

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NEW AMERICANS IN KENT COUNTY



New report shows immigrants in Kent County:

EXCEEDED
\$1.6 BILLION
IN SPENDING POWER &
\$4.9 BILLION (9%)
OF TOTAL GDP

PAID
\$492.7
MILLION
IN TAXES

DROVE **29.4%**
OF TOTAL
POPULATION
GROWTH

BACKGROUND: Released by the Grand Rapids Chamber and American Immigration Council, this new report underscores the crucial role immigrants play in the region's labor force, business creation, and consumer spending power.

- The report is part of an initiative by the Chamber's West Michigan CEO Council to drive economic prosperity and growth for the region through immigration and inspire the business community and policymakers to look at immigration as a force for good and a real solution to workforce needs.
- It is aligned with the Kent County Welcome Plan and one its goals, maximizing the economic potential of New Americans.

WHAT'S THE STORY:

- **Immigrants are helping the county meet its labor force demands.**
In 2019, immigrants were 27.3 percent 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.
- **Immigrants support the federal safety net.**
In 2021, they contributed \$192.3 million to Social Security and \$47.8 million to Medicare.
- **Immigrants are helping Kent County meet its rising labor needs in key industries.**
While making up 8.9 percent of the county's overall population in 2019, immigrants represented 53.1 percent of agriculture workers, 15.3 percent of construction workers, and 14.8 percent of transportation and warehouse workers.
- **Immigrants in Kent County help create or preserve local manufacturing jobs.**
Immigrants strengthened the local job market by allowing companies to keep jobs on U.S. soil, *helping preserve or create 2,600 local manufacturing jobs* that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.
- **Immigrants in Kent County are less likely to be entrepreneurs than national counterparts.**
In the county, immigrants were 27.2% less likely to be an entrepreneur than their U.S.-born. Nationally, immigrants are 31.2% more likely to be self-employed than native-born.

"Talent and population growth are top issues for business," said Rick Baker, President & CEO of the Grand Rapids Chamber. "Cities and regions do not grow without immigration and without this report. This data will help make the case to a broader audience. Led by our CEO Council, this report will drive initiatives to support a thriving West Michigan."



GO DEEPER:

Scan the QR code to read the full research brief.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NEW AMERICANS IN KENT COUNTY



OUR GOAL:

The new report on the economic impact of New Americans in West Michigan is powerful research demonstrating how immigration positively impacts our economy.

Inspired by the Kent County Welcome Plan, the Chamber's West Michigan CEO is working to provide leadership and inspire the greater business community and policymakers to look at immigration as a force for good and a real solution to workforce needs.

To create more awareness of how immigration benefits West Michigan, we are excited to announce this update of the 2018 study on our foreign-born population's role as contributors to the workforce, economy, and as drivers of population.

WHAT CAN I DO NEXT:

Please share the link to this report, www.grandrapids.org/newamericans, with your colleagues, coworkers and fellow community members.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED WITH THE WELCOME PLAN?

The Welcome Plan is always accepting new members. This work is only possible because of community participation and engagement. If you would like to join, please fill out the brief Welcome Plan Engagement survey: www.kentcountynewamericans.org.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Please contact Omar Cuevas, Vice President of Investor & Corporate Relations for the Grand Rapids Chamber at omar@grandrapids.org.



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