

FACT SHEET: IMMIGRATION IN MINNESOTA



THE HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION TO MINNESOTA.

- The first peoples living in the region now known as Minnesota were members of diverse Native American tribes who settled in the area as long ago as 6000 B.C.
- The Ojibwe and Dakota, the largest tribes living in Minnesota in the early and mid-nineteenth century, both had well-established societies based on hunting and gathering when the first French and French Canadian traders arrived to establish fur posts among them.
- By 1850, many settlers from New England as well as immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Ireland, and Germany had settled in Minnesota. Drawn by the lure of inexpensive farmland and a growing industrial base, diverse groups continued to migrate to Minnesota.
- By 1896, official election instructions were being issued in nine languages: English, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, French, Czech, Italian, and Polish.
- Minnesota became a significant immigration state as a result of the wave of immigration to the United States at the turn of the century. This first major wave of immigration to Minnesota peaked around 1900, with more than 60% of the immigrants came from Sweden, Norway, and Germany.
- While the foreign-born population in the United States was only 15% in the 1890s, the foreign-born population for Minnesota was 40%.
- Another wave of immigration to Minnesota, which began after the Vietnam War, marked a change in the ethnic makeup of Minnesota's immigrant populations. This wave peaked in the 1980s when hundreds of refugees from Southeast Asia, aided by local churches, were resettled in Minnesota communities. Minnesota's ethnic mix—originally comprised of Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants from diverse Western European countries—was further enriched by new populations primarily from Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.¹

MINNESOTA'S CURRENT FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

- The term "foreign-born" refers to naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees, foreign students, and undocumented immigrants.
- The current foreign-born populations in Minnesota are growing in number and diversity. However, only 6.3% of Minnesota's population is foreign-born, which is less than half the national average.²
- In 2004, 11,708 of the 946,142 immigrants admitted to the U.S. intended to reside in Minnesota. That means Minnesota receives approximately 1.2% of all new foreign-born arrivals.³

REFUGEES IN MINNESOTA

- Refugees are persons who are forced to flee persecution in their country of origin. The Minnesota Department of Human Services estimates that more than 70,500 refugees live in Minnesota.⁴
- In a given year, 25-50% of Minnesota's immigrants are refugees, compared to 8% nationally.⁵
- 13,500 refugees from about 30 different countries were resettled in Minnesota from 1999-2003, accounting for just over 2% of all refugees admitted nationally. Though the number each year may fluctuate, the percentage resettling in Minnesota is expected to be stable.⁶
- In the last two decades, refugees have tended to come from the former Soviet Union, Bosnia, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

- Federal, state, and community agencies give these estimates of Minnesota’s largest refugee populations:⁷

Hmong	60,000	Former Soviet Republics	12,500
Vietnamese	25,000	Ethiopian	7,500
Somali	25,000	Cambodian	7,500
Laotian	13,000		

According to reports from local immigrant communities, Minnesota is home to the largest Somali population in the United States.⁸ The Twin Cities area is host to the largest Hmong community in the world outside of Asia.⁹ An estimated 400 Hmong-owned businesses have contributed to the revitalization of urban areas in the Twin Cities metropolitan area: St. Paul, North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, and Brooklyn Center in particular.¹⁰ Unique, yet smaller immigrant communities in Minnesota include the largest group of Oromo – an ethnic group from Ethiopia – outside of that country, the second largest group of Tibetans in the U.S., and a concentration of West African refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone.

UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS IN MINNESOTA

- The number of undocumented people residing in Minnesota is difficult to estimate. The number of undocumented people residing in Minnesota is difficult to estimate. Pew Hispanic Research estimates the unauthorized immigrants to Minnesota to be between 55,000-85,000.¹¹
- Undocumented labor in Minnesota is concentrated in the trade, service, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing sectors. Additionally, there is an indirect impact of undocumented labor on other sectors, such as real estate and government. A 2000 report by HACER-MN, estimates that undocumented labor is worth almost \$1.6 billion to the Minnesota economy, and if the undocumented were suddenly removed, Minnesota’s economic growth would decline by 40%.¹²

OTHER FACTS

- According to the 2000 Census, 143,382 members of the Chicano/Latino population live in Minnesota – nearly 60% are U.S. citizens by birth,¹³ with only 57,573 having immigrated to this country during their lifetime.¹⁴
- Minneapolis Public schools report more than 90 languages other than English are spoken in the homes of their students,¹⁵ and in St. Paul Public Schools, 41% of students come from a home where one of 103 languages or dialects is spoken.¹⁶
- Immigrants are increasingly settling in and enriching Minnesota communities with their economic and cultural contributions. The past few years have seen a growth of diversity in Greater Minnesota, outside of the Twin Cities. Here, immigrants play a special economic role as some rural communities face the phenomena of aging workers and population losses. In South Central Minnesota, the Latino workforce added an estimated \$484 million per year, consequently lowering the tax rates for non-Latino residents of the area.¹⁷



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For citations for this fact sheet and further information, please see www.energyofanation.org.

Sources for “Immigration in Minnesota”

¹ *They Chose Minnesota*. Minnesota Historical Press. 1981.

² “International Immigration and Foreign-born Population.” Minnesota Department of Administration. 2005 data accessed in September 2006 at: <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/immigration.htm> using information from Table 1 contained in “Immigrants to Minnesota by Region and Selected Country of Birth available at: <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/documents/ImmigrationJuly2006.csv>.

³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2004*, Table 11. Accessed in May 2006 at: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics/yearbook/2004/yable11.xls>.

⁴ Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2006. “Refugee Assistance.” http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/economic_support/documents/pub/dhs_id_004115.hcsp.

⁵ Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. “Faces of Change.” Accessed in January 2006 at: <http://minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/04-09/change.cfm>.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Estimates include U.S.-born children and refugees resettled in other states who subsequently moved to Minnesota. Minnesota Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis. “Minnesota’s Immigrant Populations Continue to Increase.” June 17, 2004. Accessed in January 2006 at: <http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=7193>.

⁸ The McKnight Foundation “Immigrant Gateway: Framing the Issue” accessed in Feb 2006 at http://www.mcknight.org/hotissues/framing_immigrants.aspx and League of Women Voters and Minnesota’s Education Fund. “Immigration in MN: Changing Faces Changing Communities.” Accessed February 2006 at: <http://www.lwvmn.org/EdFund/ImmigrationInMinnesota.asp>.

⁹ Fettig, David and Rolnick, Arthur J. “Credit Availability: A snapshot of the Hmong business community in Minneapolis and St. Paul.” Accessed in Feb 2006 at: <http://Minneapolisfed.org/pubs/cd/03-1/credit.cfm>.

¹⁰ Hang, Lue Xieng. “Hmong Economic Development in the Twin Cities.” Hmong Chamber of Commerce. Aug. 2002. Accessed Feb. 06 from: www.hmongchamber.com/chamber_stories.asp?storyID=MHC7.

¹¹ Passell, Jeffery. Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics. Pew Hispanic Center. June 14, 2005. Accessed March 06 from: <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/46.pdf>.

¹² Keilkopf, James. “The Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers in Minnesota.” September 2000. Accessed in February 2006 at: www.hacer-mn.org/PDFs/undocumented.pdf.

¹³ Ronningen, Barbara. “Estimates of Selected Immigrant Populations in Minnesota: 2004.” Minnesota Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis. June, 2004. Citing the 2000 U.S. Census. Accessed Feb. 06 from: www.demography.state.mn.us/PopNotes/EvaluatingEstimates.pdf.

¹⁴ HACER Minnesota “Census 2000 Summary: Latinos in Minnesota” Rafael Robert 2000 accessed Feb 2006 www.hacer-mn.org/Reports/Census_2000.html.

¹⁵ Minneapolis Public Schools. Accessed May. 06 from: <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/about.html>.

¹⁶ Saint Paul Public Schools. Accessed Feb. 06 from: http://www.spps.org/About_Us2.html.

¹⁷ League of Women Voters and Minnesota’s Education Fund. “Immigration in MN: Changing Faces Changing Communities.” Accessed Feb. 06 from <http://www.lwvmn.org/EdFund/ImmigrationInMinnesota.asp>.