SEPTEMBER 2026

Immigrants in Mecklenburg County

Contributions[1] of Immigrants[2] in the County[3]

Population

198,600

the number of immigrants living in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, in 2024.[4]

Immigrants made up

17.0%

of the total population of the county in 2024.

Between 2019 and 2024, the total population of the county increased by

7.1%

During the same time period the immigrant population increased by

20.2%

42.7%

of total population growth in the county was attributable to immigrants from 2019 to 2024.

Demographics

20.4%

of households in Mecklenburg County in 2024 had at least one immigrant.

88,200

children had at least one immigrant parent in Mecklenburg County in 2024.

72.6%

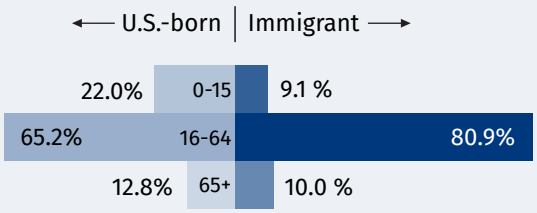
of immigrants in the county had resided in the United States for more than five years, enabling them to build deep roots in the community.

In the county, immigrants were

24.0%

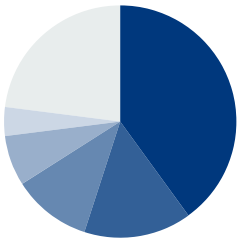
more likely to be of working age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.[5]

Shares of population by age:[6]



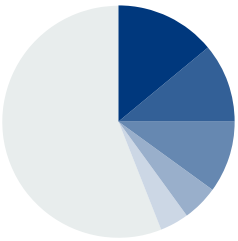
1. *Data in this report comes from the most recent data from the American Community Survey (ACS) released by the Census Bureau and is representative of the population in Mecklenburg County as of 2024. As a result, the impact of major immigration policy changes that have been made since 2024 are not reflected in the data presented in this report.*
2. *The American Community Survey (ACS) historically under-samples the immigrant population, especially among lower income, more recently arrived, and less English-fluent immigrants.*
3. *Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 3-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2019 and 2024 and figures refer to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.*
4. *We define "immigrant" as any non-citizen or any naturalized U.S. citizen. They include naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.*
5. *We define working age as 16-64 years of age.*
6. *Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.*

Demographics *(continued)*



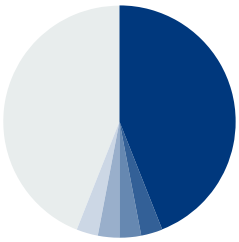
The top regions of origin for immigrants living in the county:

- Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (**39.7%**)
- India and Southwest Asia (**14.7%**)
- South America (**10.6%**)
- Southeast Asia (**7.3%**)
- East Asia (**4.2%**)
- Other (**23.5%**)



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

- Mexico (**13.9%**)
- India (**11.0%**)
- Honduras (**10.1%**)
- El Salvador (**5.1%**)
- Vietnam (**3.8%**)
- Other (**56.1%**)



The top languages spoken at home other than English among immigrants:

- Spanish (**44.0%**)
- French (**2.9%**)
- Telugu (**2.9%**)
- Vietnamese (**2.9%**)
- Hindi (**2.5%**)
- Other (**44.8%**)

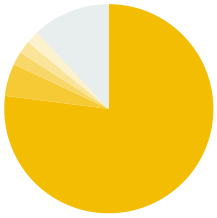
Immigrants with Limited English Language Proficiency

58,800

living in the county didn't speak English well, making up

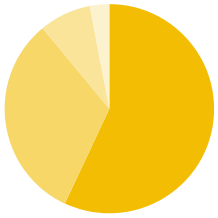
30.1%

of the immigrant population.[7]



Among those, the top languages spoken at home other than English were:

- Spanish (**76.5%**)
- Vietnamese (**5.2%**)
- French (**2.3%**)
- Chinese (**1.5%**)
- Russian (**1.5%**)
- Other (**13.0%**)



Educational attainment among those immigrants was as follows:

- Less than a high-school diploma (**56.6%**)
- A high-school diploma or some college (**32.1%**)
- Bachelor's degree or higher (**7.9%**)
- Advanced degree (**3.3%**)

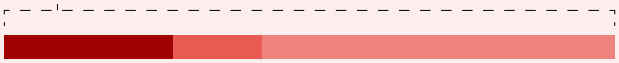
7. *For the purpose of this report, we define people with limited English language proficiency as those who do not speak English at all or do not speak English well.*

Spending Power and Tax Contributions

Immigrants play a critical role in fueling economic growth, contributing significantly to federal, state, and local taxes. They pay a wide range of taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments that help support public services and resources that benefit all residents in Mecklenburg County.

In 2024, immigrant households[8] in Mecklenburg County earned:

$9.6 billion



- **$1.8 billion** went to federal taxes[9]
- **$803.7 million** went to state & local taxes[10]
- **$7.0 billion** was left in spending power

This means that immigrant households held

16.3%

of all spending power in the county.

In 2024, immigrants in the county contributed

$31.7 billion

to the county's gross domestic product (GDP), or

17.1%

of total GDP for that year.[11]

Immigrants in the county also supported federal social programs. In 2024, they contributed

15.9%

of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid in 2024, compared with

27.8%

of U.S.-born residents.

About **52.2%** of immigrant residents had private health care coverage, while **11.8%** had public health care coverage. **4.4%** of immigrants residents had both private and public health care coverage, while **31.5%** were uninsured.

About **64.4%** of U.S.-born residents had private health care coverage, while **20.2%** had public health care coverage. **8.6%** of U.S.-born residents had both private and public health care coverage, while **6.8%** were uninsured.

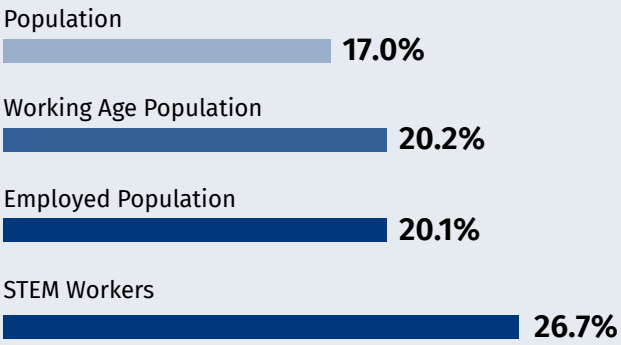
8. *Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.*
9. *U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income, 2022 (Washington, DC: 2026), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62300.*
10. *Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2024), https://itep.org/whopays.*
11. *These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 3-year ACS sample from 2024 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.*

Workforce

Immigrants bring a wealth of diverse talent, skills, and innovation, providing Mecklenburg County's companies and businesses with a unique opportunity to drive economic growth.

Although immigrants made up **17.0%** of the county's total population, they represented **20.2%** of its working age population and **20.1%** of its employed labor force in 2024, and **26.7%** of its workers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in 2024.[12]

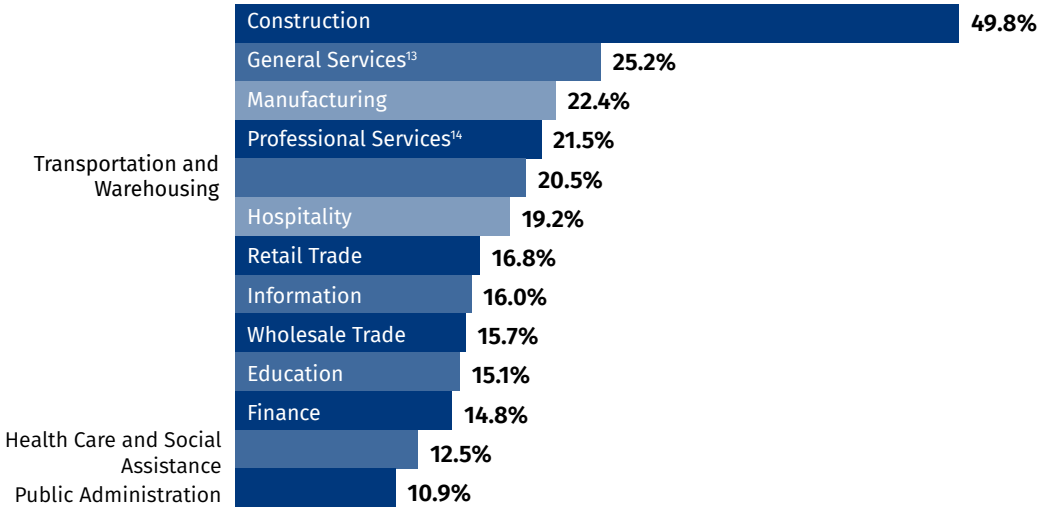
Immigrant shares of the...



The immigrant working-age population was **48.7%** female and **51.3%** male.

The immigrant employed population was **42.3%** female and **57.7%** male.

Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries across the county. The immigrant share of workers, who live in the county, was highest in the following industries:

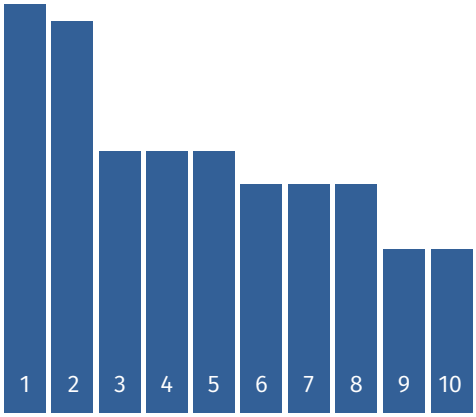


12. *STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in science, technology, engineering, or math.*
13. *General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.*
14. *Professional services: Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.*

Workforce *(continued)*

Immigrant workers were concentrated in the following occupations:

1. Construction laborers (5.1%)
2. Software developers (4.8%)
3. Carpenters (3.2%)
4. Janitors and building cleaners (3.0%)
5. Painters and paperhangers (2.9%)
6. Other managers (2.8%)
7. Maids and housekeeping cleaners (2.8%)
8. Driver/sales workers and truck drivers (2.6%)
9. Cooks (2.0%)
10. Hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (1.7%)



Top occupation with the largest number of immigrant female workers:

Maids and housekeeping cleaners - **6.3%**
Janitors and building cleaners - **4.6%**
Registered nurses - **2.7%**

Top occupation with the largest number of immigrant male workers:

Construction laborers - **7.9%**
Software developers - **6.6%**
Carpenters - **5.1%**

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in Mecklenburg County in 2025

Immigrants represent a larger share of the working age population compared to their U.S.-born counterparts, enabling them to play a vital role in fueling Mecklenburg County's economy and help meet the demands of its fastest-growing and most in-demand fields.[15]

The top industries in the county, by the number of unique job postings, were:

1. Commercial Banking - 16,000

2. Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists) - 10,200

3. Temporary Help Services - 8,000

4. Computer Systems Design Services - 5,700

The top industries in the county, by the concentration of job postings, relative to the national average postings, were:

1. Credit Intermediation and Related Activities: **4.14x the national average**
2. Air Transportation: **3.73x**
3. Textile Mills: **3.15x**
4. Monetary Authorities - Central Bank: **2.25x**
5. Construction of Buildings: **2.08x**

15. *Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, accessed on June 26, 2026.*

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in Mecklenburg County in 2025 (continued)

The top industries in the county, by the concentration of employed workers compared to the national average, were:

1. Air Transportation: **5.24x the national average**
2. Credit Intermediation and Related Activities: **4.51x**
3. Monetary Authorities – Central Bank: **3.19x**
4. Telecommunications: **3.03x**
5. Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities: **2.33x**

The top industries in the county, by average monthly hires, were:

1. Full-Service Restaurants: **3,100**
2. Temporary Help Services: **2,700**
3. Limited-Service Restaurants: **2,200**
4. Commercial Banking: **1,100**
5. Couriers and Express Delivery Services: **900**

The top occupations in the county, by the number of unique job postings, were:

1. Software Developers: **11,400**
2. Registered Nurses: **10,600**
3. Computer Occupations, All Other: **6,000**
4. Project Management Specialists: **4,500**
5. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers: **4,200**

For those occupations, the top skills or qualifications, were:

1. Communication
2. Management
3. Computer Science
4. Operations
5. Leadership

The top occupations in the county, by the county's concentration of job postings relative to the national average, were:

1. Air Transportation Workers: **2.27x the national average**
2. Mathematical Science Occupations: **2.25x**
3. Financial Specialist: **2.18x**
4. Sales Representatives, Services: **2.01x**
5. Helpers, Construction Trades: **1.84x**

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in Mecklenburg County in 2025 (continued)

The top occupations in the county, by average monthly hires, were:

1. Fast Food and Counter Workers: **2,100**
2. Hand laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers: **2,000**
3. Cashiers: **1,400**
4. Waiters and Waitresses: **1,300**
5. Retail Salespersons: **1,300**

Immigrants play a crucial role in filling high-demand positions, particularly as the need for bilingual and culturally competent skillsets continues to grow.

The top industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers, by number of job postings, were:[16]

1. Automotive Parts and Accessories Retailers: **190**
2. Elementary and Secondary Schools: **170**
3. Temporary Help Services: **150**
4. Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists): **130**

The top five jobs with the highest demand for bilingual workers in the county, by number of job postings, were:

1. Customer Service Representatives: **300**
2. Retail Salespersons: **220**
3. Interpreters and Translators: **170**
4. Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products: **140**
5. Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education: **120**

16. *Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, accessed on June 26, 2026.*

RECIPES FOR BELONGING

Building Bridges for African Families:

Congolese Immigrant Helps Other Immigrants Adjust to Life in America

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Binti Muzuri Amisi

Special Education Teacher, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Founder & Executive Director, Amani Kids
Charlotte, NC

Binti Muzuri Amisi had long dreamed of moving from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United States. In 2014, at age 27, she received a life-changing opportunity by becoming one of the less than five percent of immigrants who receive an immigrant visa through the annual diversity visa lottery. Amisi left behind her career as a lawyer specializing in children's welfare and came to Charlotte, North Carolina, to live with her sister.

Shortly after arriving, Amisi discovered that navigating everyday life in a new country would not be easy. Like many newcomers from French-speaking African countries, she spoke little English and struggled with simple tasks, such as communicating at a doctor's office or using public transportation.

In an effort to overcome her isolation, she contacted the nonprofit International House of Charlotte, where she signed up for English classes and volunteered for an after-school program there and later with other immigrant serving organizations. "Through these experiences, I found my calling," she says. She saw the need for families from the African Diaspora to understand cultural differences, such as registering special needs children in school or learning about field trip customs. "One experience that deeply affected me was seeing a field trip permission letter in a kid's backpack that just needed a signature, but the parents didn't how to check it," she says. "It was something so important but basic."

But first Amisi wanted to go back to college. After earning her associate degree in early childhood education from Central Piedmont Community College, she was hired by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and worked her way up from cafeteria server to special education teaching assistant and is now a special education teacher. In 2026, she was given the Beginning Teacher of the Year Award at Merry Oaks International Academy.

Three years ago, Amisi found a way to realize her vision to help African immigrant families and connect them to critical educational resources, such as parenting classes and leadership development. "I asked the executive director at International House if I should start a nonprofit, and she said 'Yes, you can do it!'" recalls Amisi. "Those words were a game-changer for me."

Called Amani Kids ("Amani" means "peace" in Swahili), the organization aims to create the sense of community she longed for: Every month, about 30 kids, ages four to 16, meet in a local library to learn social and cultural skills, such as building confidence and showing respect at school or celebrating African traditions. "I wanted to become the bridge that I wished I had when I first arrived," Amisi says. "International House helped me build a new life," she says. "Now, through Amani Kids, I have the privilege of helping others do the same."

Entrepreneurship

18,800
immigrant entrepreneurs generated

$659.8 million
in business income in Mecklenburg County.

Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **36.9%** female and **63.1%** male.

Female
Male

14.3% of immigrants were entrepreneurs, compared to **9.3%** of the U.S.-born population.[17]

Immigrant U.S.-born

Immigrants represented

27.8%

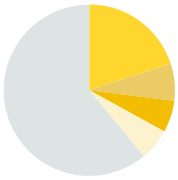
of the entrepreneurs in the county in 2024 despite making up **17.0%** of the population.

Immigrants were

52.9%

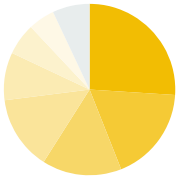
more likely to be an entrepreneur than their U.S. counterparts.

The top countries of origin for immigrant entrepreneurs were:



- Mexico (**20.1%**)
- Honduras (**6.9%**)
- Vietnam (**5.6%**)
- El Salvador (**5.6%**)
- Other (**61.8%**)

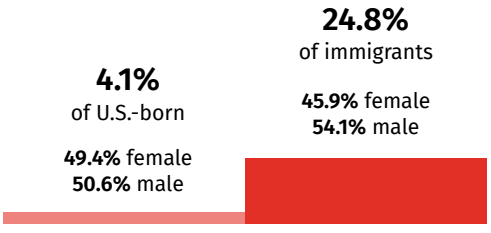
The industries with the highest share of immigrant entrepreneurs:



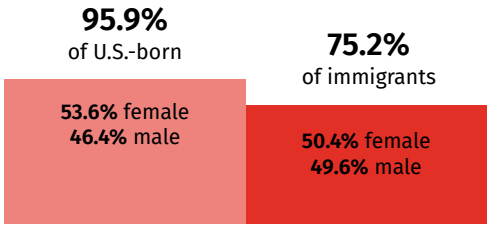
- Construction (**25.7%**)
- Professional Services (**17.7%**)
- Transportation and Warehousing (**14.9%**)
- General Services (**14.0%**)
- Retail Trade (**9.0%**)
- Hospitality (**6.1%**)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (**5.3%**)
- Other (**7.3%**)

Education

Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that had **less than a high school education** in 2024:



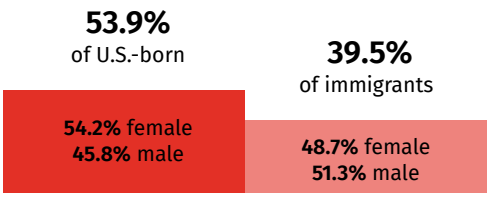
Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that held **at least a high school education or some college** in 2024:



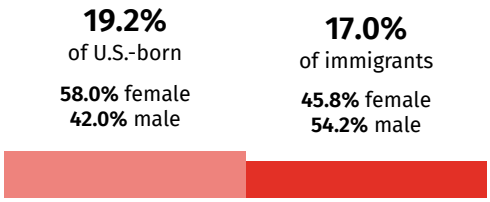
17. *Data obtained from the ACS may not capture those who work in informal jobs and businesses, and as a result may not capture immigrants' full entrepreneurial contributions within the county.*

Education *(continued)*

Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that had **a bachelor's degree or higher** in 2024:



Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that held **an advanced degree** in 2024:



8.7%

of K-12 students in the county were immigrants in 2024.

33.0%

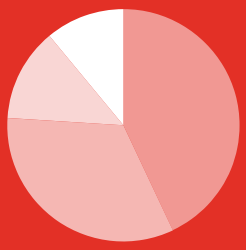
of K-12 students in the county lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2024.[18]

SPOTLIGHT **University Population**

In fall 2024,

3,802

students[19] enrolled in colleges and universities in Mecklenburg County were international students.[20]



The international student population includes:

- 1,617 full-time undergraduate students
- 1,271 full-time graduate students
- 510 part-time undergraduate students
- 404 part-time graduate students

The universities with the largest international student populations were:

1. **University of North Carolina at Charlotte** (2,253)
2. **Central Piedmont Community College** (1,121)
3. **Davidson College** (201)

In the 2023-2024 academic year,

744

degrees were awarded to international students with a primary major in a STEM field,

and

10

degrees were awarded to international students with a secondary major in a STEM field.

International students supported

731

jobs in the county and contributed

$106.6M

in the 2024-2025 academic year.[21]

18. *Children of immigrants includes both U.S.-born and immigrants who are under the age of 18 with at least one immigrant parent.*
19. *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, accessed on June 26, 2026.*
20. *An international student is a temporary U.S. resident and refers to people who are not U.S. citizens and are in this country on a non-immigrant visa or temporary basis.*
21. *Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA: the Association of International Educators, accessed on June 26, 2026.*

Families & Housing

Immigrants are an important part of Mecklenburg County. They help revitalize neighborhoods and generate housing wealth as homeowners and renters.

The average household size for immigrants in Mecklenburg County is **3.0** individuals compared with **2.1** for U.S.-born residents.

Immigrant households

U.S.-born households

In 2024, **51.7%** of immigrant households in Mecklenburg County owned their own homes, compared to **55.7%** of U.S.-born households.

Immigrant

U.S.-born

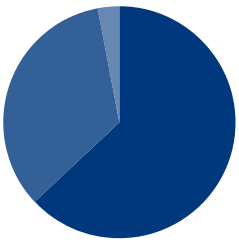
Total property value of immigrant households was

$21.3B

48.3%

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

$724.7M



- **52,200** immigrant households, or **62.8%** of immigrant households in the county, lived in houses.
- **28,400** immigrant households, or **34.1%**, lived in apartments.
- **2,600** immigrant households, or **3.2%**, lived in other types of housing.[22]

Immigrant

U.S.-born

81.5% of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their place of residence, compared with **90.4%** of U.S.-born households that did.[23]

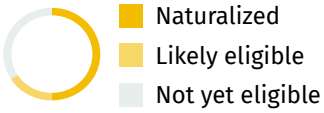
Naturalization

Among immigrants in Mecklenburg County in 2024:

- **39.0%** were naturalized[24] citizens (77,500)
- **12.7%** were likely eligible to naturalize (25,200)
- **48.3%** were not yet eligible to naturalize (95,900)

22. *"Other" housing includes mobile homes, trailers, boats, tents, vans, and housing that is not considered a single-family home or multi-family building.*
23. *This data point reports whether the respondent or any member of their household subscribed to the internet using broadband (high speed) internet service such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL.*
24. *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.*

Naturalization *(continued)*



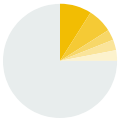
Nationally, **49.5%** of immigrants are naturalized citizens, **16.4%** are likely eligible to naturalize, **34.1%** are not yet eligible to naturalize.

When immigrants become U.S. citizens, their income increases by

8.9%

on average.[25] Becoming a U.S. citizen opens economic and civic doors for Mecklenburg County's residents and their families.

The top countries of origin for naturalized citizens in Mecklenburg County were:



- India **(8.7%)**
- Vietnam **(7.0%)**
- China **(3.0%)**
- Jamaica **(3.0%)**
- Colombia **(2.9%)**
- Other **(75.4%)**

Refugees

13,100

immigrants, or **6.6%** of the immigrant population in Mecklenburg County, were likely refugees[26] in 2024.[27]

The top country of origin for the county's refugee population was Vietnam.

21.4%

In 2024, refugee households[28] in the county earned:

$577.5 million

- **$98.6 million** went to federal taxes[29]
- **$49.3 million** went to state & local taxes[30]
- **$429.6 million** was left in spending power

Industries with the largest number of refugee workers were:

Transportation and warehousing	**23.6%**
Manufacturing	**16.9%**
Retail trade	**15.7%**

Education:

Refugees who held at least a bachelor's degree	**20.8%**
Refugees who held an advanced degree	**7.5%**

77.0%

of refugees were naturalized U.S. citizens.

25. *Maria E. Enchautegui and Linda Giannarelli, The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities, Urban Institute, 2015, https://www.urban.org/research/publication/economic-impact-naturalization-immigrants-and-cities.*
26. *Refugees are admitted to the United States based upon an inability to return to their home countries because of a "well-founded fear of persecution" due to their race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. Learn more here: https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works.*
27. *To identify cases in microdata from the 2024 ACS that are likely to be refugees, we use an imputation method based on each foreign-born respondent's country of birth and their year of arrival, similar to the work of Kallick and Mathema in "Refugee Integration in the United States," https://www.americanprogress.org/article/refugee-integration-in-the-united-states/ , as well as Capps et al in "The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees: Successes and Challenges", https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integration-outcomes-us-refugees-successes-and-challenges.*
28. *Refugee households refer to those with a refugee as head of the unit.*
29. *U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income, 2022 (Washington, DC: 2026), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62300.*

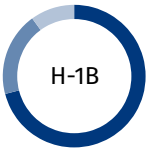
H-1B & H-2B Visas

Approximately

9,000

H-1B visas were certified[31] in Mecklenburg County during Fiscal Year 2025.

The top occupations among certified H-1B visa applications were:



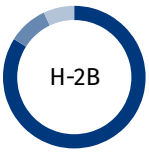
- Software Developers (**3,800**)
- Computer Systems Engineers/ Architects (**1,200**)
- Information Technology Project Managers (**520**)

Approximately

980

H-2B visas were certified[32] in Mecklenburg County during Fiscal Year 2025.

The top occupations among certified H-2B visa applications were:



- Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (**760**)
- Construction Laborers (**80**)
- Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (**60**)

30. *Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2024), https://itep.org/whopays/.*

31. *Before an employer can file a petition with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to hire an employee using an H-1B visa, the employer must take steps to ensure that hiring the foreign worker will not adversely affect U.S. workers. To do this, employers file a labor condition application (LCA) to be certified by the Department of Labor (DOL), which ensures that employment of the H-1B worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. The number of certified H-1B visas is therefore a good indication of the demand for foreign-born workers of a given occupation in a given region. More information on the H-1B process can be found here: https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/h-1b-specialty-occupations.*

32. *Similar to the H-1B process, in order for an employer to obtain an H-2B certification, the DOL must determine that there are not enough U.S. workers available to do the temporary job being petitioned for, and that employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similar workers. Additionally, the need for the worker must be temporary. Certified jobs are not necessarily the jobs filled, though they do indicate a level of demand for temporary foreign-born workers in a particular occupation. More information on the H-2B process can be found here: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/programs/h-2b.*