



MINNESOTA'S OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS



EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What is the Minnesota Office of New Americans?

The Office of New Americans (ONA) was established in Minn. Stat. § 116J.4231 in 2023. ONA's mission is to implement strategic programs, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and advocate for policies that promote belonging and participation of New Americans for the benefit of all Minnesotans.

ONA is a convener, focused on bringing together leaders from across state government, county and municipal government, community-based organizations and the business community to promote immigrant and refugee integration, create the welcoming communities we all want and engage all Minnesotans more fully in a successful state economy.

ONA's work supports the mission of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): To empower the growth of the Minnesota economy, for everyone. ONA is located within DEED and is advised by an Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, as described under Minn. Stat. § 116J.4231, Subd. 4.

Dear Fellow Minnesotans,

As a New American myself, I also know all that Minnesota offers immigrants and refugees from around the world. Families fleeing war and persecution have found safety here and built new lives, strengthening the fabric of communities across the state in the process. It is my honor to serve the State of Minnesota in helping to ensure New Americans are integrated into our workplaces, into our economy and into communities across the state—for the benefit of all Minnesotans.

New Americans make up a significant and growing part of the state's labor force—in some industries, Minnesota employers would be hard pressed to continue to operate without New American workers. New Americans also play an important role as entrepreneurs in the state, growing small businesses and launching startups that contribute to the continued strength of our state economy. New Americans are also taxpayers, helping to support local schools, public safety, roads and bridges and services we all rely on.

Immigrant and refugee families bring new perspectives and experiences to Minnesota communities, helping to revitalize cities and towns across the state, making them more appealing to other new arrivals from both within and outside the United States, and providing a greater depth of cultural experiences to all of us. Minnesotans who were born in the United States tend to be older, on average, than those who have more recently made Minnesota their home—and it's important to have new, young perspectives along with the viewpoints of long-time Minnesotans to foster innovation and creativity.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Office of New Americans

Assistant Commissioner Abdiwahab Mohamed
Office of New Americans

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STAFF

Abdiwahab Mohamed

Assistant Commissioner, Immigrant & Refugee Affairs

Assistant Commissioner Abdiwahab Mohamed leads the Office of New Americans, where he develops strategies that advance and improve access and opportunities for New Americans seeking employment or starting and growing a business. He also leads interagency work across all of state government to galvanize services for immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. Prior to becoming Assistant Commissioner, Mohamed served as Interim Assistant Commissioner. During his tenure as Interim Assistant Commissioner, Mohamed helped write DEED's budget requests and brought together state agencies to compile legislative proposals that impact immigrant and refugee communities. He expanded DEED's outreach to diverse immigrant communities and business associations with the goal of reducing barriers to employment and entrepreneurship, and he collaborated with other states' immigrant and refugee offices on strategies and best practices. Before beginning as Interim Assistant Commissioner, Mohamed served as a Trade Manager within the Minnesota Trade Office.



Sonji Davis

Program Manager, Office of New Americans

Sonji Davis is the proud daughter of a Liberian refugee. She coordinates programs under the Office of New Americans, including the International Credential Evaluation Pilot program to facilitate credit for prior learning from educational institutions outside the United States for required credentials for employment in a variety of fields including health care, engineering, education and information technology. Prior to assuming the role of Program Manager with the Office of New Americans, Davis served as the Workforce Policy Coordinator for the Governor's Workforce Development Board. Her previous positions include Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Coordinator, Area Manager for Rice and Steele Counties, and Career Planner with Workforce Development Inc. serving the Southeast Minnesota Region.



CURRENT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

International Credential Evaluation Pilot

Minnesota is home to many New American learners. These multilingual workers and students bring a wealth of learning acquired through work plus life experience and international credentials. Unfortunately, there is often not a clear path for international credentials to be recognized by Minnesota educational institutions or employers. For this reason, New American professionals many times end up working in entry level positions, not able to share the considerable expertise and experience earned in another country with their community in Minnesota. Many struggle to find a family-sustaining wage. If they decide to pursue similar credentials here in Minnesota at a postsecondary institution, they must often complete duplicative coursework to fill general education and major requirements for their degree programs. At a time when our communities could benefit from their skills, we want to help connect New Americans to a career pathway that builds on their past education and work experience.

To meet this need, the Office of New Americans is launching the International Credential Evaluation Pilot. This work began in 2024, when DEED partnered with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the Office of Higher Education and Adult Basic Education through the Minnesota Department of Education to submit a proposal to the Minnesota Jobs Skills Partnership (MJSP) Board requesting funding for a pilot to provide credit evaluations, credit for prior learning assessments and language assessments, as well as the development of an Educator and Service Provider Resource Guide. MJSP approved the funding request and is providing \$350,000 for the project. ONA provided an additional \$500,000 in funding for the International Credential Evaluation Pilot and brought in new partners, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Resettlement Programs Office and the International Institute of Minnesota, and will soon serve internationally trained professionals across Minnesota in receiving credit for prior learning.

This pilot will serve individuals with international credentials, with a focus on college credentials but potentially also comprehensive workforce credentials. Eligible participants are internationally trained professionals who are 18 years old or older who want to reconnect to one of the following career pathways: health care, engineering, education or information technology. The pilot is providing cross-functional training to service providers and college faculty during the summer of 2025 and plans to enroll no fewer than 50 participants in the fall of 2025. ONA is working closely with the Adult Career Pathways team in DEED's Employment and Training Programs Division on training and support funding options for participants who are eligible and enrolled.



Educator and Service Provider Resource Guide

To ensure that internationally trained immigrants can access the educational pathways and resources they need to succeed, ONA and our partners are working to address some of the challenges identified by students who navigate the complex landscape of credit, noncredit and workforce development programs. The resource guide will equip service providers and Adult Basic Education staff, as well as Minnesota State faculty, staff and advisors with the knowledge and strategies needed to better guide

New American students through workforce development programs and services. This guide is focused primarily on how credentials earned outside the United States can be recognized by Minnesota educational institutions. The resource guide will be posted on the ONA web page upon completion.



Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) Regional Planning Grant Modification

ONA is collaborating with MAWB on enhancing workforce services to New Americans and increasing local workforce integration through \$500,000 in funding for selected Local Workforce Development Areas. Each Local Workforce Development Area was invited to submit a detailed plan either individually or as part of a regional consortium to MAWB outlining strategies to increase outreach, engagement, services and successful workforce outcomes for New Americans who live in their communities. MAWB will work closely with ONA to select up to three Local Workforce Development Areas or regional consortia to receive funding for this work, based on which applications demonstrate the strongest potential to develop and implement impactful and sustainable plans.

Capacity Building for Legal Services

ONA continues to support our non-profit legal assistance partners in addressing a backlog of immigration cases across our state and the country. In response to the growing need for immigration legal services, the Department of Justice (DOJ) developed the Recognition & Accreditation Program, which allows non-attorneys at non-profit organizations to provide immigration legal services. ONA supported efforts to train five people in Minnesota seeking DOJ accreditation. The training was provided through a pilot program with Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a national legal support agency for charitable immigration legal programs, as well as the Wisconsin Office of New Americans. This partnership fostered peer learning and capacity building across state borders, while helping to reduce immigration case backlogs.

WHO ARE NEW AMERICANS?

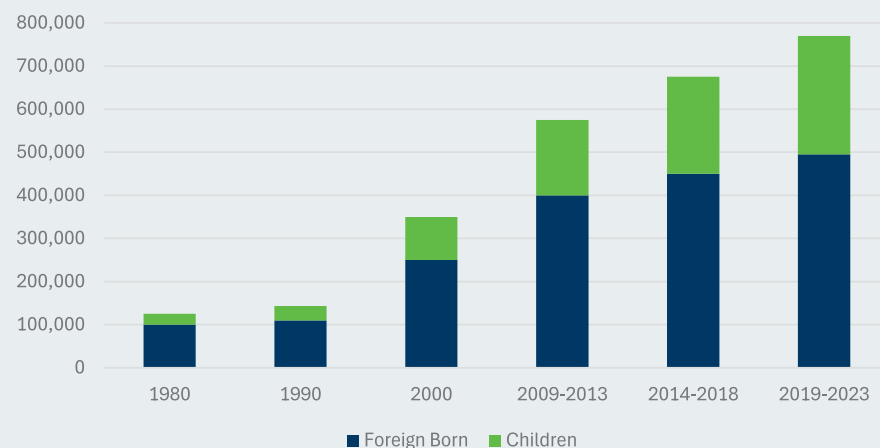


New Americans in Minnesota are immigrants and refugees from around the world, as well as their children, who now call our state home. The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term “foreign born” to describe all people who were born in a country other than the U.S. The Census Bureau uses the term “native born” to refer to anyone born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents.



FOREIGN BORN POPULATION AND THEIR CHILDREN

Minnesota, 1980–2003



Source: Compass analysis of Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Minnesota’s foreign-born population grew by 25% during the decade of 2013-2023 to nearly 490,000 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

The percentage of Minnesotans who are foreign born is 8.6%, significantly below the national percentage of foreign-born residents, which is nearly 14%.

In this report we use the broader term New Americans when referring to people born in a country outside the U.S. as well as their children.

NEW AMERICANS IN MINNESOTA BY THE NUMBERS

► One in 12 Minnesotans and one in nine workers in Minnesota are foreign born (2023)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

► Foreign-born workers accounted for nearly half of Minnesota's labor force growth from 2013 to 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

► Foreign-born Minnesotans contribute \$6.2 billion in taxes, including \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes (2023)

Source: American Immigration Council

► Educational attainment among foreign-born residents 25 years and older

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

- 35.8% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (with 16% holding advanced degrees)
- 20.5% have some college or an associate's degree
- 20.7% are high school graduates
- 22.9% have less than a high school education

► More than 83% of foreign-born Minnesotans are proficient in English

Source: Immigrants in Minnesota American Immigration Council

► However, more than 246,000 Minnesotans speak English less than "very well"

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

► Nearly 57% of all foreign-born people in Minnesota are naturalized citizens (2023)

Source: American Immigration Council



TOTAL POPULATION BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME (EXCLUDING ENGLISH) IN MINNESOTA, 2019-2023

Language	Population
Spanish	214,331
Cushite-Beja-Somali	74,444
Hmong	69,464
Vietnamese	22,034
Arabic	17,262
French	16,821
German	15,659
Amharic-Ethiopian	14,980
Chinese	14,319
Niger-Congo region language	14,083
Karen	12,607
Russian	11,705
Swahili	8,817
Hindi	8,734
Filipino-Tagalog	7,909

Source: Minnesota Compass, IPUMS, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates

FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN MINNESOTA RANKED BY 10 MOST COMMON COUNTRIES OF BIRTH, 2019-2023

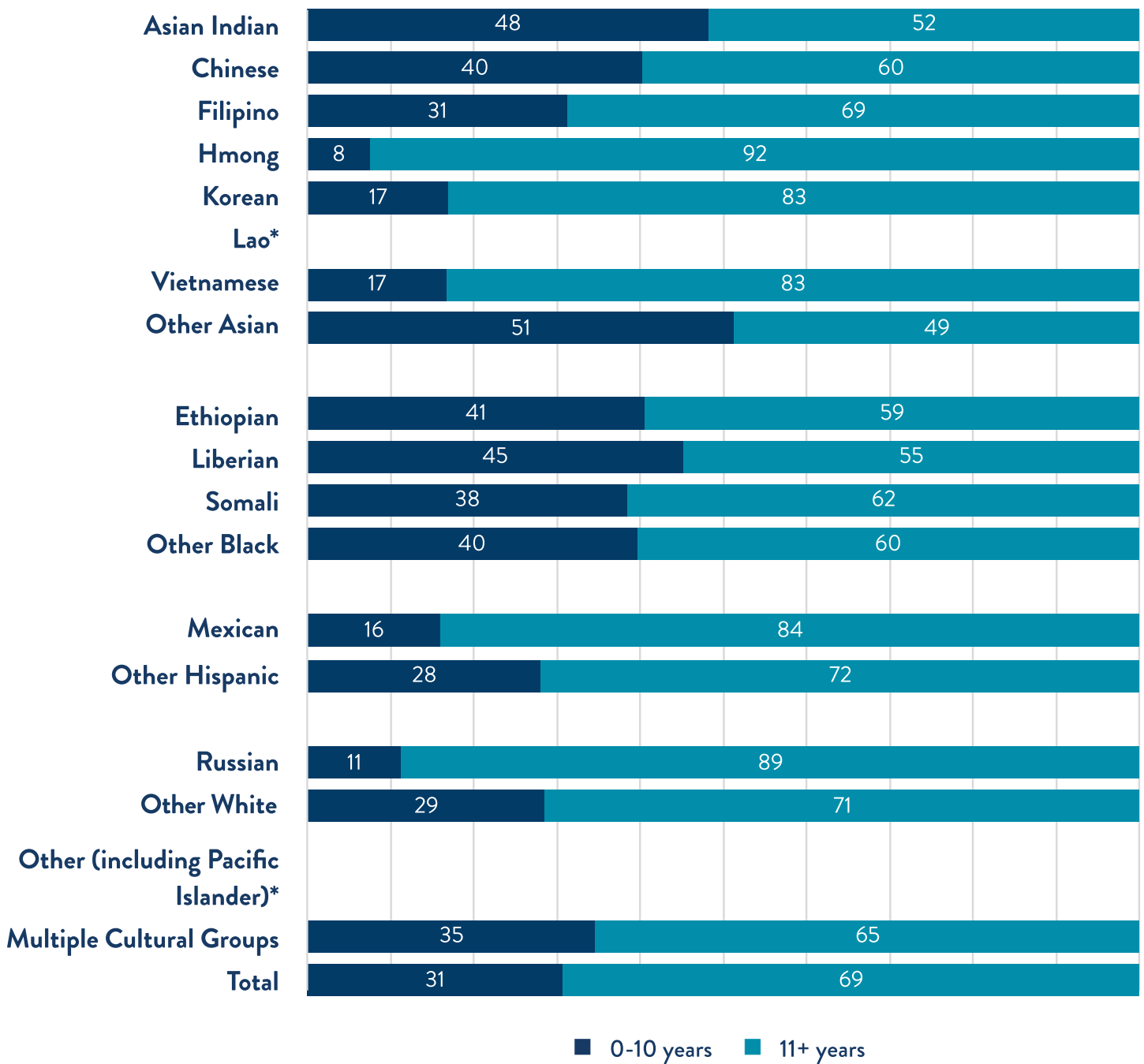
Rank	Country	Population
1	Mexico	58,764
2	Somalia	36,253
3	India	31,836
4	Ethiopia	26,112
5	Laos	24,709
6	Thailand	19,268
7	Kenya	17,024
8	Vietnam	16,825
9	China	15,821
10	Liberia	12,447

Source: American Immigration Council

MINNESOTA AGE DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION COMPARED TO NATIVE-BORN POPULATION

Age Group	Foreign-Born Population	Native-Born Population
0-15	6.5%	21.0%
16-64	82.9%	60.5%
65+	10.6%	18.5%

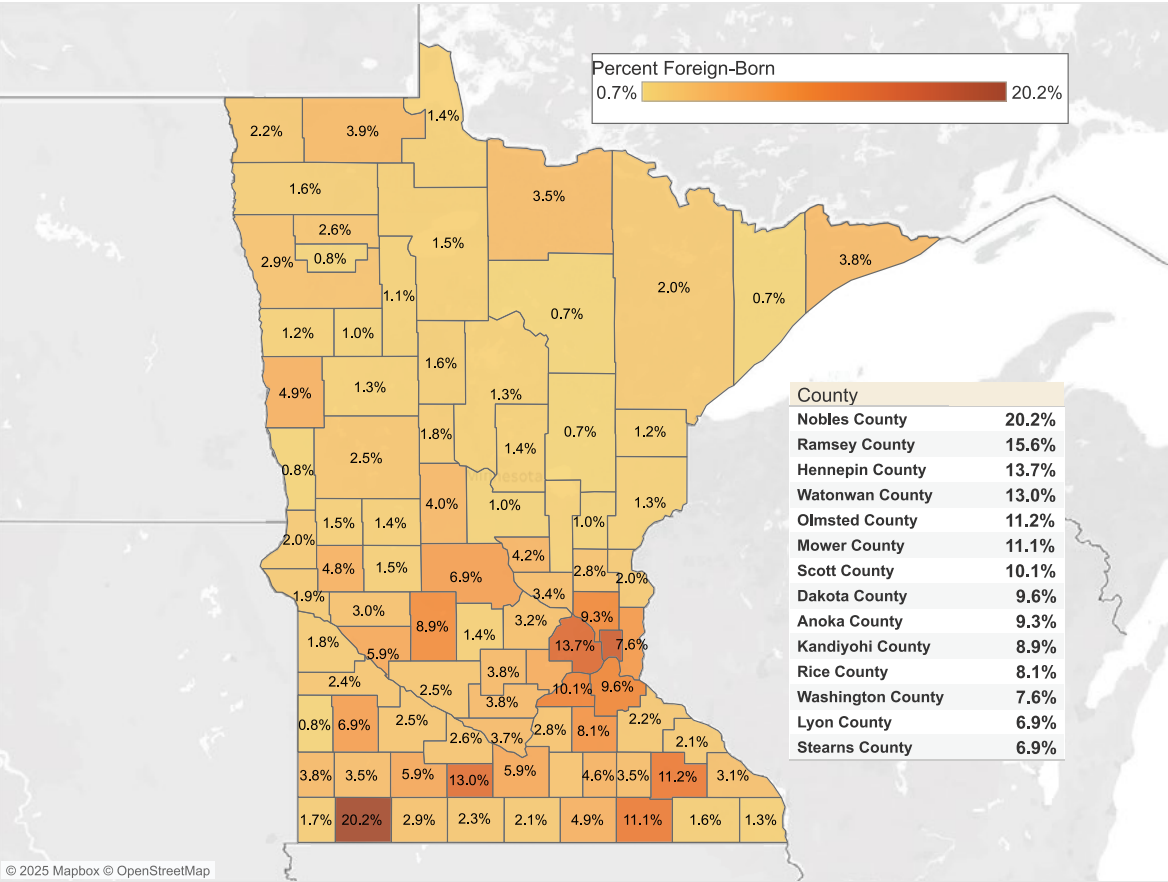
SHARE OF FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, AGES 16-64, BY YEARS IN U.S. AND CULTURAL GROUP



*Group is not shown because the sample includes less than 150 unweighted respondents.
Source: Economic Status of Minnesotans 2023, Minnesota State Demographic Center

WHERE DO NEW AMERICANS LIVE IN MINNESOTA?

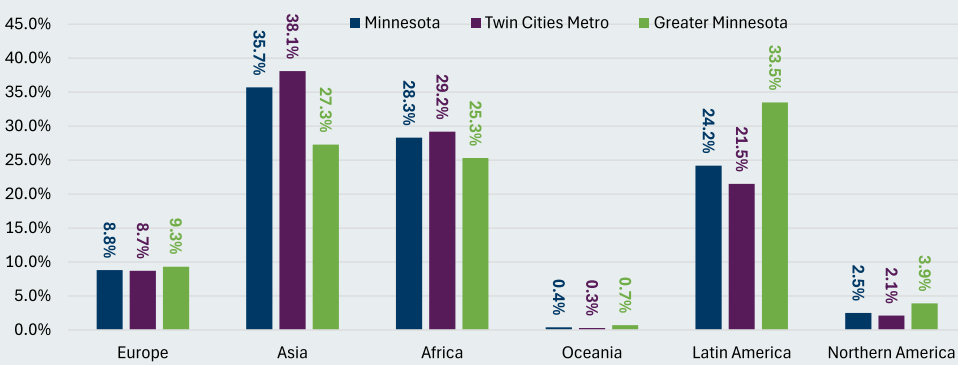
PERCENT FOREIGN-BORN BY COUNTY, 2019-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019-2023 5-year estimates

According to U.S. Census Bureau data analyzed by DEED’s Labor Market Information Office analysts, the seven-county Twin Cities metro area is home to most New Americans, with 77.8% of the state’s foreign-born population (380,516 residents) living in the Twin Cities, which is home to 55% of the state’s population overall. The Twin Cities metro area has more established immigrant communities, with 38.6% having arrived before 2000 and 60.6% of foreign-born Twin Cities residents being naturalized citizens. In contrast, Greater Minnesota, which is home to 22.2% of the state’s foreign-born population (108,381 residents), has a different demographic profile with a lower naturalization rate at 49.9% and 40.5% having arrived since 2010.

PLACE OF BIRTH FOR THE FOREIGN BORN POPULATION, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey

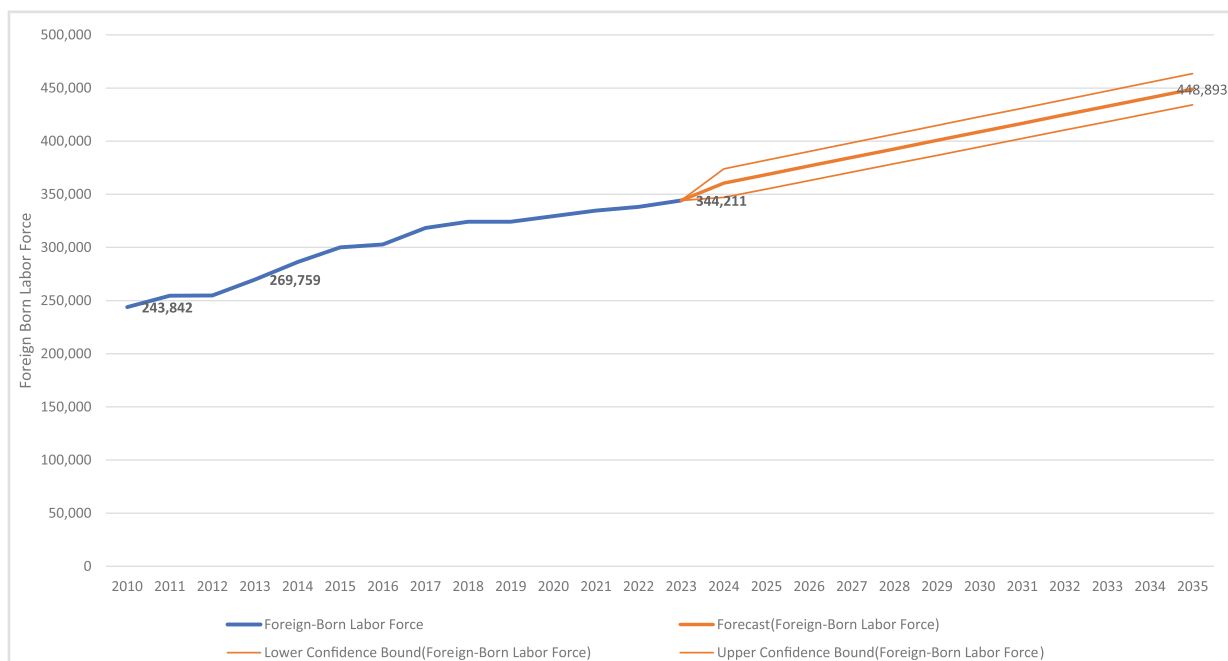
This table takes a closer look at regional differences among New Americans and U.S. born residents across a variety of economic, educational and other characteristics.

SELECT CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE TOTAL AND FOREIGN-BORN POPULATIONS BY MINNESOTA REGION

		7-County Metro	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
Population 2023	Total	3,156,517	735,753	326,078	578,252	519,192	397,924
	Foreign-Born	380,516	32,076	5,887	12,989	36,741	20,688
	Percent Foreign-Born	12.1%	4.4%	1.8%	2.2%	7.1%	5.2%
Net Migration 2020-2024	Total Net Migration	-13,034	+25,036	+6,407	+11,305	+4,433	-986
	International	+57,073	+8,046	+832	+2,730	+7,456	+4,954
	Domestic	-70,107	+16,990	+5,575	+8,575	-3,023	-5,940
Median Individual Income 2023	Total	\$50,540	\$43,714	\$36,802	\$38,444	\$43,455	\$38,339
	Foreign-Born	\$42,470	\$38,503	\$32,380	\$35,529	\$41,998	\$33,568
Language other than English spoken at home 2023	Total	16.7%	6.6%	3.1%	4.7%	10.4%	8.6%
Educational Attainment: Bachelor's Degree or higher 2023	Total	47.3%	26.1%	29.5%	26.8%	34.0%	25.6%
	Foreign-Born	38.1%	24.7%	35.9%	26.8%	33.1%	18.3%
Poverty Rate 2023	Total	8.5%	8.2%	12.7%	11.2%	9.0%	11.3%
	Foreign-Born	13.1%	15.1%	11.6%	21.6%	17.0%	21.1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, 2024 U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates

MINNESOTA FOREIGN-BORN LABOR FORCE TREND, ACTUAL THROUGH 2023 AND PROJECTED THROUGH 2035



Although a variety of factors may impact foreign-born population and workforce trends moving forward, based on recent trends, DEED's Labor Market Information Office analysts project a foreign-born labor force of 448,893 in 2035, 32.7% growth from 2023. If assumptions hold, the share of foreign-born workers in Minnesota's labor force would increase from the current 11% to 13.9% in 2035.

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, DEED Labor Market Information Office Calculations

WHY IS THE INTEGRATION OF NEW AMERICANS IMPORTANT?

Community Contributions

New American families bring new experiences to Minnesota communities, broadening perspectives and making Minnesota communities more appealing to other new arrivals from both within and outside the United States. New Americans provide new cultural backgrounds and help revitalize communities.



Economic Contributions: as Consumers and Taxpayers

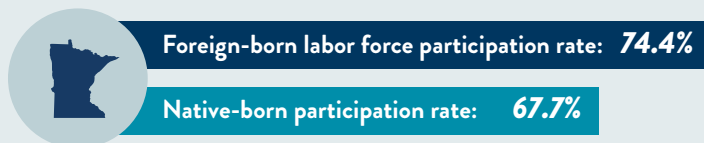
New American consumers play an important role in the economy through the purchase of goods and services, with \$17 billion in spending power in 2023 in Minnesota, according to the American Immigration Council. New Americans are customers of existing businesses as well as new businesses created to meet their communities' needs.

New Americans also play a critically important role in Minnesota as taxpayers. Immigrants pay sales tax, property tax, payroll tax and other taxes and fees, which benefit all Minnesotans. According to data compiled by the American Immigration Council, immigrant households in the state paid \$6.2 billion in taxes in 2023, including \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes, helping to pay for roads, public safety, schools and more. Undocumented immigrants in Minnesota are estimated to have paid nearly \$222 million in state and local taxes in 2022, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. While undocumented immigrants pay taxes through sales tax, income tax and other means, they are not able to access many of the services those taxes fund.

Economic Contributions: in the Labor Force

Foreign-born workers, who are not necessarily new to the country, make up 11% of Minnesota's labor force and 8% of the total state population. Those percentages reveal two things: immigrants and refugees who now call Minnesota home are an essential part of Minnesota's labor force and they engage in the labor force at a higher rate than the population overall. In fact, the foreign-born labor force participation rate is 74.4%, notably higher than the native-born participation rate of 67.7% in Minnesota.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES IN MINNESOTA



A key reason for foreign-born Minnesotans' higher labor force participation rate is age demographics. Minnesotans who were born in the U.S. are older as a group than New Americans as a group, and when a person is older than 55, or especially older than 65, they are less likely to be employed. The foreign-born population is much more likely to be of prime working age, with 61.4% of foreign-born Minnesotans between the ages of 25 and 54 years, compared to just 38.2% of the total Minnesota population in that age category.

Another critical role New Americans play in the labor force is complementing the occupations native-born workers are more likely to fill. As noted in a recent research article from DEED's Labor Market Information Office: "Foreign-born workers are both more likely to fill occupations that have low educational requirements like Drivers and Janitors/Building Cleaners as they are occupations with high educational requirements such as Chemists & Materials Scientists, Computer Scientists and Physicians. These trends reflect the bifurcated nature of educational attainment among foreign-born workers in Minnesota, who are both more likely than the native-born population to have less than high school degree and more likely to have attained a graduate or professional degree."

New Americans are critically important to Minnesota's economy. Without foreign-born workers, many businesses in Minnesota would not have the workers they need to operate, let alone grow and thrive.

Some of the occupations in Minnesota where more than 15% of the labor force is foreign born

- **Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing workers:** 1,268 (25.2%) of the people who work in these roles in food manufacturing are foreign-born.
- **Manufacturing workers:** 11,307 (31.9%) of the people who help manufacture semiconductor processors or cooling and freezing equipment are foreign born.

“The success of companies like Polar, and a vibrant domestic semiconductor industry, depends on America’s continued ability to attract the hardest and brightest from across the world. These foreign-born New Americans personify grit, courage, willingness to take risks, perseverance through setbacks, eagerness to learn and adapt to changing needs, and determination to make their dreams real. Combine that with welcoming communities and private and public institutions that provide further education and training, and the outcome is exceptional workers and entrepreneurs unleashing technological dominance. As one of these lucky immigrants, I am proud of my fellow travelers, and immensely grateful to the nation and its people who gave us a chance.”

— Surya Iyer, President, Polar Semiconductor, Bloomington, MN.

- **Long term care and home health care workers:** 17,154 (30.3%) of the nursing assistants and home health aides who care for elderly Minnesotans and people who need care at home while recovering from illness or injury are foreign-born workers.

“For decades, long-term care providers have relied on the dedication, resilience, and cultural richness of New Americans. Rooted in shared values of service and multigenerational care, the senior care sector continues to welcome and benefit from foreign-born talent. Foreign-born individuals are helping to fill critical staffing needs across all levels of senior care, from nursing assistants and nurses to dietary aides to leadership roles. Their contributions are not only vital to ensure safe care in every corner of our state, but they also enrich the cultural competence and compassion embedded in the daily care of older adults.

As Minnesota’s senior population grows rapidly and demand for care increases, immigrant and refugee communities are vital to sustaining care statewide. Data shows that Minnesota’s immigrant population is growing modestly while our senior population is growing very quickly. Without efforts to welcome and support New American workers, many providers—especially in rural areas—will struggle to meet demand.

The Long-Term Care Imperative strongly supports state efforts to expand meaningful career pathways for New Americans. That is why we championed written language accommodation for applicants taking the nursing assistant exam, advocated for grants to support New Americans working in long-term care, and are working alongside federal partners to adopt commonsense immigration reform. Doing so strengthens care for our aging population and keeps Minnesota a welcoming place for global talent.” —Long-Term Care Imperative, a partnership of Minnesota’s two senior care provider associations: Care Providers of Minnesota and LeadingAge Minnesota.



- **Personal care aides:** 5,509 (15.1%) of people who care and provide support for people with disabilities are foreign born.
- **Child care workers:** 4,789 (19.6%) of people who care for young children in day care or similar settings across the state are foreign born.

“As Minnesota’s population becomes more diverse, with an increasing number of children from birth to age five, it is imperative that our early childhood workforce reflects this demographic shift. When children see themselves reflected in their caregivers, they feel seen, safe, and supported.

Evidence shows that culturally responsive care improves child outcomes and fosters long-term education success, embracing the strengths of New Americans and adults from diverse backgrounds in early childhood education is vital. It plays a part in nurturing every child’s potential while building a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous Minnesota for generations to come.”—Cisa Keller, President and CEO, Think Small



- **Food service workers:** 6,644 (16.4%) of the chefs and cooks who work in restaurants across Minnesota are foreign born.
- **Software Developers, Applications & Systems Software workers:** 11,278 (25.9%) of the people who develop software and systems to facilitate the operation and growth of Minnesota businesses and other organizations are foreign born.
- **Agricultural workers:** Agricultural & Food Science Technicians: 576 (24.9%) Agricultural & Food Scientists: 403 (15.4%) and First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing & Forestry Workers: 146 (25.1%) who work in Minnesota’s agricultural industry are foreign born.

Important note: the employment statistics for agricultural workers in Minnesota do not include thousands of workers here under the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program, which allows agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of domestic workers to bring nonimmigrant foreign workers to the U.S. to perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature and pay the prevailing wage. People here on a H-2A Visa are not U.S. citizens. Roughly 4,000 H-2A Visas were granted to Minnesota employers requiring workers during Federal Fiscal Year 2024. Those H-2A Visas were granted for the following types of agricultural workers from outside the U.S.: Agricultural Equipment Operators, Livestock Workers, Farmworkers & Laborers, Crop, Nursery and Greenhouse, Beekeepers, Graders & Sorters of Potatoes, Truck Drivers, Construction Laborers, Maintenance & Repair Workers and other occupations. The numbers cited above also do not include thousands of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, who are U.S. Citizens who travel to or within Minnesota. Thousands of migrant farm workers travel seasonally, typically from the southern United States, to Minnesota each year to help with cultivating and harvesting crops and processing food. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers are employed seasonally in everything from fieldwork to harvesting vegetables to canning and meatpacking.

Mother and Son Pursue Nursing Dreams Together

When Emmy and her 22-year-old son Edwin walk across the stage to receive their nursing degrees, they'll be celebrating not just their diplomas, but the journey they've shared. Originally from Tanzania, the mother-son duo supports each other through long nights of studying and balancing work and school—all to achieve their dream of becoming nurses.

For Emmy, that dream began at the International Institute of Minnesota. Though she arrived in the U.S. with a college education, she had to start over. "I didn't know how to begin until someone told me about the Institute," she said. Emmy enrolled in the Institute's Nursing Assistant Training, where she built English and job skills, and later joined the College Readiness Academy, which gave her the confidence and tools to succeed in higher ed. Both programs are part of the Healthcare Career Pathway Program funded by DEED.

Inspired by his mother, Edwin enrolled in the same college prep program. "She said, 'If you want to be a nurse, you can be a nurse. Nothing is impossible,'" he said.

Today, Emmy is working as a Nursing Assistant while completing her associate degree to become a Registered Nurse. Edwin is pursuing his pre-nursing requirements while working part-time. They continue to lean on each other—and the support of the Institute—as they move toward their goals.



"Sometimes I feel like giving up," Emmy said, "but I remember—I have a goal. I'm going to be a nurse."



Workforce Development, Inc. Employee Helps New Americans Find Employment

Ehsannah moved to the U.S. in 2009, as a Karen refugee from Burma (sometimes called Myanmar) and made her way to Albert Lea to work at Select Foods. In 2016, Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) hired Ehsannah to help other immigrants and refugees in the Albert Lea/Austin area find employment.

Ehsannah helps fellow Southeast Asian refugees prepare for and find jobs. Bilingual in English and Karen, she is able to bridge the gap between newly arrived individuals looking for work and employers looking for workers. She also serves many long-time residents of the area. Ehsannah provides assistance to 200-400 people each year who seek assistance preparing for and finding employment.

Funding from DEED's Southeast Asian Economic Disparities Relief Competitive Grant Program helps Ehsannah and WDI do this work, which includes enrollment in training programs, job search assistance and help with clothing and other work materials.

WDI employs multilingual staff and utilizes interpretation services to help job seekers who speak a variety of languages prepare for and find employment. Creating connections with New Americans and helping them be welcomed by employers and communities is good for everyone, says Ehsannah.

"Everyone needs to have success to have a strong and healthy community," she said. "Welcoming New Americans is important because when you move to another country, you face many challenges—language barriers, cultural differences and the struggle of starting over in a new environment. During that time, it's so important to have support. We all need someone we can rely on, and access to resources that help us take care of ourselves and our families."

"Being welcomed makes a big difference—it gives you hope, confidence and a sense that you belong."



Taka Moves from MFIP to Management Role, Thanks to Drive for 5 Training Program

Taka was enrolled in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which helps families with children meet their basic needs, when his counselor at Hired recommended he consider the Drive for 5 Semiconductor Manufacturing Career Pathways pre-apprenticeship program.

Taka had recently moved to the U.S. from Japan to build a new life for his family, but despite having a Bachelor's Degree in International Business and years of experience in building and managing a business in Japan, Taka faced challenges securing employment in the U.S. and received no offers after applying for multiple positions.

After completing Hired's semiconductor discovery and work readiness training, Taka began full-time paid work as an Operator at Seagate, while he started college coursework with Normandale Community College as part of the Drive for 5 Semiconductor Manufacturing Career Pathways pre-apprenticeship program.

Taka graduated in late June from the Semiconductor Manufacturing Career Pathways pre-apprenticeship program, which is the result of an innovative collaboration between DEED and Hired; employer partners Polar Semiconductor, Seagate Technology and SkyWater Technology; and educational partner Normandale Community College.

Being a strong worker and leader, Taka was recently offered a full-time permanent position at Seagate in a management role earning \$35 an hour. Taka has since successfully exited the MFIP program as he continues with college coursework while being employed in an advanced role.

"The support I received from Hired gave me not only a pathway into the Minnesota workforce but also renewed confidence in my career potential. I'm grateful for the training, the mentorship, and the doors that have opened because of it."

Rural Minnesota CEP Helps Habib Advance on In-Demand Career Path

Habib, a husband and father of four living in Moorhead, wants to earn a degree in Diesel Equipment Technology and advance in the in-demand career of Diesel Mechanic. He came from Kenya with a high school education. After he arrived in the United States, he earned his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and worked as a heavy truck driver until he was ready to further his education. Habib came to RMCEP seeking funding through DEED's Pathways to Prosperity Grant Program to attain his Associate Degree in Diesel Equipment Technology at M State in Moorhead. So far, he has not only succeeded in all his classes, but he has made the President's List. This summer he is working as a Diesel Mechanic in a local shop and will return to school this fall at M State in Moorhead.



Mohamedfatah Moves from a Low-Wage Job to Self-Employment

Mohamedfatah hoped to become a Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Driver and maybe even own his own business. The Community Integration Center in Willmar helped Mohamedfatah achieve his goals with the support of DEED's African Immigrant Community Economic Disparities Relief Grant Program.

Thanks to support he received through the Community Integration Center and his hard work and dedication, Mohamedfatah earned his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) after completing training at Ridgewater College in Willmar, which recently expanded its truck driver training range with a DEED capital grant. Mohamedfatah looks back on his accomplishment, noting about earning his CDL that "I saw this as a turning point in my life, a chance to enter a new industry with greater potential for growth and success."

Once Mohamedfatah earned his CDL, he immediately began looking for employment as a truck driver, eventually securing a position and gaining valuable experience on the road.

"For a year, I worked hard, learning everything I could about the trucking industry, how logistics operate, how to manage time effectively, and the key elements of running a successful business in this field," said Mohamedfatah. "After a year of dedicated work, I took a bold step: I bought my own truck. This was a major milestone in my journey, marking my transition from employee to owner-operator. I continue driving, expanding my knowledge, and preparing for the next phase of my career."

Mohamedfatah continues to drive a truck—his own truck—while strategizing how to take the next step and launch his own trucking company.



"Every step I take brings me closer to building something of my own. This is just the beginning. I am always grateful to be given this opportunity that shaped my path."



Workforce Development, Inc. Bridges to Healthcare Program Helps Ghislain Better Provide for His Family

Ghislain is married and the father of two children. He came to the U.S. in July 2022, and just three weeks later, he began classes with the goal of becoming a Registered Nurse. Like many New Americans, he faced challenges along the way. Because he is not eligible for Minnesota educational grants, he has had to rely on federal loans to pay for his education while working to support his family. He turned to Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) for assistance and through WDI's Bridges to Healthcare Program, his tuition for Trained Medical Assistant (TMA) training was fully paid. With the new credential, Ghislain advanced from Nursing Assistant to TMA, increasing his income so he can better provide for his family. In addition to paying his Fall 2024 tuition, WDI was able to pay for his childcare costs and for repairs to his vehicle so

he could reliably get to class, work and clinicals. With less financial stress, Ghislain has been able to focus more on his studies, making the Dean's List in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 at Riverland Community College in Austin.

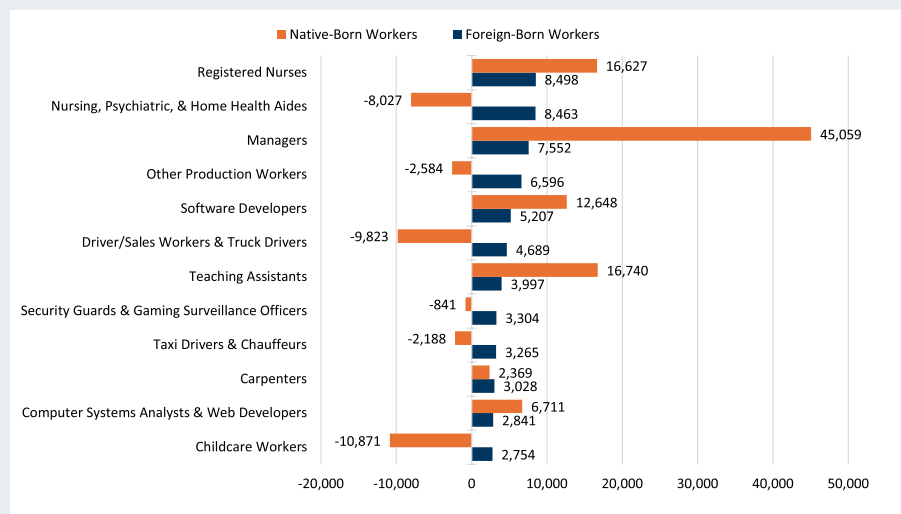
"I'm incredibly grateful to Workforce Development Incorporated and to all the donors who make this work possible. Thank you for believing in people like me and for investing in our dreams. I promise to pay it forward in my future as a nurse."

Importance of New Americans in critical occupations in Minnesota's labor force is growing over time

Because Minnesotans who were born in the United States are older on average than New American workers, foreign-born Minnesotans are more likely to be of working age than their native-born counterparts. As older workers retire or otherwise leave the labor force, employers need to find workers to fill essential open positions. As seen in the chart showing 12 of the occupations in Minnesota with the fastest growing numbers of New American workers from 2013-2023, New American workers have played a critical role in filling essential positions. For example, the 8,463 new foreign-born Nursing, Psychiatric & Home Health Aides offset the 8,027 native-born workers who left those positions over the decade. New Americans are bringing a strong work ethic, skills and experience into Minnesota's labor force, easing the workforce shortage in critical fields.

12 OCCUPATIONS IN MINNESOTA WITH FASTEST GROWING NUMBER OF FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS

Minnesota change in foreign- and native-born workers by occupation, 2013-2023



Source: IPUMS USA

There may have been 70,000 unauthorized immigrants in Minnesota's labor force in 2022, the latest year for which data is analyzed, according to the Pew Research Center. That would mean undocumented immigrants accounted for about 2% of the state's total labor force (3.1 million workers) according to DEED's Labor Market Information Office. The Pew Research Center estimates that the Manufacturing industry has the highest number of unauthorized immigrant workers in Minnesota, while Agriculture has the largest share.

Economic Contributions: as Entrepreneurs and Business Owners

According to data from the 2021 U.S. Census Bureau's Nonemployer Statistics, there are 66,000 foreign-born individuals operating Minnesota businesses without employees (13.9% of total nonemployers). That's proportionally higher than New Americans' share of the total workforce, but significantly below the national average of 24.0%. However, a trend toward more self employment among New Americans in Minnesota may be emerging: from 2018 to 2021, an estimated 12,000 additional foreign-born nonemployer establishments opened in Minnesota.

In 2022, there were 5,918 foreign-born employer businesses in Minnesota that responded to the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey; that's 7% of total business responses, as compared to 19.1% nationally. However, nearly 19% of all Accommodation & Food Service business respondents in Minnesota reported being born in a country outside the United States as did nearly 18% of all Health Care & Social Assistance business owners. While the survey doesn't capture the demographics of all business owners in Minnesota, it does provide a general picture of New American business ownership in the state.

Many recently-arrived New Americans may lack awareness of how to set up a business in Minnesota, develop a business plan, navigate business financing and other information needed to successfully start their own business. ONA has worked with the Office of the Secretary of State to help clarify processes for registering a business and annual registration renewals in Minnesota. ONA shares information about DEED business services and other resources for small businesses in Minnesota via its monthly online forum and in other ways.

WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS DOING TO FOSTER INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN MINNESOTA’S LABOR FORCE, LARGER ECONOMY AND SOCIETY?

Established the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

- ONA convened the council’s inaugural meeting on May 3, 2024, and meets as needed as determined by the Council. Per state statute, the council shall be chaired by the assistant commissioner who leads the Office of New Americans and shall include the commissioners, department directors, or designees from the following:
 - Governor’s Office
 - Department of Administration
 - Department of Employment and Economic Development
 - Department of Human Services
 - Department of Human Services Refugee Resettlement Programs Office
 - Department of Labor and Industry
 - Department of Health
 - Department of Education
 - Office of Higher Education
 - Department of Public Safety
 - Department of Corrections
 - Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans
 - Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
 - Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs

Collaborated with state agencies, offices, and ethnic councils to ensure better services and support for New Americans

- ONA works regularly with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and other state agencies and offices, as well as ethnic councils.
- ONA holds monthly New Americans Forums, which provide a way to share state agency and office resources, discuss challenges and opportunities and gather community feedback from immigrant and refugee stakeholders. Topics have included: information about workforce development training programs, the Promise Act, child care grants, Adult Basic Education, first-time homebuyer assistance, loan funds for immigrant entrepreneurs, among many other topics.

Held listening sessions throughout the state with local immigrants, refugees and leaders in the community to hear concerns, create new partnerships and foster collaboration and understanding

DATE	LOCATION	WHAT WE HEARD
August 7, 2024	West Central region CareerForce in Willmar 2200 23rd St NE #2040 Willmar. MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Advanced language training for skilled immigrants is needed● Lack of access to affordable, quality child care is a barrier to employment
Sept. 11, 2024	Northeast region CareerForce in Duluth 402 West 1st Street Duluth, MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Credit for prior learning in another country is needed to help New Americans utilize their skills and experience in Minnesota● A resettlement agency is needed to provide welcoming assistance● Legal services are needed● There needs to be more engagement between local non-profits serving New Americans and local Chambers of Commerce● Access to long-term care and mental health care are needed
Oct. 24, 2024	Northwest region CareerForce in Moorhead 715 11th Street North Suite 302 Moorhead, MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● There needs to be more engagement with employers about hiring and retaining diverse employees● Legal services are needed● There needs to be more collaboration between local non-profits and state government● Lack of transportation is a barrier to employment
Nov. 27, 2024	Southwest region Nobles County Government Center 315 10th St. Worthington, MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Legal services are needed● Employees need to have a way to access information about worker rights regarding documentation, overtime pay and other issues● Lack of transportation and child care are barriers to employment
August 11, 2025	Southeast region CareerForce in Rochester 2070 College View Rd E Rochester, MN 55904	

Advised state agencies and offices on program implementation impacting New Americans

- Assistant Commissioner Mohamed advised DHS on development and implementation of the Supporting New Americans in the Long-Term Care Workforce Grant to provide services and support to New Americans who seek to enter and advance in the Long-Term Care workforce.
- Assistant Commissioner Mohamed assisted DEED staff in developing, designing and reviewing Request for Proposals (RFPs), including those for the Transformative Career Pathways and Pathways to Prosperity workforce development grant programs.



Convened leaders and staff from state agencies and local areas to identify and support implementation of programs and strategies to reduce employment barriers for immigrants and refugees

- ONA advised DEED Workforce Division leadership and staff in Careerforce locations, expanding access to employment services for immigrants and refugees. For example, ONA provided specific guidance to help serve hard-to-reach workers in New American communities in Greater Minnesota, including in Faribault, St. Cloud and Willmar.
- ONA engaged with local workforce development area leaders to identify skills gaps holding New American workers back, grow workforce services utilization and help increase workforce integration. This engagement included presenting at Local Workforce Development Board meetings in the 7-county metro area and meeting with local directors at MAWB meetings.

Worked with non-profit community-based organizations that assist New Americans with the legal immigration process

- ONA partnered with CLINIC to sponsor five people to be trained as DOJ-accredited representatives, who are able to provide legal services at approved non-profits statewide, easing immigration case backlogs.
- ONA encouraged local municipalities to invest in legal services by hosting a session during CLINIC's national convening in May 2024 around the role of local governments in strengthening legal services to New Americans.

Worked to address challenges to workforce participation by New Americans, including employment authorization documentation barriers

- Assistant Commissioner Mohamed joined counterparts from across the country on an Office of New Americans State Network virtual meeting with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to identify ways to shorten application processing wait times, resulting in eligible New Americans gaining work authorization more quickly to help ease Minnesota's labor force shortage.

Helped foster inclusive hiring practices and promote skills development for immigrants by participating in locally organized employer engagement opportunities

- ONA has engaged with numerous Chambers of Commerce, providing Minnesota employers with an overview of resources to attract and retain New American workers.
- ONA participated in two panel discussions in 2023 about hiring and retaining New Americans, along with City of Minneapolis and Ramsey County staff and immigration attorneys. Employers received important information about types of documentation of employment eligibility, as well as best practices for training and retaining workers.
- ONA highlighted ways for employers to engage with immigrants and refugees at a workforce summit sponsored by DEED and attended by 350 employers, workforce development professionals and other workforce stakeholders in September 2024.

Coordinated efforts across agencies to develop resources that promote the inclusion of immigrants and refugees

- ONA developed the first-ever state resource guide for immigrants and refugees, a 26-page comprehensive guidebook covering resources across 17 state agencies, in partnership with DHS and its Refugee Resettlement Programs Office. This guide is regularly updated, is available in multiple languages and is posted on the DHS website and on ONA's page on the DEED website. ONA has shared these guides with New Americans across Minnesota in various ways.
- ONA developed a one-page flyer listing essential services (shelter, transportation, legal) in multiple languages, in partnership with DHS and its Refugee Resettlement Programs Office.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

- Members of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
- [Governor's Workforce Development Board](#)
- [Governor's Office of Public Engagement](#)
- [Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage](#)
- [Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans](#)
- [Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs](#)
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Employment and Training Programs Division
- [Minnesota Department of Human Services, Refugee Resettlement Programs Office](#)
- [Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards](#)
- [DEED and Local Workforce Development Area staff in the CareerForce system](#)
- [Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#)
- [City of Minneapolis Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs](#)
- [City of St. Paul City Attorney's Office](#)

RESOURCES USED IN CREATING THIS REPORT

- **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Labor Market Information Office:**
 - [The Growth and Impact of Minnesota's Foreign-Born Workforce](#)
 - [The Importance of Immigration](#)
- **Minnesota State Demographic Center:**
 - [Immigration & Language](#)
 - [Economic Status of Minnesotans](#)
- **Minnesota Chamber of Commerce:**
 - [The Economic Contributions of New Americans in Minnesota: February 2025](#)
- **American Immigration Council:**
 - [Immigrants in Minnesota](#)
- **Minnesota Compass:**
 - [Explore the Data](#)



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For an electronic copy of this report, to find out more about the work of the Office of New Americans and to sign up for an invitation to join the New Americans Forum snap this code.



**EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

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AUGUST 2025