

**Immigrants and Refugees in Buffalo**  
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### **What is the distinction between an immigrant and a refugee?**

Immigrants are people who have citizenship in one country but voluntarily set up permanent residence in another country. Refugees are people who are fleeing persecution or threat of death because of their politics, ethnicity or religion.<sup>i</sup>

### **How many immigrants reside in Buffalo?**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 12,856 people of foreign-born citizenship, living in Buffalo.<sup>ii</sup>

### **In recent years, from what countries have most immigrants come from in Buffalo?**

From 2003 to 2006, the highest numbers of immigrants have come from Canada. Yemen, India, China, and Ukraine complete the top five countries with the most immigrant representation in Buffalo.<sup>iii</sup> Germany, Mexico, and Italy also have immigrant representation in Buffalo.



### **What are significant characteristics of the immigrant population in Buffalo?**

From 2003 to 2006, 30 percent of the foreign-born population were younger than 18. This number exceeds the national number of 20 percent and 22 percent statewide. Related to the high number of young immigrants is the corresponding high prevalence (31%) of immigrants admitted under refugee and asylee status.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Where in Buffalo have immigrants settled?**

Working class immigrants have concentrated in Buffalo's gateway communities. Immigrant groups living there include Vietnamese, Somali, Sudanese, and Yemeni in Lackawanna. Larger groups of professional- class immigrants have settled in the suburbs, especially in neighborhoods around the University at Buffalo. Chinese and Indian immigrants make up a large number of this class.<sup>v</sup>

### **What has been the effect of immigrants at the University at Buffalo?**

Many immigrants are very connected to UB, either as faculty members or as students. The enrollment of foreign-born students has added a unique distinction to UB as the major public institution with the highest number (15.4%) of international students in the U.S.<sup>vi</sup>

### **What are the education levels of immigrants residing in Upstate New York?**

In 2000, 45% of immigrants aged 25 and over had a bachelor degree or higher.<sup>vii</sup> By contrast, only 23.2% of the region's native adult population had a bachelor's degree.

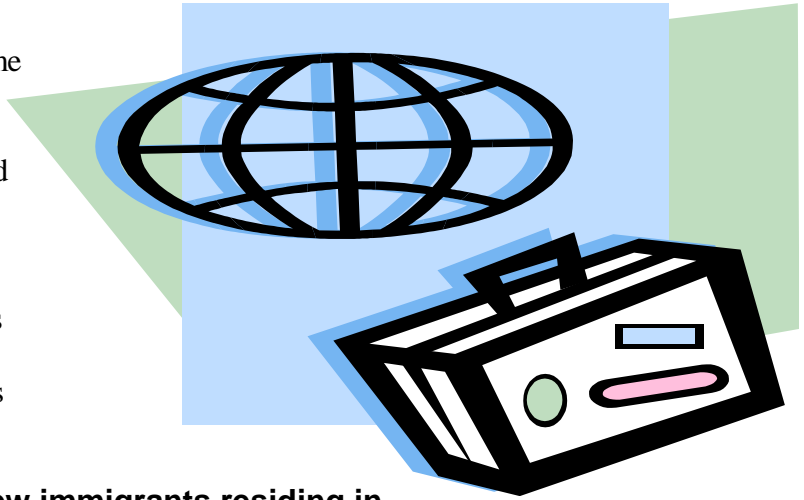
### **How are immigrants helping communities and economy of Buffalo?**

Immigrants are revitalizing gateway communities in Buffalo by residing in the city and first ring suburban neighborhoods that have been suffering from depopulation. This

boosts housing and retail markets in these districts. Immigrants are also filling work gaps as the work population decreases in Buffalo.<sup>viii</sup>

### **In what job areas do immigrants work?**

1. Post-secondary teachers
2. Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides
3. Physicians and surgeons
4. Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators
5. Registered nurses
6. Computer software engineers
7. Janitors and building cleaners
8. Cooks
9. Laborers and material movers
10. Other production workers<sup>ix</sup>



### **What are major concerns for new immigrants residing in Buffalo?**

- New arrivals who do not speak English need language-training programs in schools.
- Immigrants need help finding suitable housing. Many immigrants live in poor housing conditions because of financial and accessibility issues.<sup>x</sup>
- New arrivals need access to transportation and driving education.<sup>xi</sup> Driving is a sign of wealth, so many of the new immigrants want a car as soon as possible without fully understanding the law and procedures that are associated with owning a car and maintaining a valid driver's license.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Which organizations help immigrants transition to living in Buffalo?**

- International Institute of Buffalo: It is the mission of the International Institute of Buffalo to assist immigrants, refugees, and others who face linguistic and cultural difficulties to become self-sufficient members of the Buffalo community. Specific services include: interpretation and translation, education programs, domestic violence programs, legal assistance with citizenship concerns, and language classes. 5,618 immigrants benefited from International Institute's services in 2006.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Journey's End Refugee Services: This community-based organization has a mission to "to welcome refugees to Western New York without regard to ethnic origin or creed and to assist them to become healthy, independent, contributing members of the community." Specific services include: resettlement (housing, food, and clothing essentials), employment, immigration, interpretation, and education. Journey's End Refugee Services serves 300 to 400 refugees annually.<sup>xiv</sup>



- Catholic Charities: This organization provides human services in a number of areas and includes a branch for immigration and refugee assistance. Specific services include: housing assistance, interpretation, language instruction, job development, employment placement, and assistance with immigration/citizenship applications.<sup>xv</sup>
- Hispanics United of Buffalo (HUB): This organization is targeted towards the empowerment of the Hispanic population in Buffalo. Services include addressing issues of: homelessness, domestic violence, joblessness, language barriers and suicide prevention.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **What cultural barriers make it difficult for refugees to get and retain jobs?**

Many of the refugees were living in refugee camps until migrating to Buffalo. In these camps, time was not regulated. In working for an employer, many immigrants find the time-orientation very challenging. A similar problem involves calling employers in situations where the worker is going to be late or will not be able to make it in that day.<sup>xvii</sup> In many of the foreign countries that the immigrants come from, a worker needs only come in late or the next day and explain what had caused the problem. This issue might be related to lack of communication devices in the country of former residence. Another problem is the lack of understanding of how business is conducted in the United States. The staff members of Journey's End conducted an informal survey of some of their clients and found that many had not even used money for commercial activities in their countries. Many had simply bartered for their necessary goods.<sup>xviii</sup> Training and cultural orientation is essential in educating immigrants about the U.S. employment and business system.

### **What role does the Federal law play in helping immigrants and refugees?**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin. To enforce this law, the federal government requires federal agencies and all local governments and non-profit agencies that receive federal funds to develop a system in

which persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can get access to services and programs. The U.S department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document in order to help the agencies comply with the law: "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency".<sup>xix</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Source: Immigration into America: Visa Glossary -<http://www.visabureau.com/america/america-visa.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> Source: <http://www.census.gov/>

<sup>iii</sup> The Regional Institute

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<sup>vii</sup> Orr, 10. [This number includes six metropolitan areas of upstate New York: Albany-Schenectady-Troy, Buffalo-Niagara, Rochester, Utica-Rome, Syracuse, and Glen Falls.]

<sup>viii</sup> The Regional Institute

<sup>ix</sup> Orr, 13. [This number includes six metropolitan areas of upstate New York: Albany-Schenectady-Troy, Buffalo-Niagara, Rochester, Utica-Rome, Syracuse, and Glen Falls.]

<sup>x</sup> The Buffalo Institute

<sup>xi</sup> Interview with Becky, Executive Director at Catholic Charities.

<sup>xii</sup> Interview with Elaine, head of volunteer services at Journey's End.

<sup>xiii</sup> Source: International Institute of Buffalo-<http://www.iibuff.org/>

<sup>xiv</sup> Source: Journey's End Refugee Service- <http://jerswny.org/>

<sup>xv</sup> Source: Catholic Charities- [http://www.ccwny.org/service\\_details.php?nID=74](http://www.ccwny.org/service_details.php?nID=74)

<sup>xvi</sup> Source: Buffalo Rising-[http://www.buffalorising.com/story/hispanics\\_united\\_of\\_buffalo](http://www.buffalorising.com/story/hispanics_united_of_buffalo)

<sup>xvii</sup> Elaine, Journey's End

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<sup>xix</sup> Source: Federal Guidelines on Language Access Rights: <http://www.lep.gov/faqs/faq.html>