

# New Americans in Memphis

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Metro Area<sup>1</sup>



State & Local

## POPULATION GROWTH



Immigrant share of the population, 2015

Between 2010 and 2015, the population in the metro area grew 2.2%.

The immigrant population increased 2.7%.

**Total population**

1,315,139 → 1,343,746



**Immigrant population**

67,956 → 69,787



In 2015, **604,670** commuters worked in metro Memphis.



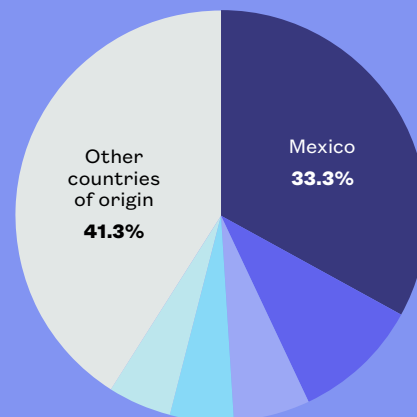
Of these, **6.9%**, or **41,987**, were foreign-born.

Number of immigrants living in the Memphis metro area in 2015:

**69,787**

Top five countries of origin for immigrants living in metro Memphis:

- 1 Mexico ..... 33.3%
- 2 India ..... 9.7%
- 3 China ..... 6.0%
- 4 Honduras ..... 5.0%
- 5 Vietnam ..... 4.7%



## SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2015, foreign-born residents in metro Memphis contributed **\$4.2B** to the metro area's GDP.<sup>2</sup>

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

Amount earned by immigrant households in 2015:

**\$1.6B**

**\$372.1M** went to federal taxes.<sup>3</sup>

**\$109.7M** went to state and local taxes.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving them with

**\$1.1B**  
in spending power.<sup>5</sup>

This means that foreign-born households held **5.4%** of all spending power in the Memphis metro area, slightly more than their share of the area's overall population.

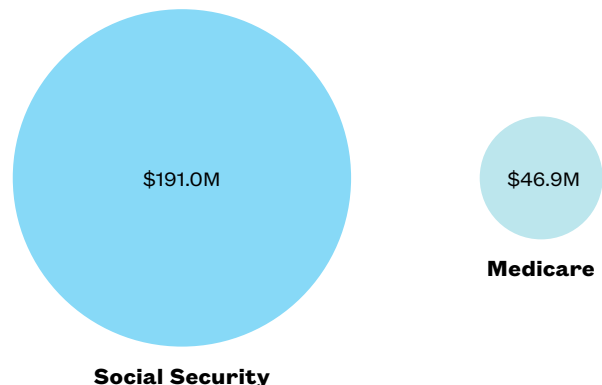
Share of spending power



Share of population



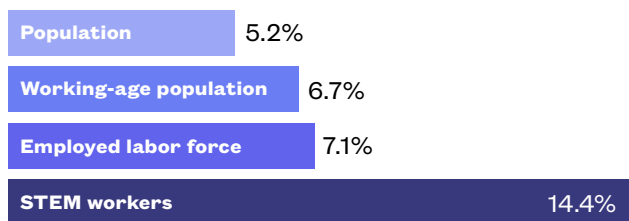
Immigrants also support federal social programs. In 2015, they contributed **\$191.0M** to Social Security and **\$46.9M** to Medicare.



## LABOR FORCE GROWTH

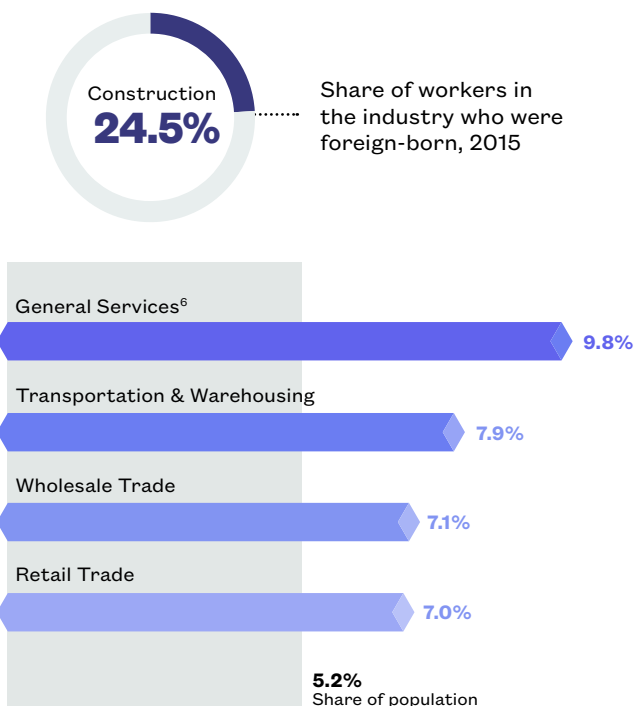
Although the foreign-born made up **5.2%** of the metro area's overall population, they represented **6.7%** of its working-age\* population, **7.1%** of its employed labor force, and **14.4%** of its STEM workers in 2015.

### Immigrant shares of the...



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

Immigrants are significantly overrepresented in several **key industries** in the metro area. This includes:



## SPOTLIGHT ON

# Nancy Aguila

Editor, *La Raza*

**N**ancy Aguila was working in the state cultural department in Jalisco, in west-central Mexico, when her husband received an invitation to work for an air-conditioning business in Memphis. The family has now lived in the city for 10 years.

Aguila, who worked as a journalist in Mexico, has since seen her role shift from one who records history to one who helps shapes it. "This is a challenging time for establishing human rights," she says. "But somebody once said: If you make someone play a musical instrument, they will never use a gun."

The goal may be profound, but Aguila's method is straightforward. By providing in-depth coverage in the Spanish-language media of mainstream cultural events in Memphis, she hopes to encourage participation, strengthen community, and break down prejudice. "Art and culture connects us," she says.

In 2016, she and a colleague started a monthly magazine called *Ruta Memphis*, her most structured attempt yet to promote non-Latino happenings to the Hispanic community. "We didn't want them to know about the events only on a weekly basis, but to prepare for the future, and get them to attend all over," she says. "Sometimes the Hispanic community doesn't feel invited. We wanted to bring the Latino community to everything going on in the city. We felt it made an important example."

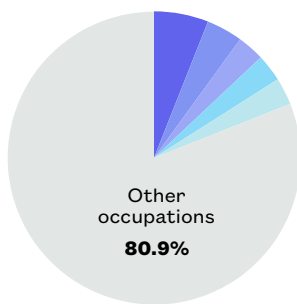
A year and a half after its launch, the magazine folded in the face of financial pressure, the latest in a series of media closures that have hit Aguila without once putting a dent in her drive. After arriving in Memphis, she had found work as a freelance writer and columnist for *La Prensa Latina*, which led to an offer to edit the newspaper *El Sol de Memphis*. But funding for that program ended, as well as for two magazines she co-founded, *Ediciones Especiales* and *Ella*.

Aguila is now an editor at *La Raza*, and continues to promote the arts across cultures. "When people enjoy a piece of theater or a piece of music together, they belong to the same community," she says. "Prejudices are broken down."

**LABOR FORCE GROWTH CONT.**

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

- 1 Construction Workers ..... 6.1%
- 2 Carpenters..... 3.9%
- 3 Cashiers .....3.3%
- 4 Packers & Packers..... 3.2%
- 5 Supervisors of Retail Workers ... 2.6%



Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that by 2015, immigrants living in the metro area helped create or preserve

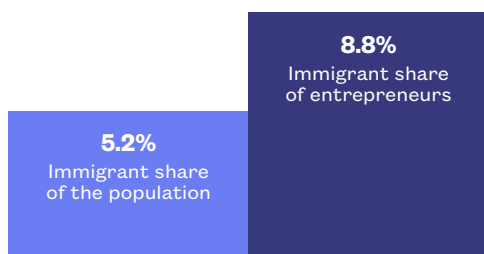
**3,210**

**local manufacturing jobs**

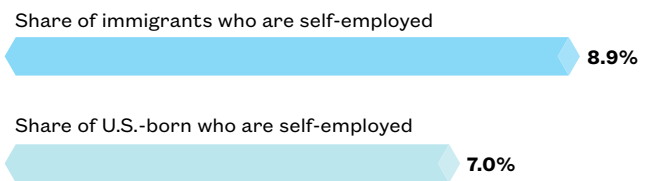
that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Despite making up **5.2%** of the overall population, immigrants represented **8.8%** of the entrepreneurs in metro Memphis in 2015.



This makes the foreign-born **26.7%** more likely than the U.S.-born to be entrepreneurs.



Memphis Metro Area Businesses, 2012	Sales Revenue, 2012	Number of Paid Employees, 2012 <sup>a</sup>
Asian-owned	<b>\$2.5B</b>	9,305
African American-owned	<b>\$1.6B</b>	9,715
Hispanic-owned	<b>\$450M</b>	3,709

SPOTLIGHT ON

# Dr. Pedro Velasquez

## Founder of LifeDOC

**D**r. Pedro Velasquez never intended to emigrate from Venezuela. He had won a prestigious scholarship for a three-year endocrinology fellowship at Harvard University’s Joslin Diabetes Center in 1993, and, upon completion, returned home. Then his 5-year-old son was diagnosed with a rare, progressive T-cell leukemia. Harvard colleagues advised him to go to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

The boy, Pedro, received four years of weekly treatment and is now a healthy business-school graduate who helps his father run an innovative Memphis health care organization for underprivileged patients with diabetes and other chronic conditions. “The reality is that I want to pay back the community,” says Dr. Velasquez, who opted to stay in the city. “I do believe that thanks to Memphis, and thanks to St. Jude’s, and thanks to this country, that Pedro was cured.”

LifeDOC, which Dr. Velasquez founded in 2005, provides a comprehensive treatment approach for cardio-metabolic conditions. Dr. Velasquez had noticed high rates of childhood obesity and other risk factors for serious, chronic conditions. Yet a lack of treatment among the uninsured led to costlier services, costs often borne by hospitals and government. “And there was not a single clinic that was providing quality of care,” Dr. Velasquez says. “By the time these children were adults, they were already sicker. It was work, work, work, get sick and go to the ER. They were affecting also the Memphis health system.” By focusing on preventative care, the clinic has been able to reduce the total cost of treating common chronic conditions such as diabetes by an average of 65 percent.

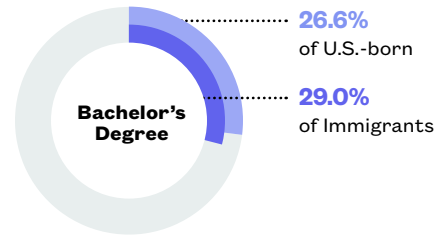
In addition, Dr. Velasquez started a primary-care clinic in a Hispanic neighborhood; he and his sons created LifeDOC Research and Pharmacy, which works with pharmaceutical companies to evaluate and implement therapies for common chronic conditions; and his son Pedro developed Vidaplus, an innovative healthcare membership program that allows the uninsured population to have access to the same quality services their insured patients receive. In total, the organizations employ 60 people.

Dr. Velasquez points out that St. Jude was also created by a child of immigrants. “And I do believe there is something in common with my project and St. Jude, and that is gratitude,” he says. “Gratitude to the American community, to the people who gave us the opportunity to do our best, to develop ourselves, to help other people through our jobs, our dreams, our skills.”

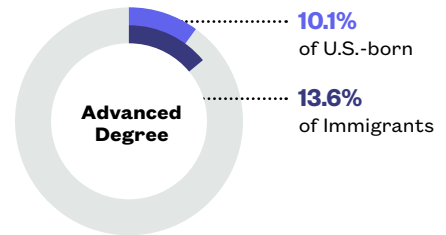
## EDUCATION

Immigrants are more likely to have a **bachelor’s degree** or higher.

Share of population over age 25 with an **advanced degree** in 2015:



Share of population over age 25 with an **advanced degree** in 2015:



# 1,079

students who were enrolled in Memphis colleges and universities during the fall of 2015 were temporary residents.<sup>9</sup> International students supported...

## 377

local jobs and spent...

## \$28.8M

in the 2016-2017 academic year.<sup>10</sup>

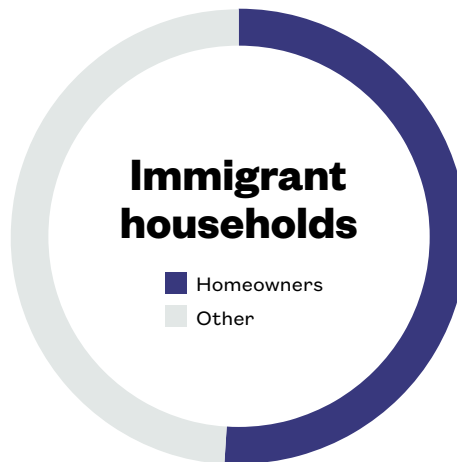
**EDUCATION CONT.**

Immigrants make up  
**2.4%**  
 of students under age 18  
 who attended public schools in  
 the metro area in 2015.

Memphis Metro Area Immigrants, 2015	Share with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Share with an Advanced Degree
<b>Asian</b>	<b>55.6%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>2%</b>

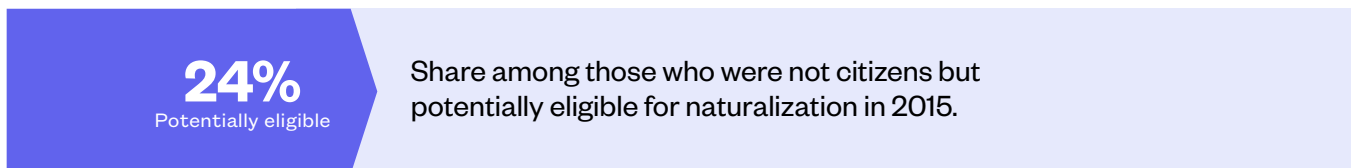
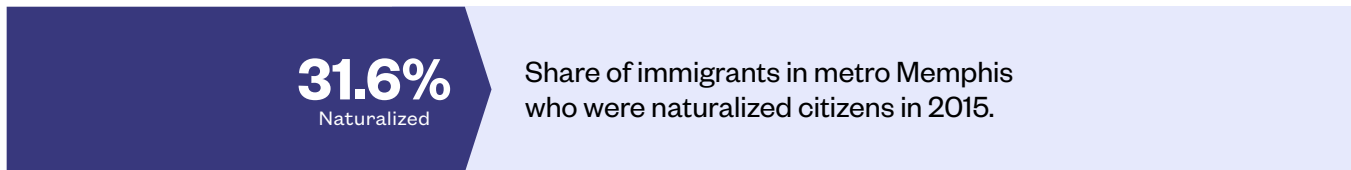
**HOUSING WEALTH**

In 2015,  
**51.3%** of  
 immigrants in the  
 metro area owned  
 their own homes.

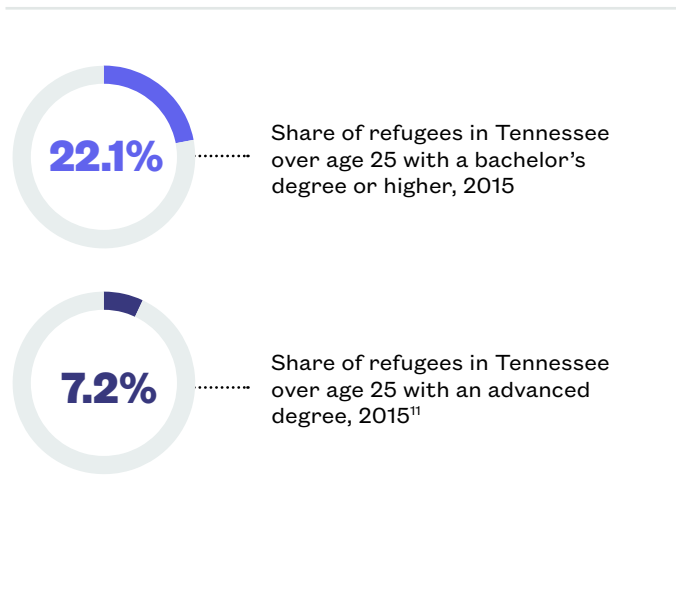
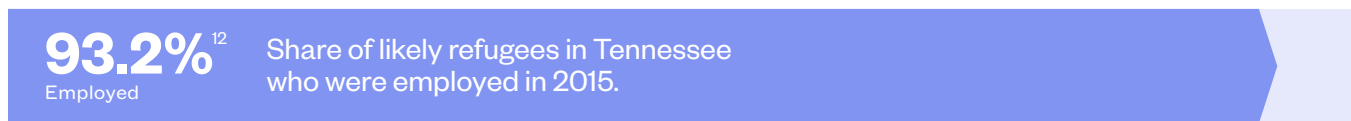


The total property  
 value of immigrant  
 households was  
**\$2.4B.**

**NATURALIZATION**

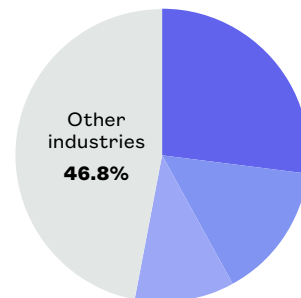


**REFUGEES**



Between 2011-2015, refugees in Tennessee tended to concentrate in the following industries:

- 1 Manufacturing . . . . . 27.1%
- 2 Retail . . . . . 15.3%
- 3 General Services<sup>13</sup> . . . . . 10.8%



**UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

Undocumented immigrants contributed to state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state or municipal governments. Given their income, we estimate that in 2015...

Amount earned by undocumented immigrant households:  
**\$414.8M**

**\$45.0M** went to federal taxes.<sup>14</sup>

**\$16.5M** went to state and local taxes.<sup>15</sup>

Leaving them with  
**\$353.2M**  
in spending power.<sup>16</sup>

For more city, district, and state-level data,  
visit [MapTheImpact.org](http://MapTheImpact.org) and explore our interactive map.



- 1 We define the Memphis metro area using the Office of Management and Budget definition of the Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Unless otherwise specified, the data come from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2010 and 2015.
- 2 These figures are derived from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 1-year ACS sample from 2015 and GDP estimates by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- 3 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 4 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States,"
- 5 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and from state and local tax incidence rates calculated by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- 6 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
- 7 Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." New American Economy.
- 8 2012 Survey of Business Owners, U.S. Census Bureau
- 9 Data on total student enrollment is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics.
- 10 Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.
- 11 New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America,"
- 12 The data come from 5-year sample of the American Community Survey from 2015.)
- 13 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
- 14 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 15 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 16 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.