canada
- Thailand
- Mexico

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3 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the one-year ACS sample from 2014 and the statistics of GDP by Metropolitan Area from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.


8 Metropolitan Export Series from the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.
LABOR FORCE GROWTH

Although the foreign-born made up 12.7% of the county’s overall population, they made up 16.8% of its working-age population and 16.7% of its employed labor force in 2014.

Immigrants are significantly overrepresented in several key industries in the county. This includes:

- Manufacturing ........................................... 29.2%
- Construction ............................................... 29%
- Services ...................................................... 27.7%
- Entertainment, recreation, & accommodation .... 19.6%
- Retail trade .................................................. 17.9%
- Professional services .................................... 14.7%

6,403 🏛️ manufacturing jobs

Because of the role immigrants play filling jobs and helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants in Salt Lake County helped create or preserve 6,403 local manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.⁹

EDUCATIONAL AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

In fall 2014, 3,652 students enrolled in the county’s colleges and universities held temporary resident visas.¹⁰

These students supported 1,578 local jobs and contributed to the local economy $112.5 million in spending that academic year.¹¹

More than 19% of immigrants in the county hold at least a bachelor’s degree, while close to 66% hold at least a high-school diploma.

If Salt Lake City could increase its population of international students by 10%, the number of patents created would be expected to rise by 820.¹²,¹³

If the county retains one half of its international students after graduation, 3,709 local jobs will be created within six years,¹⁴ boosting the metro area’s GDP per capita by $699 within the next 30 years,¹⁵ and increasing the population by 27,901 people within the next 50 years.¹⁶

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¹⁰ Data on total student enrollment in the metro area is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics.

¹¹ Economic data is derived from The International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

¹² To derive the patent counts, we used the data on patent assignees available from Patent Full-Text and Image Database maintained by the US Patent and Trademark Office.


The Partnership for a New American Economy brings together more than 500 mayors and business leaders united in making the economic case for streamlining, modernizing, and rationalizing our country’s immigration policies at the national, state, and local levels.