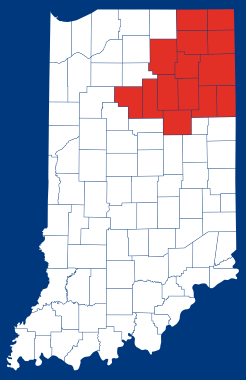
Immigrants in Northeast Indiana

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



SEPTEMBER 2026

GATEWAYS for GROWTH

American Immigration Council

Community Connections
Wabash County Diversity Coalition

Population

46,300

The number of immigrants living in the region of Northeast Indiana,[4] in 2024.[5]

Immigrants made up

4.9%

of the total population of the region in 2024.

Between 2019 to 2024, the total population of the region increased by

2.6%

During the same time period the immigrant population increased by

21.4%

33.6%

of total population growth in the region was attributable to immigrants.

Demographics

6.7%

of households in the region in 2024 had at least one immigrant.

22,800

children had at least one immigrant parent in the region in 2024.

In the region, immigrants were

37.8%

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.[6]

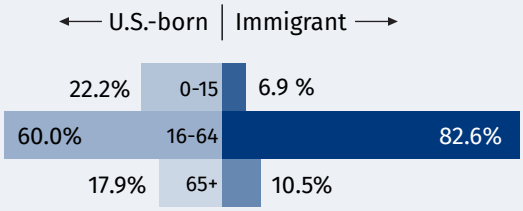
83.0%

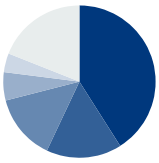
of immigrants had resided in the United States for more than five years, enabling them to build deep roots in the community.

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 fourteen counties, including eleven counties that comprise the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (NEI) and three additional counties, 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 immigrant.*
3. *Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 4-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2019 and 2024 and figures refer to Adams, Allen, Cass, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Miami, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley counties in Indiana.*
4. *This report defines the fourteen-county region as the eleven counties that comprise the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, an economic development region, as well as nearby Grant, Miami and Cass Counties. For more information, see: https://neindiana.com/.*
5. *Immigrants in this report include naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.*
6. *We define working age as 16-64 years of age.*

Demographics *(continued)*

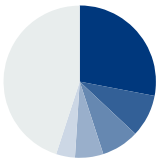
Shares of population by age:[7]





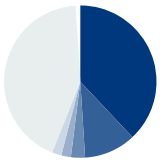
The top regions of origin for immigrants living in the region:

- Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (**40.9%**)
- Southeast Asia (**15.9%**)
- India and Southwest Asia (**14.2%**)
- East Asia (**5.8%**)
- South America (**3.8%**)
- Other **(19.4%)**



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

- Mexico (**27.5%**)
- Burma (Myanmar) (**8.9%**)
- Thailand (**8.4%**)
- Guatemala (**5.8%**)
- Philippines (**3.5%**)
- Other **(45.9%)**



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

- Spanish (**38.3%**)
- Burmese, Lisu, Lolo (**10.8%**)
- Filipino, Tagalog (**2.9%**)
- Arabic (**2.4%**)
- Thai (**2.3%**)
- Other **(43.4%)**

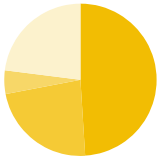
Immigrants with Limited English Language Proficiency

11,600

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

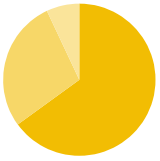
25.3%

of the immigrant population.[8]



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

- Spanish **(48.8%)**
- Burmese, Lisu, Lolo **(23.3%)**
- Vietnamese **(4.9%)**
- Other **(23.0%)**



Educational attainment among those immigrants was as follows:

- Less than a high-school diploma (**65.4%**)
- A high-school diploma or some college (**27.7%**)
- Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (**6.9%**)

7. *Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.*
8. *For the purpose of this report, we define people with limited English language proficiency as those who reported that they 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 the region.

In 2024, immigrant households[9] in the region earned:

$1.8 billion

- **$291.4 million** went to federal taxes[10]
- **$161.7 million** went to state & local taxes[11]
- **$1.3 billion** was left in spending power

This means that immigrant households held

5.5%

of all spending power in in the region, despite making up only **4.9%** of the total population.

In 2024, immigrants in the region contributed

$3.7 million

to the region's gross domestic product (GDP), or **6.0%** of total GDP for that year.[12]

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

$172.4 million to Social Security

$44.4 million to Medicare

27.0%

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

37.3%

of U.S.-born residents.[13]

About **51.4%** of immigrant residents had private health care coverage, while **22.1%** had public health care coverage. **5.0%** of immigrants residents had both private and public health care coverage, while **21.5%** were uninsured.

About **52.6%** of U.S.-born residents had private health care coverage, while **25.7%** had public health care coverage. **12.6%** of U.S.-born residents had both private and public health care coverage, while **9.1%** were uninsured.

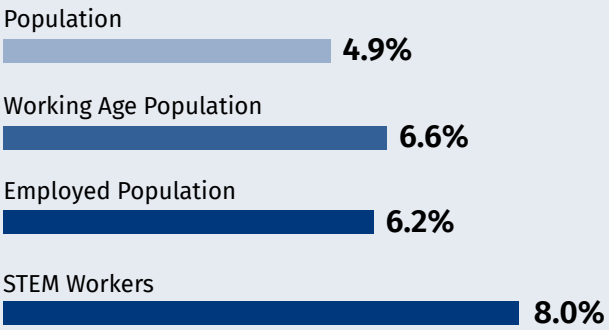
9. *Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.*
10. *U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income, 2022 (Washington, DC: 2026), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62300.*
11. *Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2024), https://itep.org/whopays.*
12. *These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 4-year ACS sample from 2024 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.*
13. *Some lawfully present immigrants can qualify for federal benefits, but eligibility is limited. For more information, please visit: https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/undocumented-immigrants-snap-medicaid-benefits/.*

Workforce

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

Although immigrants made up **4.9%** of the region's total population, they represented **6.6%** of its working age population, **6.2%** of its employed labor force, and **8.0%** of its workers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in 2024.[14]

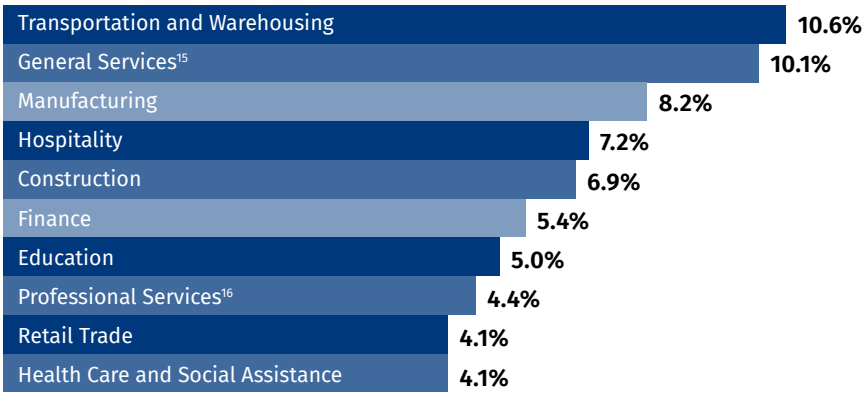
Immigrant shares of the...



The immigrant working age population was **51.5%** female and **48.5%** male.

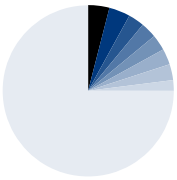
The employed immigrant population was **41.1%** female and **58.9%** male.

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



14. *STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in science, technology, engineering, or math.*
15. *General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.*
16. *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:

- Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (4.4%)
- Other assemblers and fabricators (3.6%)
- Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders (3.6%)
- Janitors and building cleaners (3.0%)
- Registered nurses (2.8%)
- Driver/sales workers and truck drivers (2.8%)
- Cooks (2.5%)
- Other metal workers and plastic workers (1.9%)
- Other (75.4%)

Top occupation with the largest number of immigrant female workers:

Other assemblers and fabricators[17] **5.8%**
Registered nurses **5.8%**

Top occupations with the largest number of immigrant male workers:

Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers **5.5%**
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers **4.7%**
Miscellaneous production workers, including equipment operators and tenders **4.4%**

SPOTLIGHT

Job Demand in the Region 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 the region's economy and help meet the demands of its fastest-growing and most in-demand fields.[18]

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

1. General Medical and Surgical Hospitals - 13,500
2. Temporary Help Services - 4,100
3. Limited-Service Restaurants - 2,600
4. Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists) - 2,200

17. *Assemblers and fabricators build finished products and the parts that go into them. They use hand tools and machines to make vehicles, toys, electronic devices, and more.*
18. *Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, accessed on July 21, 2026.*

SPOTLIGHT Job Demand in the Region in 2025 (continued)

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

1. Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation: 5.01x the national average
2. Primary Metal Manufacturing: 4.30x
3. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing: 2.67x
4. Hospitals: 2.48x
5. Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing: 2.03x

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

1. Primary Metal Manufacturing: 7.60x the national average
2. Miscellaneous Manufacturing: 5.36x
3. Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing: 4.51x
4. Transportation Equipment Manufacturing: 4.14x
5. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing: 3.85x

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

1. Temporary Help Services: 1,600
2. Full-Service Restaurants : 1,300
3. Limited-Service Restaurants : 1,300
4. Elementary and Secondary Schools (Local Government): 600
5. Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities): 600

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

1. Registered Nurses: 15,000
2. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers: 3,800
3. Retail Salespersons: 2,700
4. First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers: 2,300
5. Maintenance and Repair Workers, General: 2,200

For those occupations, the top skills or qualifications were:

1. Registered Nurse (RN)
2. Nursing
3. Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification
4. Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification
5. Detail Oriented

SPOTLIGHT Job Demand in the Region in 2025 (continued)

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

1. Supervisors of Production Workers: 2.40x the national average
2. Religious Workers: 2.20x
3. Metal Workers and Plastic Workers: 2.07x
4. Printing Workers: 1.96x
5. Other Production Occupations: 1.90x

The top occupations in the region, by the region's concentration of employed workers compared to the national average, were:

1. Woodworkers: 4.09x the national average
2. Assemblers and Fabricators: 4.05x
3. Metal Workers and Plastic Workers: 3.86x
4. Supervisors of Production Workers: 2.57x
5. Other Production Occupations: 2.34x

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

1. Fast Food and Counter Workers: 1,700
2. Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand: 870
3. Cashiers: 800
4. Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators: 590
5. Home Health and Personal Care Aides: 580

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:[19]

1. Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers: 270
2. Administrative and Support Services: 220
3. Ambulatory Health Care Services: 100
4. Computing Infrastructure Providers, Data Processing, Web Hosting, Related Services: 90
5. Educational Services: 80

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

1. Retail Salespersons: 120
2. Interpreters and Translators: 100
3. Parts Salespersons: 90
4. Tax Preparers: 90
5. First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers: 70

19. *Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, accessed on July 21, 2026.*

RECIPES FOR BELONGING

Pastor Zach Szmara

Founder, Immigrant Connections

In 2012, Pastor Zach Szmara returned to Indiana, where he'd attended college, after working as a missionary in Mozambique. He only planned to preach at the Bridge Church in Logansport for a few weeks, but the hospitality and warmth he received from some of the Hispanic congregants inspired him to stay. Over the next 14 years, the Bridge's flock grew from just 15 weekly attendees to reach over 300 people. Much of that growth was fueled by recent immigrants, mostly from Latin America and Haiti, who became a defining part of the church community.

The Bridge's growth reflects a broader trend. Foreign-born workers, drawn to central Indiana's meatpacking plants, deliver an economic and demographic boost to the region. "Most of the growth in central Indiana comes from immigrants opening businesses, buying homes, and stepping up and filling gaps," Szmara says. "Immigration makes everything better."

To support that growth, Szmara trained as a legal representative, helping members of his congregation with immigration paperwork. Demand surged: over the past decade, Szmara's team have helped over 6,800 local residents obtain employment authorization and DACA status, gain green cards and citizenship, and complete other vital paperwork. Other local groups provide career advice, language training, and logistical support, Szmara says, but effective legal services are the keystone that help immigrants integrate into their communities.

In 2014, Szmara launched Immigrant Connection, a nonprofit that helps churches around the country set up similar services; this spring, he stepped back from his work at the Bridge to focus all his energy on the project. With 35 offices in 20 states—including several in Indiana—and a new office opening soon in North Manchester, Immigrant Connection has helped over 65,000 immigrants to navigate and abide by the rules of the complex U.S. immigration system.

By working with churches, Immigrant Connection keeps costs low, and offers services in places where immigrants may struggle to get support. Much of the growth is driven through partnerships with local businesses. "I'd never have guessed, 15 years ago, that I'd wind up working with this many big businesses," Szmara says. "But the business community gets how important this is."

That's especially true as federal immigration authorities target immigrants in communities across the country, leaving local businesses struggling to find workers. "If we lose our immigrant workforce, that has a ripple effect on our city budgets, on our hospitals, on our churches, on our schools," Szmara explains.

The reality, Szmara says, is that immigrants come to places like Wabash County because they're needed there. Welcoming them isn't just the right thing to do—it's also the best way to drive growth for everyone. "Workforce needs drew immigrants to come and live here," Szmara says. "The question is, can we be hospitable enough that they want to stay?"

Entrepreneurship

2,800

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

$90.5 million

in business income in the region.

Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **37.7%** female and **62.3%** male.

9.8% of immigrants were entrepreneurs, while **8.0%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs.[20]

Immigrants represented

7.5%

of the entrepreneurs in the region in 2024 despite making up **4.9%** of the population.

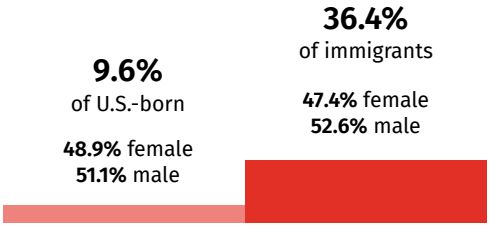
Immigrants were

22.7%

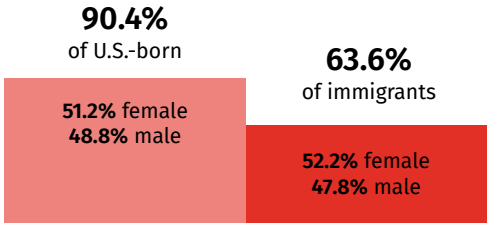
more likely to be an entrepreneur than their U.S. counterparts.

Education

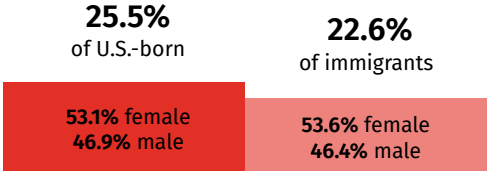
Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that had **less than a high school education** in 2024:



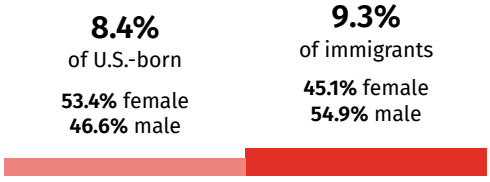
Share of the county's population aged 25 or above that held **at least a high school education or some college** in 2024:



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:



2.4%

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

10.9%

of K-12 students in the region lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2024.[21]

20. *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 region.*

21. *Children of immigrants includes both U.S.-born and immigrants who are under the age of 18 with at least one immigrant parent.*

SPOTLIGHT **University Population**

In fall 2024,

14,536

students[22] enrolled in colleges and universities in the region were international students.[23]

The international student population includes:

- 1,000 full-time undergraduate students
- 5,336 full-time graduate students
- 180 part-time undergraduate students
- 8,020 part-time graduate students

The universities with the largest international student populations were:

1. **Trine University-Regional/Non-Traditional Campuses** (9,213)
2. **Indiana Wesleyan University-National & Global** (3,721)
3. **Indiana Institute of Technology** (704)

In the 2023-2024 academic year,

2,077

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

International students supported 189 jobs in the region and contributed $46.0 million in the 2024-25 academic year.[24]

Families & Housing

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

The average household size for immigrants in the region is **3.2** individuals compared with **2.4** for U.S.-born residents.

Immigrant households

U.S.-born households

In 2024, **67.9%** of immigrant households owned their own homes, compared to **74.9%** of U.S.-born households.

Immigrant

U.S.-born

Total property value of immigrant households was

$3.1B

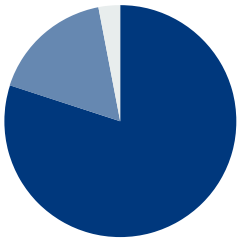
32.1%

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

$53.7M

22. *Data on total student enrollment in the region is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics, accessed on July 21, 2026.*
23. *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.*
24. *Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA: the Association of International Educators, accessed on July 21, 2026.*

Families & Housing *(continued)*



- **14,800** immigrant households, or **78.9%** of immigrant households in the region, lived in houses.
- **3,200** immigrant households, or **17.1%**, lived in apartments.
- **4.0%** lived in other types of housing

78.7% of immigrant households in the region had access to broadband connection in their place of residence, compared with **76.7%** of U.S.-born households that did.[25]

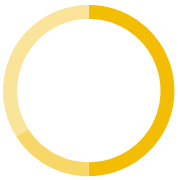
Immigrant U.S.-born

Naturalization

Among immigrants in the region in 2024:

- **45.4%** were naturalized[26] citizens (21,100)
- **14.7%** were likely eligible to naturalize (6,800)
- **39.8%** were not yet eligible to naturalize (18,500)

Nationally, **49.7%** of immigrants are naturalized citizens, **17.1%** are likely eligible to naturalize, **33.2%** are not yet eligible to naturalize.



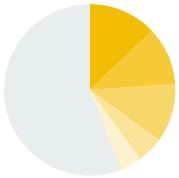
- Naturalized
- Likely eligible
- Not yet eligible

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

8.9%

on average.[27] Becoming a U.S. citizen opens economic and civic doors for the region's residents and their families.

The top countries of origin for naturalized citizens in the region were:



- Burma (Myanmar) **(13.1%)**
- Thailand **(10.8%)**
- Mexico **(10.7%)**
- Philippines **(4.8%)**
- Guatemala **(4.1%)**
- Other **(56.5%)**

25. *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..*
26. *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.*
27. *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.*

Refugees

6,400

immigrants, or **13.8%** of the immigrant population in the region, were likely refugees[28] in 2024.[29]

The top country of origin for the region's refugee population was Burma (Myanmar).

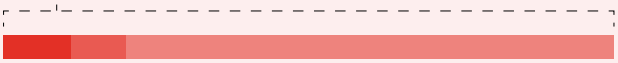
58.2%

The industry with the largest number of refugee workers was manufacturing.

40.1%

In 2024, refugee households[30] in the region earned:

$176.9 million



- **$21.2 million** went to federal taxes[31]
- **$17.6 million** went to state & local taxes[32]
- **$138.1 million** was left in spending power

- Less than a high-school diploma (**52.2%**)
- A high-school diploma or some college (**36.6%**)
- Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (**11.2%**)

73.4%

of refugees were naturalized U.S. citizens.

H-1B and H-2B Visas

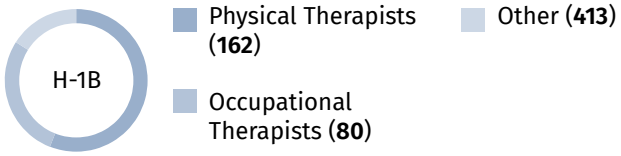
655

H-1B visas were certified[33] in the region during Fiscal Year 2025.

94

H-2B visas were certified[34] in the region during Fiscal Year 2025.

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



28. *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: https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works.*
29. *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.*
30. *Refugee households refer to those with a refugee as head of the unit.*
31. *U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income, 2022 (Washington, DC: 2026), https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62300.*
32. *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/.*
33. *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.

34. *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.*