Immigrants in Middle Rio Grande Valley

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Region[1]

POPULATION

33,000

immigrants[2] lived in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region in 2019. Immigrants made up

19.1%

of the total population of the region in 2019.

67,100

people worked in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region in 2019 Of these,

22.1%

or 14,800 workers in the region were immigrants.

The top countries of origin for immigrants living in the region were Mexico (**93.3%**) and Honduras (**0.9%**).

Between 2014 and 2019, the overall population in the region grew from **170,300** to **172,900**, or **1.5%**. During the same period, the immigrant population in the region decreased from **35,800** to **33,000**, or **-7.9%**.

SPENDING POWER AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

Immigrants in the region hold considerable **economic power**. In 2019, immigrant residents in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region contributed **$2.5B** to the region's GDP.[3]

In 2019, immigrant households[4] in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region earned:

$730.8M

$85.6M went to federal taxes.[5]

$67.5M went to state & local taxes.[6]

Leaving them with **$577.8M** in spending power, or **24.9%** of all spending power in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region.

American Immigration Council

TEXANS for ECONOMIC GROWTH

SPENDING POWER AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

In 2019, immigrants in the region contributed:

$62.3M

to Social Security and

$15.2M

to Medicare.

Share of residents receiving Medicare or Medicaid in 2019:

U.S.-born
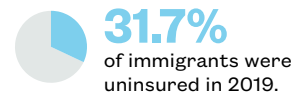**39.2%**
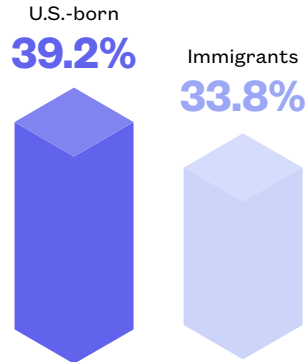
Immigrants
33.8%

Share of immigrant residents in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region with...

Only private healthcare coverage: **34.2%**
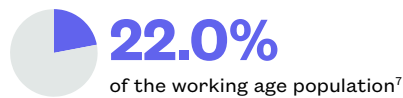
Only public healthcare coverage: **28.4%**

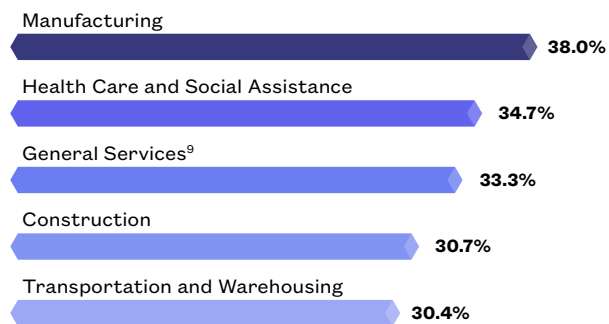Both private and public healthcare coverage: **5.7%**

...in 2019.

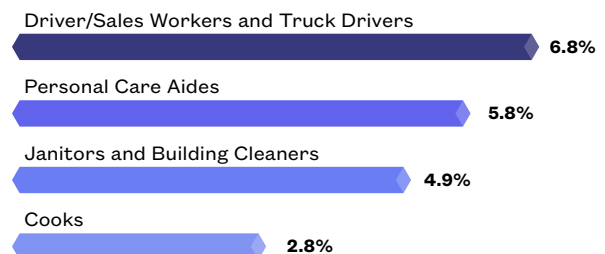**31.7%** of immigrants were uninsured in 2019.

WORKFORCE

In 2019, immigrants in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region comprised...

19.1% of the population

22.0% of the working age population[7]

22.9% of the employed labor force

The industries with the highest share of workers that are immigrants were:[8]

Manufacturing **38.0%**

Health Care and Social Assistance **34.7%**

General Services[9] **33.3%**

Construction **30.7%**

Transportation and Warehousing **30.4%**

The occupations with the largest number of immigrant workers were:

Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers **6.8%**

Personal Care Aides **5.8%**

Janitors and Building Cleaners **4.9%**

Cooks **2.8%**

Immigrants play a critical role in our workforce by helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil. Our research shows that immigrants living in the region helped create or preserve **1,500 local manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.[10]

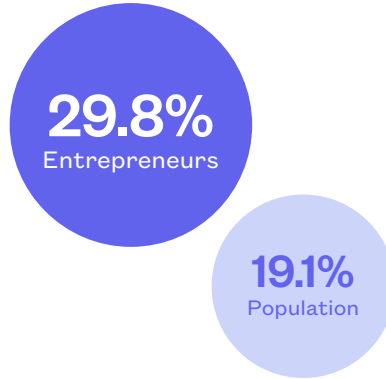## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1,600

immigrant entrepreneurs in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region generated

$49.9M

in business income in the region.[11]

Immigrants represented **29.8%** of the business owners in the region despite making up **19.1%** of the population.

29.8%
Entrepreneurs

19.1%
Population

In the region, immigrants were

43.2%

more likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts. **10.4%** of immigrants were entrepreneurs, while **7.3%** of the U.S.-born were entrepreneurs.
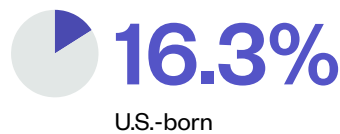
IMMIGRANTS	10.4%
U.S.-BORN	7.3%
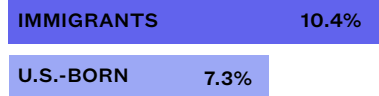
EDUCATION AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

2.8%

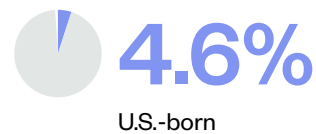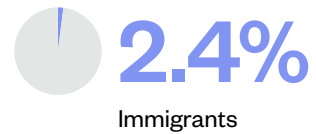of K-12 students in the region were immigrants in 2019.

Share of the region's population age 25 or older that held a:
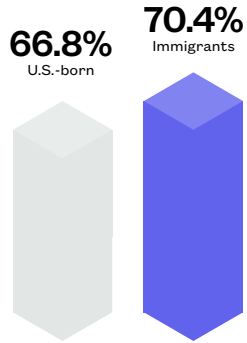
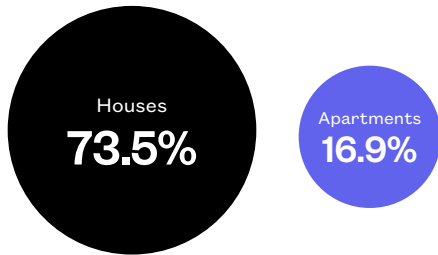| BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	ADVANCED DEGREE
10.5% Immigrants	**2.4%** Immigrants
16.3% U.S.-born	**4.6%** U.S.-born

HOUSING WEALTH

Share of residents in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region who owned their homes in 2019:

66.8%
U.S.-born

70.4%
Immigrants

The total property value of immigrant households in 2019 was

$1.1B

Share of immigrants living in:

Houses
73.5%

Apartments
16.9%

Share of immigrant residents in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region who were renters in 2019:

29.6%

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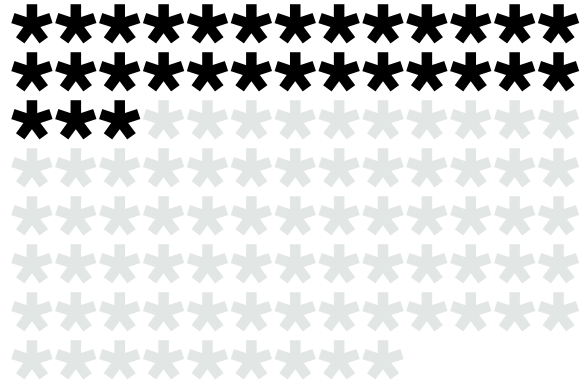
The total annual rent paid by immigrant households in 2019[12] was
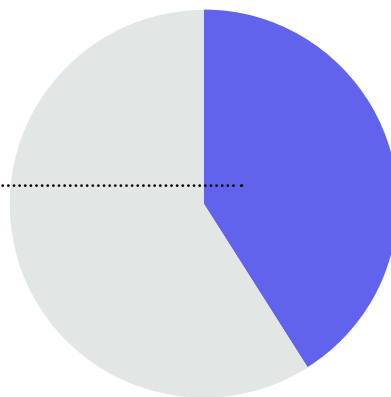
$20.8M

NATURALIZATION

In 2019,

13,600
immigrants, or

41.2%

of the immigrant population in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region were naturalized[13] citizens.

6,900
immigrants, or

21.0%

of immigrants in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region were likely eligible for naturalization in 2019.[14]

In 2019, approximately

6,200

undocumented immigrants[15] lived in the region, making up
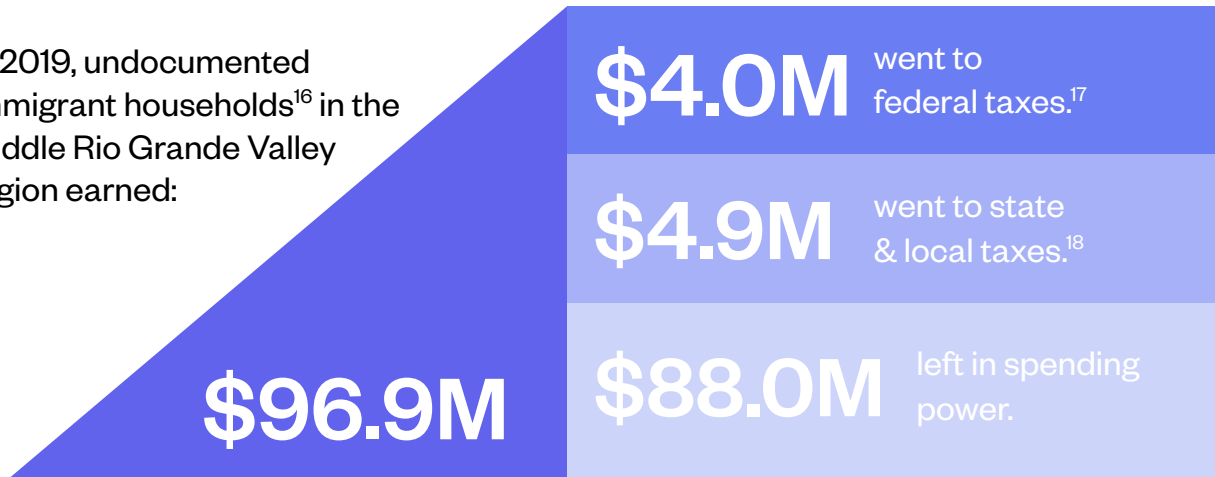
18.9%

of the immigrant population.

Mexico was the top country of origin for undocumented immigrants in the region.

96.3%

of the undocumented population was Mexican-born.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households[16] in the Middle Rio Grande Valley region earned:

$96.9M

$4.0M went to federal taxes.[17]

$4.9M went to state & local taxes.[18]

$88.0M left in spending power.

ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey (ACS) from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to the Middle Rio Grande Valley region in Texas.

2. Except where otherwise noted (e.g., "undocumented immigrant" or "DACA-eligible"), we define an immigrant as anyone born outside the country to non-U.S. citizen parents who resides in the United States. This includes naturalized citizens, green card holders, individuals with temporary immigration status, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.

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 2019 and the statistics on GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

4. Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.

5. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019* (Washington, DC: 2022), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353.

6. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, *Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States* (Washington, DC: 2018), https://itep.org/whopays/.

7. We define working age as 16-64 years of age.

8. The following are numerical estimates derived from the 5-year sample of the American Communities Survey from 2014 to 2019 and refer to the Middle Rio Grande Valley region in Texas. Immigrant workers in industries: Manufacturing: 1,300 of 3,500; Health Care and Social Assistance: 3,200 of 9,200; Construction: 1,500 of 5,000; Transportation and Warehousing: 1,200 of 4,000.

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

10. Jacob Vigdor, Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market (New York, NY: Americas Society/Council of the Americas and New American Economy, 2013), http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/revival-of-american-cities.pdf.

11. The total business income for immigrant entrepreneurs is calculated as the sum of the net pre-income-tax non-farm business and/or professional practice income for the previous calendar year (at the time of the survey) of self-employed immigrants age 16 or older.

12. The total rent paid by immigrant households is calculated as the sum of the total monthly rent (incl. utilities, fuels, etc., only if they were included in the rent contract), times 12, for immigrant households (we limit the data to one person per household to avoid double-counting rent where multiple respondents per household report the same rent).

13. Naturalization is the process through which one can become a U.S. citizen, dependent on certain eligibility requirements. Learn more here: https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works.

14. An immigrant is eligible to naturalize if they are documented, have resided in the United States for five years or more, and speak English well or fluently, as well as immigrants in military service who meet certain requirements such as speaking English well. Those who do not fit these criteria are deemed to be not eligible or currently ineligible to naturalize.

15. Undocumented immigrants are identified by applying the methodological approach outlined by Harvard University economist George Borjas in his work: George Borjas, The Labor Supply of Undocumented Immigrants (Harvard University, Labour Economics, volume 46, pages 1-3, 2017), https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gborjas/files/le2017.pdf. Immigrants who do not meet a set of criteria for legal status are identified as being undocumented. More on our methodology here: https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/methodology/.

16. Undocumented immigrant households refer to people living in a housing unit with an undocumented immigrant being the head of their unit.

17. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019* (Washington, DC: 2022), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353.

18. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2018), https://itep.org/whopays/.