

BN Welcoming in McLean County

**Snapshot of the Demographics
and Economic contributions of
Immigrants in McLean County**



STEVENSON CENTER
FOR COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Illinois State University



BN Welcoming

BN Welcoming is a collaborative initiative to build an inclusive, supportive community for immigrants and refugees. This collection of organizations hopes to create an environment where every immigrant is seen as a potential contributor to a growing and culturally diverse community. Ultimately, providing resources where everyone can find a home in McLean County, understand that their gifts and skills are valued, and receive the needed support to realize their potential fully, thus enriching all.

Overview

The following is a qualitative and quantitative report analyzing McLean County Census Data and utilizing one-on-one interviews conducted by Illinois State University and BN Welcoming. This research highlights immigrants' contributions to McLean County's community, labor market, and economy. Overall, these community members have enriched our neighborhoods, added specific skill sets to our workforce, and have become part of our culture.

11,874 immigrants call McLean County home. Initially, from 60 countries, this population makes up 6.9% of our current population. The majority of these individuals come from Latin America, Asia, and Africa allowing McLean County to remain resistant to deflating populations trends seen across the state of Illinois.

Immigrants have contributed \$ 1.2B to McLean County's GDP, working in industries from agriculture to higher education, health care to hospitality, and restaurant to technology. With 13.4% in healthcare, 7% in education, and 11.6% in manufacturing, the immigrant population in McLean County

is conducive to the economic progression of this community.

While the majority of these individuals have been here for at least 5 years, over 1 out of 3 have become U.S. citizens. 4 in 5 are eligible for naturalization. These individuals have started families, businesses, and careers that have directly influenced the unique characteristics that make McLean County such a fantastic place to live. Around 59% have college degrees, and the success of local immigrants has positively affected the general community through job creation, increased education,

We hope this report showcases the ongoing contributions that immigrants have made to our community. Hopefully, it will be used as a resource to bolster awareness, collaboration, and resources for the immigrant population in McLean County. With the information presented below, we seek continued growth as an inclusive and supportive community where all are welcomed.

Keys to the Report

Immigrant:

Anyone not born in the U.S., regardless of current status

U.S.-Born:

Anyone born in the U.S., regardless of race or ethnicity

Date Source: Household surveys of county residents conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

BN Welcoming in McLean County

A Snapshot of the Demographics and Economic contributions of Immigrants in McLean County ¹

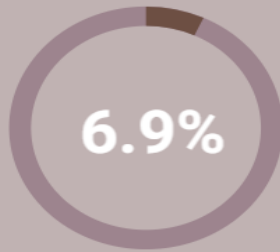


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POPULATION

11,874

Number of Immigrants living in McLean County in 2019, making up **6.9%** of the total population.



Number of immigrants in the county who were **naturalized** citizens as of 2019. **5,070**

"I don't like to ask for a lot of help. I like to overcome obstacles by myself. Teach my kids that while you want to, you can."

SPOTLIGHT 1

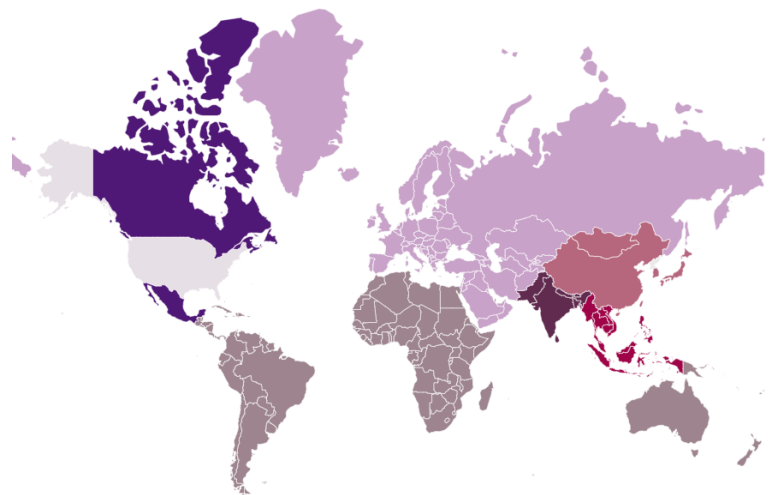
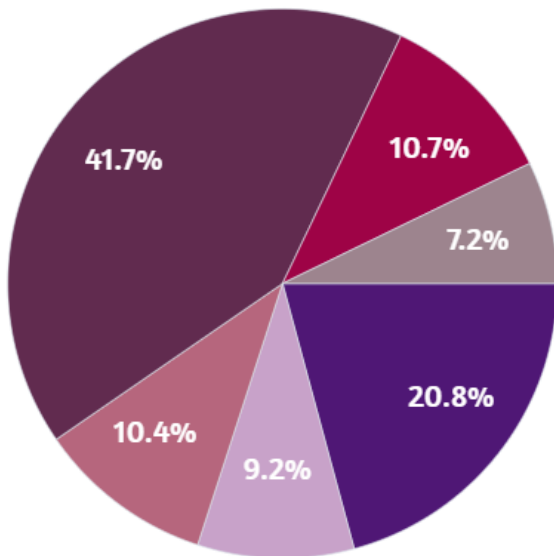
On Perseverance And Tenacity

12.6% of the immigrant population are currently university students in 2019.

This means that at least **87.4%** are long-term residents.

39

languages other than English are spoken by the immigrant population



- East Asia
- North America
- Europe & North & Central Asia
- South Asia
- Southeast Asia
- Other regions of origin

POPULATION CONT.

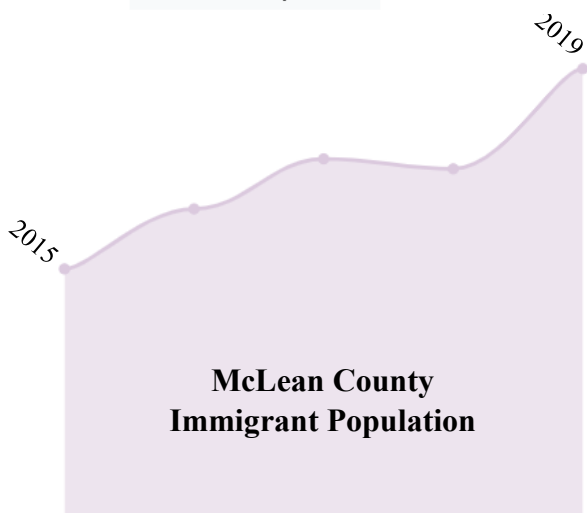
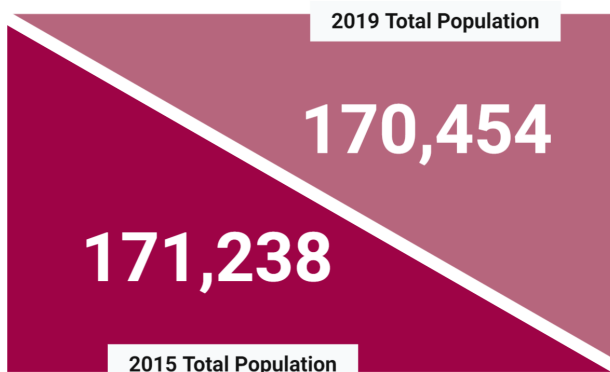
11,874

Number of immigrants living in McLean County in 2019²

Between 2015 and 2019, the **immigrant** share of the county's total population increased by



With the **Non-Immigrant** share of the county's total population is on a slow, but steady decline, the **Immigrant** population is helping McLean County stay resistant to the decreasing population trends Illinois is experiencing.



Spotlight

“David” Castillo

Agricultural Worker, *Bloomington, Illinois*

Originally from Mexico City, Mexico, David Castillo emigrated to Yorkville, Illinois, when he was 14 years old. While he has worked in various industries all over the midwest, including a local restaurant, David currently works for a small dairy farm and as a manager at a local artisanal metal shop in Bloomington. “I have 25 years of experience in the restaurant industry. I started working as a kitchen manager in 2008. All my experience as a manager in restaurants was why I was a good fit to be a manager at my new job.”

Although David admits to his struggles when moving to new places, he notes that “as the months and years pass, it gets much easier.” While he misses aspects of his homeland, David describes Bloomington as a tranquil place and a “great area to raise and have a family.” Additionally, he mentions how Bloomington-Normal tries its best to listen to him and other immigrant community members.

David is a self-starter. “I want to teach my [two] children that even when you feel like you don’t want to, you still can.” After a conversation with his son about school difficulties, David states, “I was motivated to go back and earn my GED at Heartland College.” With the help of an extraordinary teacher, he was able to push through and succeed. Along with becoming a citizen, this was one of David’s proudest moments and where he felt most connected to the community.

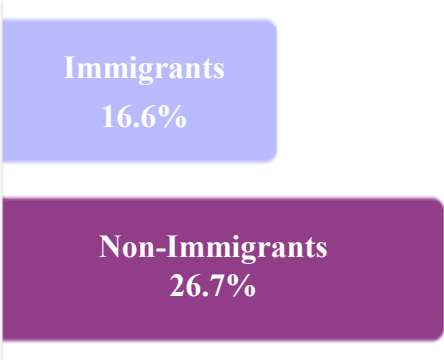
The primary way that David has been able to integrate is through his work. He states, “basically, all the people I have gotten to know have been through work.” In fact, David met his wife while working at a local restaurant.

To David, community is “a group of people that can be friends. Where people can help each other progress forward.” He notes that there are a lot “of good individuals here and that making new friends can be easy.” “My talent is that I am really good with people,” says David. He wants all to feel welcomed and comfortable around him.

David wants the general population to know that the immigrant community is simply here to make a better life and keep moving forward. He recommends residents “to talk to local immigrants, ask questions, get to know them, and help them.” This is what a strong community does, and he wants to help out his fellow man the best he can.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

16.6% of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **26.7%** of U.S.-born residents.

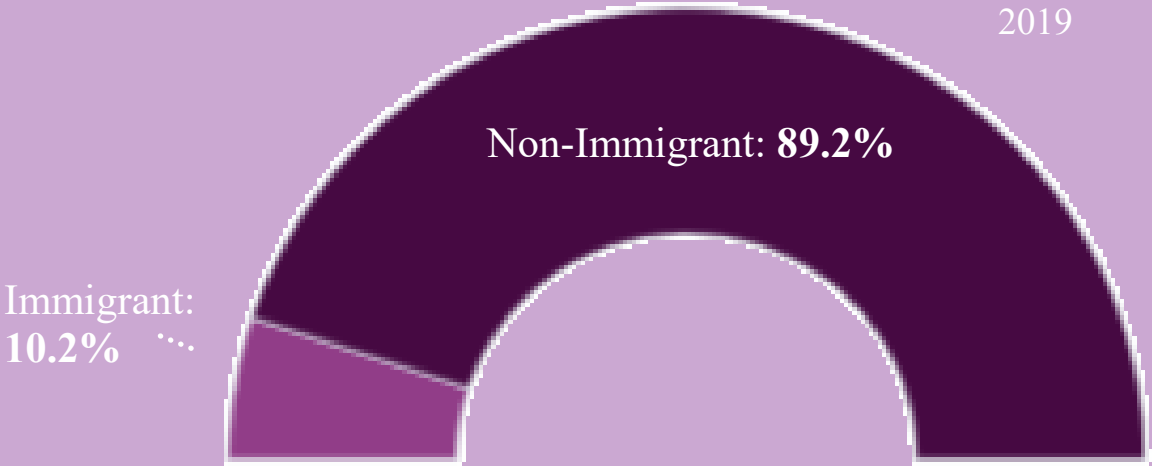


81.8% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, **16.7%** had public coverage, and only **1.5%** reported other.



Of the 65,846 homeowners in the county, immigrants make up **10.2%**.

Immigrant homeowners held **\$645M** in property value in McLean County in 2019



Top 6 Languages Spoken

- ◇ Spanish....**32.2%**
- ◇ Telugu.....**11.4%**
- ◇ Tamil.....**7.9%**
- ◇ Hindi.....**5.3%**
- ◇ Chinese.....**4.1%**
- ◇ French.....**4.1%**

Spotlight

“Papa”

Retired Professor of Economics,
Bloomington, Illinois

Papa, originally from Kenya, has done much of his higher education in the U.S. at Southern Illinois University. After completing his Ph.D. program, Papa landed in McLean County and received his first job offer teaching at ISU. “The job opportunity was the number one reason why I came to Bloomington-Normal,” stated Papa. At the time, Papa only knew three people in the area. He mentioned, “there were no other Kenyans in town that I was connected with.” However, after he found his footing, Papa quickly “started establishing the Kenyan community here.”

As a devoted member of his community, Papa took it upon himself to welcome international students and faculty. He understands and remembers the difficulties of acclimating to new cultures, customs, and food. Papa acknowledges that having a support system, “reminds you that you are not completely lost or alone and that you are at least able to connect.”

Even though Papa is not shy, McLean County “was very, very receptive.” Outside of the University, Papa found his community through the African-Cultural Association of Bloomington-Normal. He pointed out that there are “pockets of people that make you feel connected and provide information that makes you feel integrated into the community.”

“I feel extremely comfortable within Bloomington-Normal” noted Papa. As an individual who has thrived in the world of academia, his approach to life and community is very positive. For the younger generations, Papa wants them to feel just as connected as he does. While he understands that the programming is not the same as it use to be, creating friendships, “helps you feel accepted in the community.”

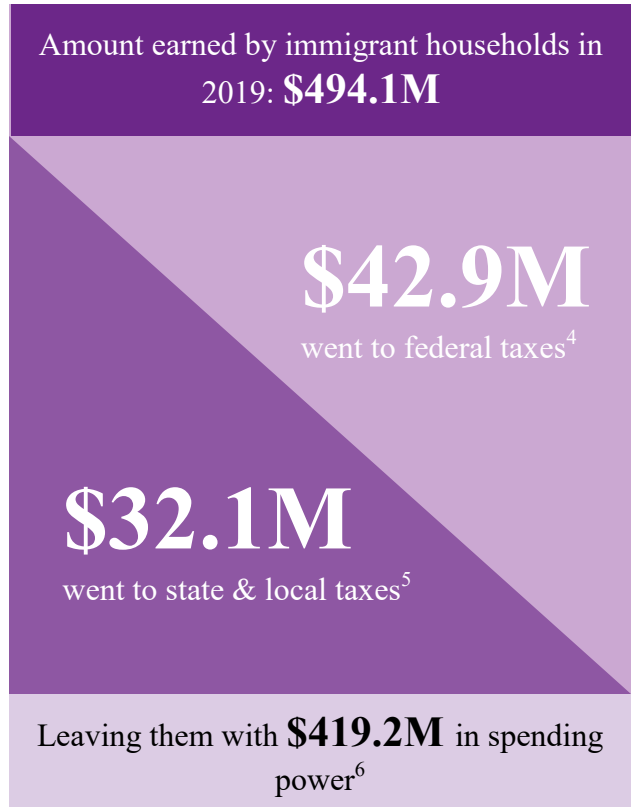
As a father of 6, their continued education and success is a point of pride for Papa. Along with the opportunities available for him and his family, McLean County is home. He states, “you don’t accumulate this many children, in a place you don’t like.” Even with all of Papa’s successes, “being able to raise a family here, and to have remained so connected” is one of his proudest accomplishments.

Papa is not only a teacher but a leader in the community. His work and passion over the years have opened doors for others looking to establish themselves in Bloomington-Normal. Connecting community members with each other “may be small, but feels good.” Ultimately, Papa feels that this connection can help foster an understanding and appreciation of the immigrant population and the international community.

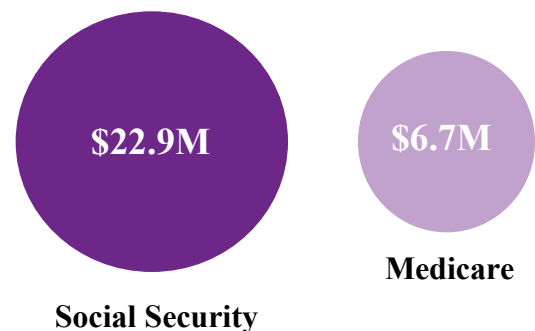
ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS CONT.

In 2019, immigrant residents in McLean County contributed \$1.2B to the area’s GDP.³

Immigrants have contributed significantly through state and local taxes, including property, sales, and other taxes levied by state or municipal governments.

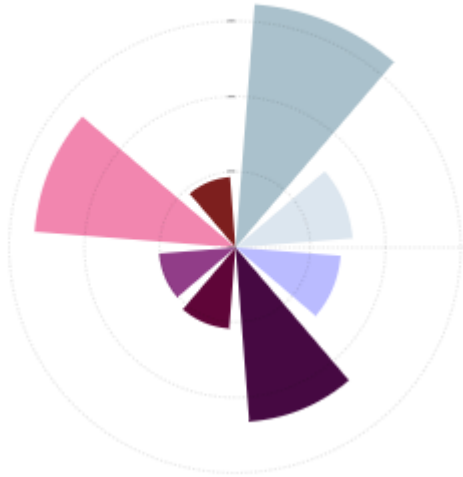


Immigrants in McLean County also support federal social programming. In 2019, they contributed **\$22.9M** to Social Security and **\$6.7M** to Medicare



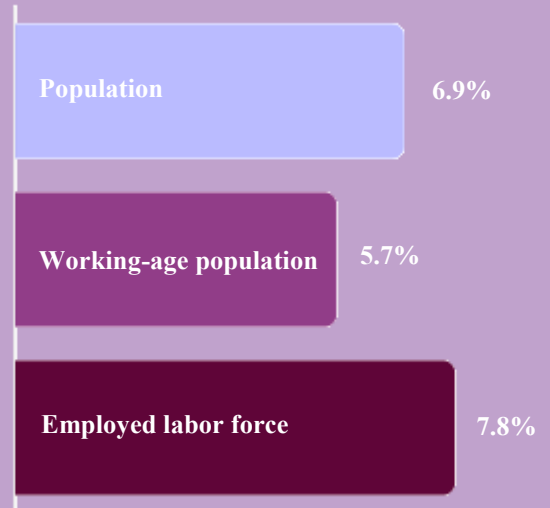
LABOR FORCE

Immigrants play a critical role in several key industries in the county, making up significant portion of the workforce:



- Manufacturing..11.6%
- Healthcare.....13.4%
- Food and Agriculture.....5.4%
- Education.....7.0%
- Professional Services...5.1%
- General Services.....4.7%
- Other.....16.2%
- Unemployed.....7.8%

Immigrant shares of the...



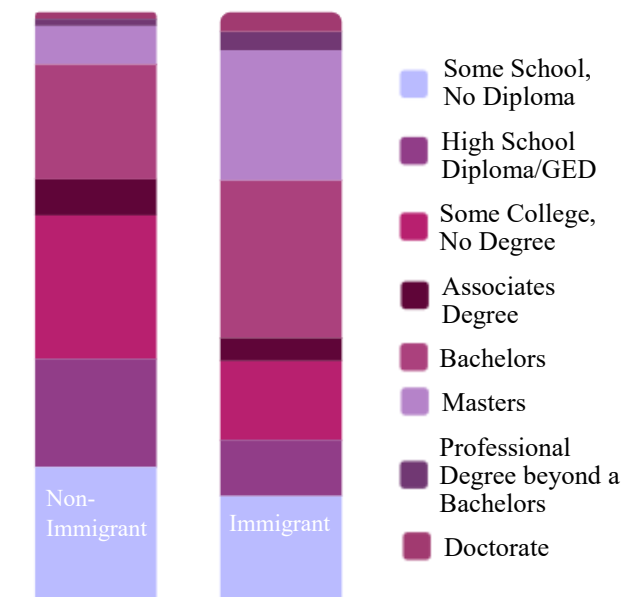
Immigrants made up **6.9%** of the county's overall population; they represented **5.7%** of its working-age⁷ and **7.8%** of its employed labor force.

In 2019, immigrants played a major role in the workforce by helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil. Those living in the county held:

682

local manufacturing jobs

McLean County's immigrant residents are highly educated. In 2016, **55%** held a Bachelors Degree or higher, compared to **28.2%** of the Non-Immigrant population.



Luz

Owner and Operator of Luz’s Market,
Normal, IL

Luz immigrated to the U.S. from the Congo in pursuit of higher education. “My husband went to ISU and studied in the college of business,” stated Luz. With her undergraduate degree in finance, Luz is currently working towards her MBA in Chicago. “I moved to Bloomington-Normal in 1996,” Luz remarks, and she hasn’t looked back.

There is a relatively large community of African immigrants in McLean County. “We work together as a community and as a family. We are all very close,” noted Luz. She takes pride in her culture and wants to share it with whoever is interested. “While it’s impossible to pass down certain aspects of our culture to our children, I try to show them as much as possible.”

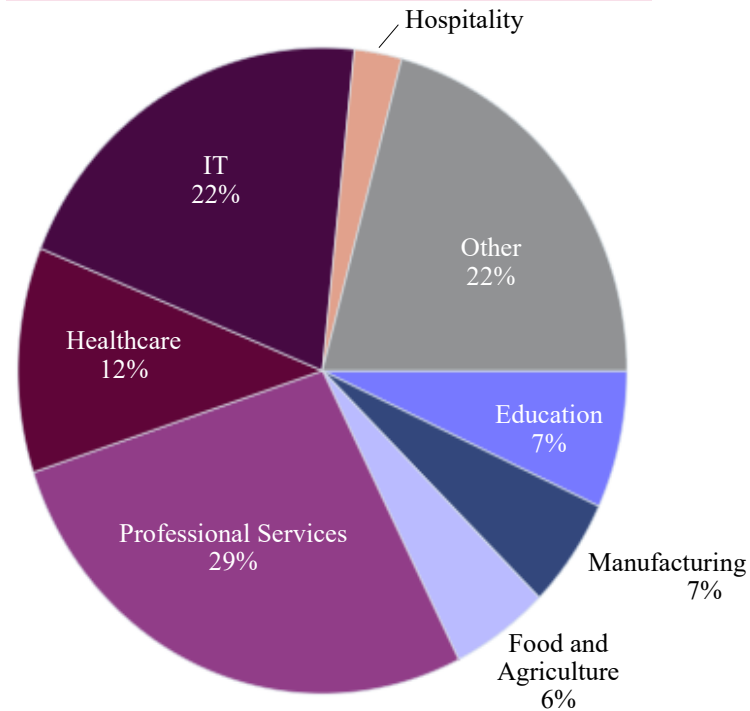
Luz is a mother of 5 and mentioned that Bloomington-Normal is a perfect place for her family. She states that “education is very important to my family and me,” and McLean County is perfectly placed in the center of the action. While it is a small community, it is surrounded by many opportunities.

As *Luz’s Market* owner and operator for 12 years, Luz finds an enormous sense of satisfaction and comfort in her business and community. Uninterested in leaving McLean County anytime soon, Luz notes the extensive Congolese support system she has in Bloomington-Normal, which has helped her become so successful. “I am working on my MBA for my personal business,” stated Luz.

When she first arrived, Luz mentioned that “Bloomington was a small place where everyone knew everyone.” She has come to love the college town vibes and misses the atmosphere when the students go home during the summer.

“I am a leader; I can say that,” realizes Luz. As a pillar of hope, she wants others who are interested in pursuing their dreams to “just do it, don’t think negatively.” She encourages others coming to McLean County to keep an open mind and share their experiences with others. This open communication can help break down the barriers that people in her community face and create an inclusive and welcoming environment where we all can succeed.

In McLean County immigrants tended to concentrate in these **occupations** in 2019:

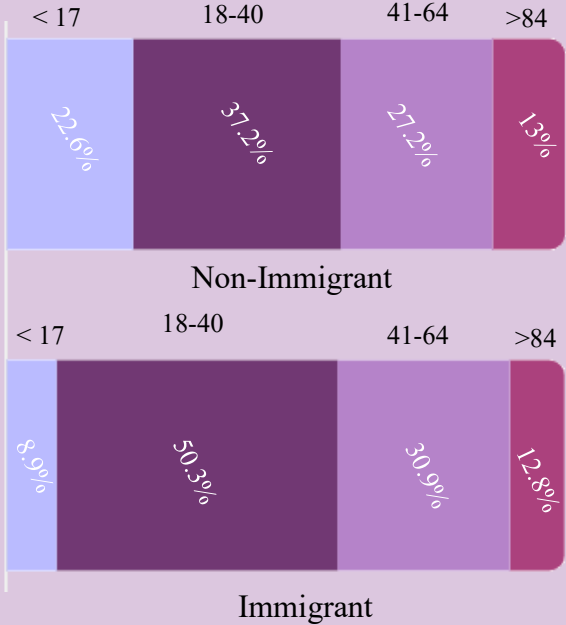


Top 15 Careers of Immigrants In The County

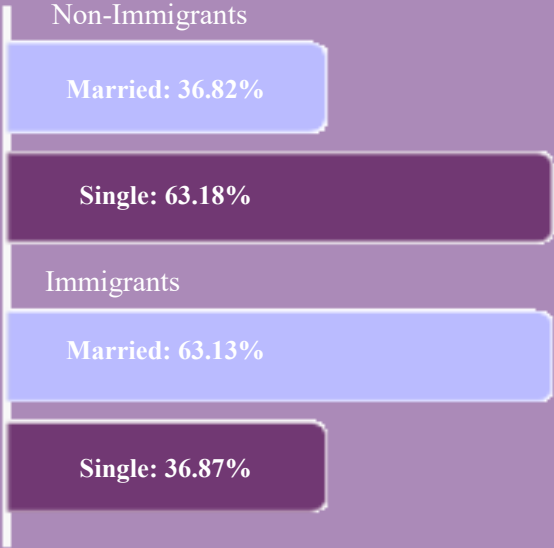
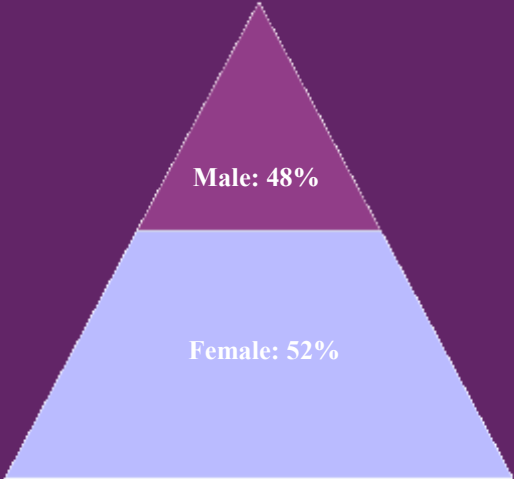
1. Software Developers
2. Computer Systems Analysts
3. Postsecondary Teachers
4. Computer Programmers
5. IT Specialists
6. Registered Nurses
7. Physicians
8. Management Analysts
9. IT Managers
10. Tax Preparers
11. Direct Support Professionals
12. Cooks
13. Electricians
14. Maintenance
15. Cashiers

GENDER, MARITAL STATUS, & AGE

In McLean County the immigrant population is more likely to be between the ages of 18-64 than the non-immigrant population



Females make up 52% of the Immigrant population, following similar trends of the rest of the county.



Marital Status:

Immigrants are more likely to be married than non-immigrant residents in McLean County

BN Welcoming and the Stevenson Center at Illinois State University want to give a special shoutout to all the community members that made this project and county so amazing.

Data Source: Household surveys of county residents conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.



1. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2015 and 2019 and figures refer to McLean County, Illinois. The term “immigrant” is defined as anyone born outside the U.S. to non-U.S. citizen parents who is living in the U.S. and counted in the Census.
2. The 2015 estimates come from the American Factfinder, the U.S. Census Bureau.
3. These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants’ share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2019 and the statistics of GDP from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.
4. U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2021. “The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes. 2018.”
5. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. “Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States.”
6. Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
7. The working-age population refers to persons aged 16 through 64.