Immigration, Jobs, Crime, and Workforce Availability: How Does Immigration Affect Ohio and the USA?

Sydney Schreiner, PhD Candidate
Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, The Ohio State University

Mark Partridge, Swank Professor of Rural-Urban Policy
Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, The Ohio State University

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy

Mark Partridge

Dr. Mark Partridge is the Swank Chair of Rural-Urban Policy at The Ohio State University. Professor Partridge is Co-Editor of the *Journal of Regional Science* and the *Springer Briefs in Regional Science* as well as serves on the editorial boards of nine journals, including *Papers in Regional Science and Annals of Regional Science.* He has published over 140 peer-reviewed scholarly papers, scores of other reports, and coauthored the book *The Geography of American Poverty: Is there a Role for Place-Based Policy?*

His research has been recently rated the highest ranked in the world in regional science. He has consulted with organizations and governments around the world and served on a National Academy of Sciences panel on defining rural areas. Partridge has received research funding from many sources including the Appalachian Regional Commission, Brookings Institution, European Commission, Infrastructure Canada, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, U.S. National Science Foundation, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. epartment of Agriculture, and Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His research includes investigating rural-urban interdependence and regional growth and policy. Partridge served as President of the Southern Regional Science Association, North American Regional Science Council and is the 2019-2020 President of the Regional Science International Association is Fellow of the Southern Regional Science Association and Fellow of the Regional Science Association International and was 2016 Chair of the North American Regional Science Council. He is winner of the Boyce Award for Service to Regional Science and the Isard Award for Research in Regional Science.
E-mail: *partridge.27@osu.edu*

Sydney Schreiner

Sydney Schreiner is a PhD Candidate in Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics at The Ohio State University and the Research Associate for the C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy. She received a B.A. in Economics from Davidson College and a M.S. in Agricultural Environmental, and Development Economics from The Ohio State University. Her research interests lie at the intersection of regional and urban economics, labor economics, and the economics of education. One arm of her research focuses on understanding the labor market payoffs to college coursework, and a second arm explores how local labor market conditions and incentives in metropolitan areas affect new business formation and residential location choice.
E-mail: *schreiner.77@osu.edu*

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About the C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy

The C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy is a nationally and internationally recognized research and outreach program focused on priority issues related to rural and urban communities and their growth and prosperity. It is named after Dr. C. William Swank who was long-time Executive Director of the Ohio Farm Bureau and served on numerous state and national public-service committees.

Led by Professor Mark Partridge, the Swank Program combines innovative approaches in economic theory, planning, advanced statistical research, and geographical information systems to create products that can be used by the academic community, stakeholders, policymakers, students, and the public. In turn, the Swank Program will help inform and facilitate teaching and student research at Ohio State and elsewhere.

The Swank Program conducts and supports research, teaching, and outreach within the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center; and Ohio State University Extension.

Learn more about the C. William Swank Program on Rural-Urban Policy at:
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Executive Summary

The contentious debate over U.S. immigration policy has persisted since at least the mid-19th century even though the country is largely considered a nation of immigrants. Political discourse on the issue has increased in recent years driven in part by the nationalist platform that was the focal point of President Trump's 2016 campaign. The public's concerns about the socioeconomic effects of immigration coupled with academic studies on the topic have often produced contradictory views that in turn lead to a lack of a common vision regarding the role of immigration and the best policies to achieve those goals.

In this policy brief, we aim to contribute to this debate by discussing existing evidence of the effect of immigration on socioeconomic outcomes for natives, by describing the landscape for immigration in the United States and Ohio, by comparing President Donald Trump's and President-Elect Joe Biden's immigration proposals, and by highlighting research to inform improved policy.[1]

We describe how existing studies in the economic literature find that immigrants in the United States have a relatively small effect on the wages of natives, with any winners likely exceeding any losers. Such a finding is intuitive. For example, picture a growing city with large numbers of people moving in. One normally does not think of the new migrants as taking jobs away from existing residents. Rather, they are typically thought to create economic opportunity, and it is unclear why the origin of the migrants, domestic or international, would matter. Similarly, immigrants are no more likely to commit crimes than natives and have a relatively smaller impact on the tax burden of natives today than in earlier decades (it typically takes five years of U.S. residence before immigrants qualify for most welfare programs).

We show that while the U.S. immigrant population has greatly grown in recent decades, this growth has slowed considerably since the Great Recession. Further, Americans' attitudes towards immigrants have improved significantly over time. In addition, we show that spatial distribution of the U.S. immigrant population has shifted over time and that today's immigrant population looks very different with respect to educational attainment, labor market outcomes, and industry and occupation of employment depending on the part of the country being considered. For example, Ohio's immigrant population is more educated, more likely to work in high-skill sectors, and less likely to be undocumented than the average American immigrant.

President Trump based much of his 2016 election campaign on grievances towards immigrants, and immigration played a large role in his Administration's policymaking. Yet, although there will be new a President, immigration will remain a controversial issue going forward, just as it has been in recent decades and during much of the country's history. Thus, to highlight the policy disagreements that will continue to frame the debate, we explain key differences between President Trump's skill-based immigration proposal and President-Elect Biden's plan based more on family unification and admitting refugees. President Trump's proposed plan is rooted in a points system based on immigrant skills and age and involves a major overhaul of the deportation process. In contrast, President-Elect Biden's plan is focused on supporting

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[1]At the time of writing this policy brief, it was still officially President-Elect Biden and President Trump.

immigrants in the United States by providing resources to help with language barriers and financial management. In addition, family unification will remain foundation of the immigration system under President-Elect Biden's plan, but it is unclear the degree to which undocumented immigrants will be deterred from entering the country under the plan, which lacks clear sanctions for organizations that employ them (at least at the time of this writing). Without clear sanctions on the employers of undocumented immigrants, it is difficult to see how their in-flow will be deterred.

In conclusion, while the evidence suggests that the net effect of immigrants on American society is largely positive, especially in the long-run, the debate about immigration policy is likely to continue until citizens and policymakers can agree on the proper goals for the national immigration system and implement a system that is not viewed as creating significant social change at a pace that seems too rapid for large numbers of Americans.

I.   Introduction

The United States has long been considered a nation of immigrants. Yet, the country also has an extensive history of periods of rising nativism driven by concerns about the socioeconomic effects of immigration on society, especially for "natives" (i.e. those born in the U.S.) Such concerns are elevated as the share of the foreign-born population has steadily increased over time. Recent years are another such period and immigration policy has been the focus of an enormous amount of political discourse in part due to the nationalist "America First" platform on which President Donald Trump centered his 2016 campaign, a platform he continued to strongly advocate for while in office and during his reelection campaign. Moreover, evidence from the academic literature about the socioeconomic effects of inflows of immigrants is not always clear, which contributes to the public debate.

The ongoing heated debate is stoked by President Trump's strong views that immigrant flows are too high. In blunt language, he claimed that immigrants pose a threat to the American way of life. He has threatened to deport at least one million immigrants with removal orders from judges.[2] In addition, the President argues that too few immigrants are employed in high-skilled sectors, underpinning his proposal to shift the current immigration system away from a focus on family reunification and instead towards favoring immigrants with higher skills, more education, and an appreciation of American civics."[3] While this debate largely occurs at the national level, Ohioans are certainly affected by its outcomes.

The undocumented immigrant population has generally received the most public attention. Supporters of ramping up deportations to reduce the undocumented immigrant population claim, among other things, that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs owed to lawful citizens. Figure 1 shows the undocumented immigrant share of the labor force by state in 2016. Given the high immigrant shares of the labor force in mainly coastal states, expelling undocumented immigrants from the country would severely disrupt about one-half of the states' economies, if not more.[4] Unquestionably, the national economy would also suffer in the resulting structural transition.

Though the concept of "amnesty" for undocumented immigrants is very controversial for a variety of reasons (including the perceived unfairness to *illegal* immigrants who went through the lengthy legal process), it is hard to see how "kicking them all out of the country" can be practically entertained given the socioeconomic disruption it would cause if carried out abruptly. Certain industries like construction, landscaping, and s segments of agriculture would be especially adversely affected. Moreover, agriculture in key states like California and Florida would be particularly affected due to their relatively large demands for foreign-born labor.

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[2]www.newsweek.com/top-trump-immigration-official-says-ice-begin-deporting-1-million-undocumented-immigrants-1447925

[3] https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-modernizing-immigration-system-stronger-america/

[4] Removing 3.2 to 10.6 percent of the labor force in half of all states (Figure 1) would be extremely disruptive both socially and economically to those states and to the nation as a whole.

Large foreign-born shares of the labor force coupled with the fact that these states tend to grow labor-intensive crops, like fruits and vegetables, indicates that wide-scale deportation would present a crushing burden to their farmers. Rising U.S. consumer demand for these fruits and vegetables means that the U.S. would then be forced to import more food. These facts underscore the infeasibility of deporting workers for important economic sectors.

Figure 1. Undocumented Immigrant Percent of Labor Force, 2016

[0.2,1.6]
(1.6,3.2]
(3.2,4.8]
(4.8,10.6]
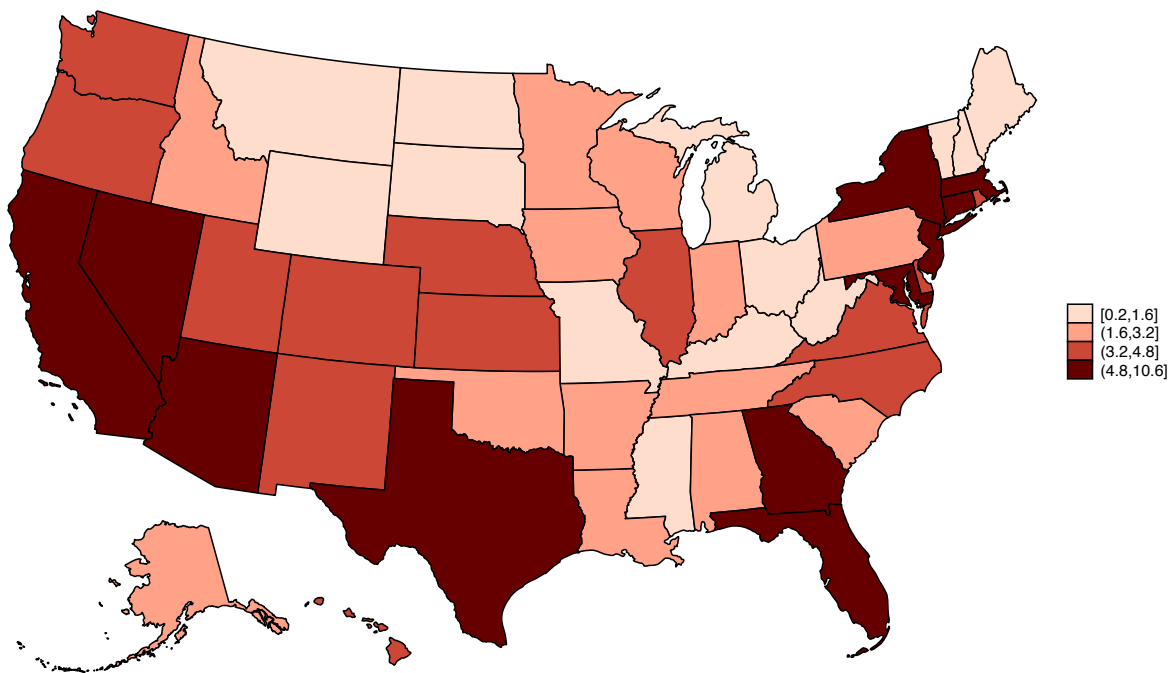
Source: 2016 Pew Research Center Estimates

Of course, there are two sides to the immigration policy debate. Many believe the United States should provide amnesty to undocumented immigrants who have been in the country for a lengthy period of time and pay a fine for not initially registering. More generally, these people typically believe that the nation should continue to welcome immigrants, citing the fact that the U.S. is a nation of immigrants, highlighting their historical contributions. Others who favor more restrictive immigration policies (or changes in policy) believe the government should deport undocumented immigrants, citing concerns about potential negative effects they could have on the economy and on the wellbeing of native-born citizens and legal immigrants. The goal of this brief is to describe the U.S. immigrant population (both legal and undocumented) and to assess the potential impacts of both of these broad-based policy agendas.

We begin by providing a summary of what research has found regarding how the size of the immigrant population influences factors such as labor-market outcomes of native workers and crime. In general, immigrants nationally:

- Have a relatively small effect on the wages of natives in local labor markets

- Are no more likely to commit crimes than their native counterparts

- Affect the tax burden of natives to a lesser extent today than before the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (i.e., Welfare Reform) greatly limited benefits to undocumented immigrants and some legal immigrants.

Next, we describe the size and the characteristics of the immigrant population and how they evolved over time at both the national and the Ohio levels. We do this by comparing important socioeconomic outcomes between native and immigrant populations and by exploring how the role of immigration has changed across time.

We show that compared to the average American immigrant, Ohio's immigrants:

- Are more educated (especially relative to the native population)

- Are more likely to work in white-collar"occupations and high-skill sectors

- (Those with earnings) earn more but in general are more likely to be out of the labor force

- More likely to be Asian, European, and African and less likely to be Latin American

- Are less likely to be undocumented

- Those who are undocumented work in similar industries and occupations as undocumented immigrants nationally

We conclude by discussing common myths associated with the expanding U.S. immigrant population. We provide an overview of President Donald Trump's and President-elect Joe Biden's competing visions of immigration policy reforms and explain how such changes would affect Ohio. The evidence suggests that Trump's proposals are impractical given their extreme nature, but Biden's proposals have their own shortcomings. For example, it is difficult to see how undocumented immigrants will be deterred from entering the United States without clear employer sanctions for employing them, yet the business community's resistance to strict sanctions would likely be a political barrier. Overall, it is unclear whether either proposal would achieve a long-term immigration compromise.

II.   Immigration and Socioeconomic Outcomes for Natives

Before discussing national and Ohio-level immigrant trends and characteristics, it is useful to review current research regarding about how immigrants affect U.S. natives.

We discuss the research literature's conclusions regarding two specific concerns frequently cited by the media and by policymakers: whether or not immigrants affect labor market outcomes for natives (i.e. do high levels of immigration affect native-worker wages and do immigrants take jobs from natives) and whether immigrants are more likely to commit crimes.

Immigrants and Labor Markets

The effects of immigration on U.S. labor market outcomes natives has been widely studied by economists. Much of the extensive interest is due, in part, to a series of early studies that found smaller-than-expected or negligible effects of immigration on the wages of natives in specific U.S. local labor markets (Card, 1990; Altonji and Card, 1991; Card, 2001). In some sense, these results are surprising because the common notion is that increased labor supply would reduce wages, all else equal. Since immigrant labor has historically been less-skilled than average, it seems reasonable to then infer that wages for low-skilled native labor would especially decline. So, subsequent studies sought to explain *why*, contrary to the predictions of economic theory, why are these effects so small?

These studies argue that the small effect of immigration on labor market outcomes for native workers can be partially explained by imperfect research designs (Angrist and Krueger, 1999) or by sampling errors in measuring the amount of immigrant labor (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011).

Card (2009) argues that small effect can be explained in part by the fact that immigrants and native workers are imperfect substitutes that is, the type of work immigrants do is different from the work that natives do. One could imagine stereotypes such as native workers do not want to undertake the backbreaking work of shingling houses or picking crops. As a result, an increase in the immigrant workforce should not affect outcomes for natives because immigrants do not directly compete with natives for jobs. Similarly, Lewis (2010) shows that manufacturing plants in areas that experienced an influx of less-skilled immigration labor in the 1980s and 1990s invested in less machinery than those without immigration waves. He argues that because of the ease of substitutability between low-skill (immigrant) labor and machinery, there are smaller effects on the wages of native-born workers.

Another reason that has been hypothesized for relatively small wage effects is that immigrants and native workers are often complements in the workplace. This means that by working together, native workers and immigrants raise each other's productivity (Ottaviano and Peri, 2006). For example, it may the case that more diverse firms are more innovative because their workforce has differing perspectives. Another example is that companies with immigrants would have better knowledge of their origin country's markets and business cultures for exports, or other forms of trade.

Following the work of Harvard economist George Borjas, Partridge, et al. (2008) find that natives migrate away from of areas that experience influxes of immigrants, with a larger response in rural areas. The mechanism appears to be that influxes of local immigrants reduce local wages with native workers moving elsewhere in search of higher wages. Because this outmigration of native workers offsets the increase in

labor supply from the in-migration of immigrants, local wages do not significantly change. However, it is important to note that in contrast to the studies mentioned above, Borjas (2003) finds larger, negative effects of immigration on wages when examining immigration's effects on the broader, national labor market instead of focusing on specific local labor markets. Taking Partridge et al. (2008) and Borjas' findings together, although wages for natives do not appear affected by changes in the supply of immigrants when comparing high-immigrant communities to low-immigrant communities, larger immigrant waves could drive down national wages overall for workers who compete with immigrants- especially low-skilled U.S. workers. Yet, such findings are not necessarily universal.

Immigrants and Crime

In addition to labor market effects, economists have also studied the influence of immigration on crime, a topic concerning those in favor of restrictive immigration policies. Yet, almost all studies find little or no effect of immigration on crime, and in studies that do find an effect, the effect is closely linked to the labor market opportunities available to immigrants.

Butcher and Piehl (1998) find that recent immigrant flows have no effect on U.S. crime rates. They also find that foreign-born youth are less likely to be criminally active than their native counterparts. In a more recent study, Miles and Cox (2014) find that the Secure Communities program, a policy intended to increase the detention and deportation of immigrants, had no effect on the overall crime rate. They argue their findings suggest the marginal detained immigrant is a less frequent and a less serious offender than the typical marginal prisoner.

Bell, Fasani, and Machin (2013) examine the effects of two waves of U.K immigrants. The first wave had significantly fewer labor market opportunities for the new immigrants than either natives or those in the second wave. They find a positive effect of the first wave on property crime and a small, negative effect of the second wave. The authors find that neither wave was related to violent crime and to differences in arrest rates.

Using provisions of the U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Freedman, Owens, and Bohn (2018) find that immigrants' inability to find employment increases their propensity to engage in criminal behavior. The studies underscore the importance of access to legal job opportunities in the settlement of immigrants.

A related concern is whether immigrants influence crime rates in sanctuary cities. Sanctuary cities are cities where municipal laws protect undocumented immigrants by limiting the ability of local law enforcement to cooperate with federal immigration authorities, especially in terms of identifying undocumented immigrants for deportation. When considering crime in sanctuary cities relative to other cities, note the fundamental trade-off inherent in the existence of sanctuary cities. On one hand, sanctuary cities make it difficult for the federal government to enforce immigration laws, so, if undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit crimes, we would expect higher sanctuary-city crime rates. On the other hand, even if the propensity of undocumented

immigrants to commit crimes is no different than for natives, we could instead see higher crime rates in non-sanctuary cities if fear of deportation prevents the local immigrant community from engaging with police-e.g., they may be reluctant to report crime or cooperate with authorities if they fear deportation. Although few studies empirically examine this issue, those that do find either no effect or a negative effect of sanctuary areas on crime (Martinez, Martinez-Schuldt, and Cantor 2018).

Overall, there is little evidence immigrants affect the job prospects and wages of natives or are linked to greater crime. Keep these findings in mind as we discuss national and state-level characteristics of the immigrant population and later on when we review President Trump's and President-Elect Biden's competing immigration reform visions.

Immigrants and Government Welfare Expenditures

Those favoring more restrictive immigration policies often argue that immigrants could indirectly harm natives by increasing their taxes because of immigrant dependence on costly welfare programs. Welfare Reform or formally, "The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996" (PRWORA) changed U.S. social welfare policy, affecting both natives and immigrants. As a result, it is important consider how Welfare Reform affected immigrant welfare dependence before and afterwards in order to better understand the reform's impact how these effects continue today.

Borjas and Hilton (1995) find that in the early 1990s, 20.7% of immigrant households received cash benefits, Medicaid, Food Stamps, or housing subsidies. This compared to 14.1% of native households and 10.5% of white, non-Hispanic native households. They further find that immigrants participated in means-tested programs longer than natives as a result of both longer and more frequent welfare spells. These patterns illustrate that concerns regarding how immigrants may exacerbate the tax burden on native residents are not unreasonable.

To address these concerns, the 1996 Welfare Reform denied welfare benefits to most legal immigrants during their first five years in the country. However, backlash against these provisions caused the federal government to restore eligibility for some programs to child, elderly, and disabled immigrants, and some states use their own funds to support poor immigrant families who are denied federal benefits (Kaushal, 2005). As a result, today's social safety net for immigrant families varies widely across states.

Recent studies quantify the extent that state welfare eligibility differences for immigrant families affect their wellbeing. Kaushal (2005) finds that benefit eligibility and generosity has little effect on which state newly-arrived immigrants choose to reside   i.e., immigrants do not select residence based on welfare programs. Likewise, Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky (2016) find that low-income, Latino and Asian immigrant youths are more likely to graduate from high school in states with a broader social safety net for immigrants and that this effect persists among non-natives beyond those who actually receive benefits together suggesting positive spillovers within immigrant local communities. Given the restrictions that Welfare Reform placed on immigrant

eligibility for welfare benefits, the corresponding native tax burden is significantly smaller today than before, though the effects vary by each state's specific social safety net for immigrant families. However, the benefits of increased immigrant access to welfare are large and spill over to others who do not receive them, suggesting that the net social benefits of expanding these benefits to immigrants are larger than they may appear at first glance.

## III. The Landscape for U.S. Immigration

U.S. Immigration rates have been historically high, even before independence. Despite historically high immigration rates, there have been periodic waves of anti-immigrant sentiment, including those against Irish immigrants in the mid-19th century and against Italians and other southern European immigrants in late 19th and early 20th centuries. The post-World War I era was a period of such anti-immigrant fervor, leading to President Coolidge signing the Immigration Act of 1924, which set up strict national quotas that favored Northern Europeans, who by that time were no longer inclined to immigrate to the U.S. Besides becoming more Caucasian, overall immigration to the U.S. slowed to a trickle.

Immigration began to increase once again when President Johnson signed the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. The act significantly increased legal immigration, especially immigration based on family unification, and allowed a much larger share of immigrants from non-western European countries. The act lead to a steady rise in the foreign-born population since the mid-20th century. For example, 44.5 million immigrants made up 13.7% of the total population in 2017, compared with only 9.6 million immigrants accounting for just 4.7% of the total population in 1970 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Foreign-Born Population and Foreign-Born Share of Total U.S. Population, 1850-2017
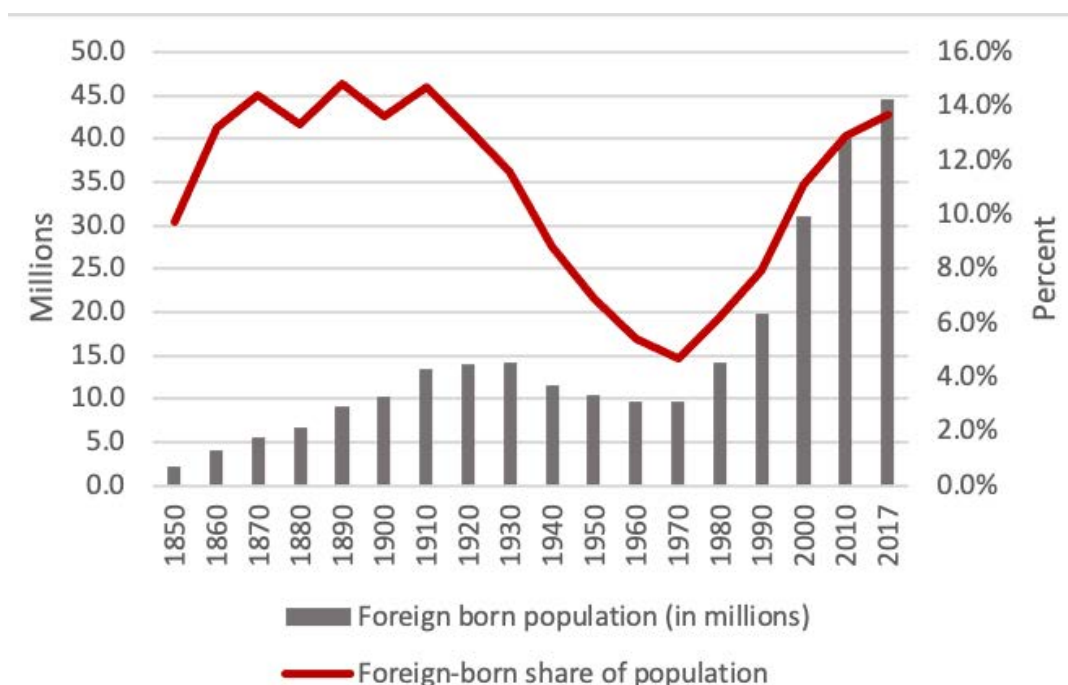
Source: 1850 to 2000 Census of Population, U.S. Census Bureau, and the 2010 and 2017 American Community Survey

Figure 3. U.S. Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth (in millions), 1970-2010
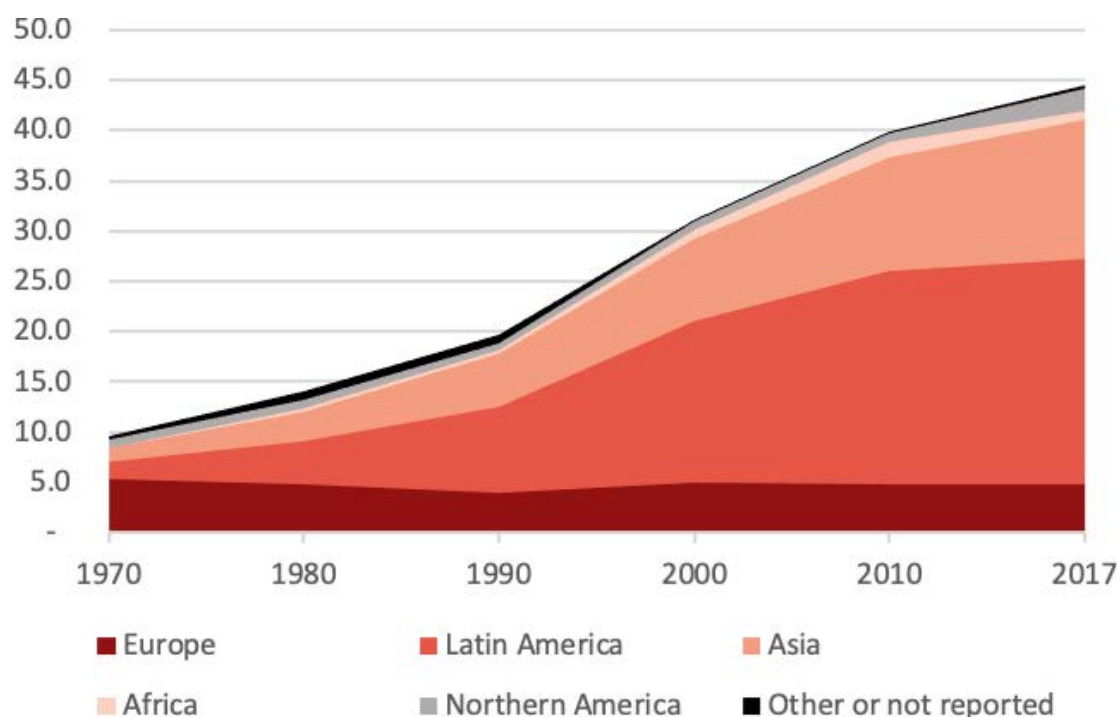
Source: 1970 to 2000, Census of Population, U.S. Census Bureau, and the 2010 and 2017 American Community Survey

As the immigrant share increased, their composition with respect to world region of origin also shifted. The majority of immigrants (55%) originated from European countries in 1970, but the share of European-born immigrants has declined ever since, reaching a low of just 12% in 2017. In contrast, the share of Latin American immigrants has significantly increased: Latin American-born immigrants made up just 19% of all immigrants in 1970 but accounted for 53% in 2017. Similarly, the share of Asian-born immigrants has increased as well, although not as rapidly as the Latin American share. In 1970, Asian immigrants made up 13% of the foreign-born population, but comprised just shy of 30% in 2017 (Figure 3).

The geographical distribution of immigrants within the U.S. has also shifted over time. In 1970, immigrants made up a larger share of the total population in western and northeastern coastal states and a relatively small share of the population in southern and central states (Figure 4a). Since 1970, immigrants made their way to the interior, and the geographic distribution of immigrants across the country is more dispersed (Figure 5). In absolute terms, the foreign-born share of the U.S. population increased from 1970 to 2017 in all states but two: Maine, which fell from 4.3% to 3.6%, and Montana, which fell from 2.8% to 2.1% (Figures 4b and 5). The foreign-born share grew the most in California and Nevada, jumping from 8.8% to 27% and from to 3.7% to 19.5%, respectively. Section IV discusses foreign-born individuals which made up 3.0% of Ohio's population in 1970 and 4.3% in 2017. Despite the 1.3 percentage point growth over this 47-year period, Ohio's foreign-born share lagged with respect to the rest of nation, with Ohio falling from the top half of the state distribution in 1970 to 12th from the bottom in 2017.

Figure 4a shows the percent of the state's population in 1970 that is foreign-born with states shaded by quantiles-i.e., four groups containing roughly 12-13 states in each group. Foreign-born individuals composed the smallest (largest) percent of the total population in states shaded tan (dark red). In contrast, the 1970 data is reproduced using the 2017 quantile distribution in Figure 4b to show how 1970 immigration patterns would look relative to today's higher shares. Then, Figure 5 reports the corresponding quantile distribution using 2017 data and the 2017 quantiles.

Figure 4a. Foreign-Born Share of Total Population, 1970 (1970 quantiles)
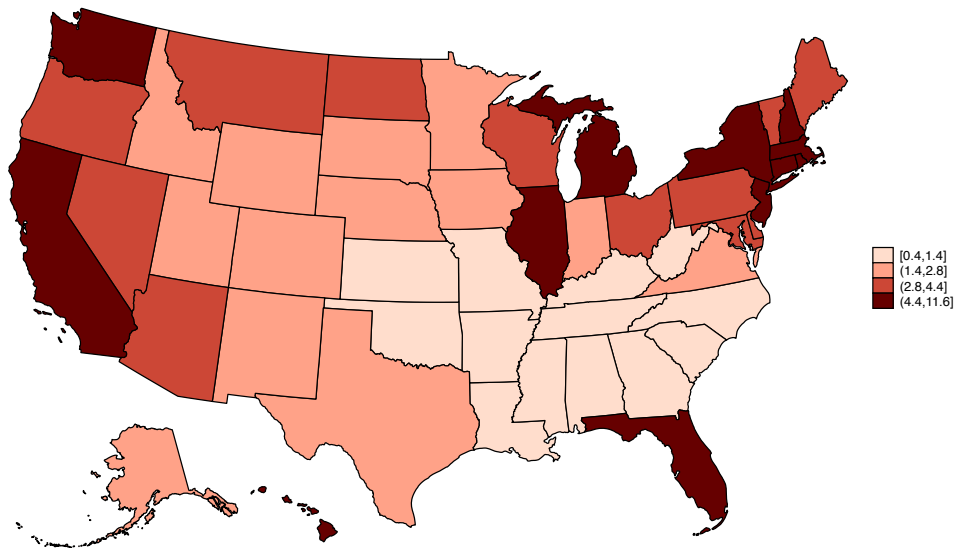
Figure 4b. Foreign-Born Share of Total Population, 1970 (2017 quantiles)
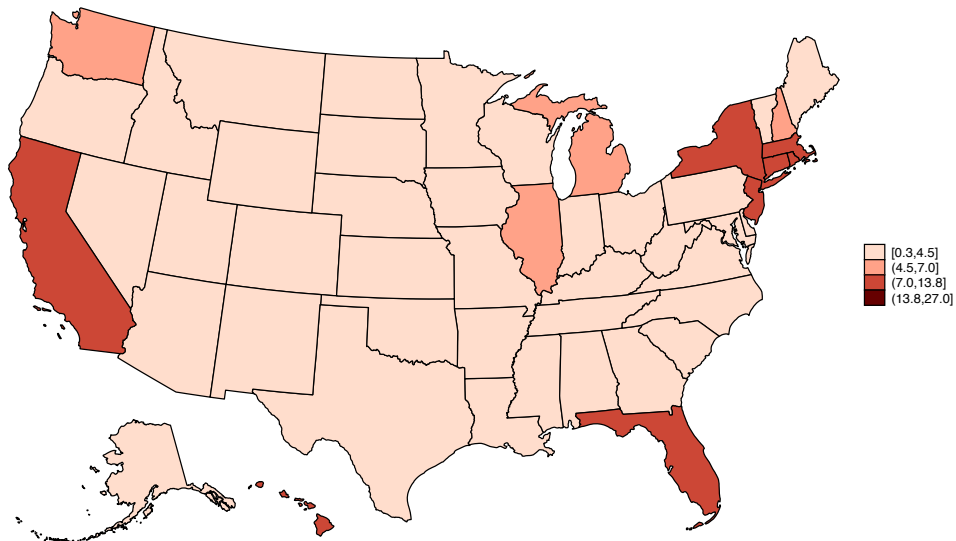
Source: 1970 Census of Population, U.S. Census Bureau

When comparing Figures 4a, 4b, and 5, the 1970 foreign-born share is clearly smaller (i.e. more tan) and the spatial variation is much greater in 1970 when 2017 quantiles are used (figure 4b)as opposed to Figure 5 that shows the 2017 shares by quantile. However, there are some similarities between Figures 4a (1970) and 5 (2017) in that western states, Illinois, Northeastern states, and Florida generally have the highest concentrations of immigrants.

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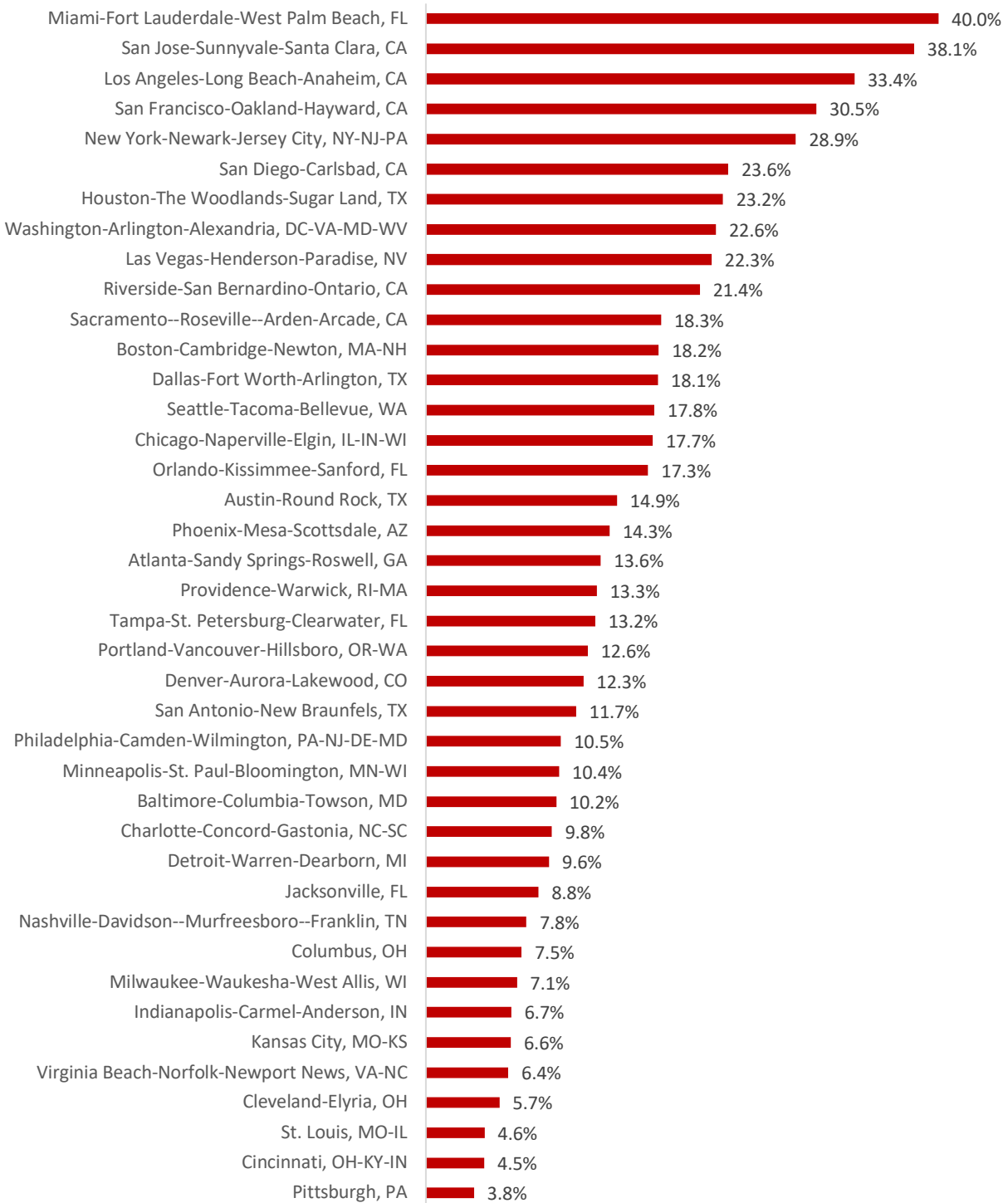
However, there are some similarities between Figures 4a (1970) and 5 (2017) in that western states, Illinois, Northeastern states, and Florida generally have the highest concentrations of immigrants.

In addition to examining how the immigrant population has changed over time at the state level, interesting patterns emerge when examining how the immigrant population is distributed across America's largest cities. Table 1 reports the 2017 foreign-born population share for the 40 largest U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). Immigrants are generally highly concentrated in MSAs in western and Sunbelt states like California, Florida, and Texas and are a smaller population share in Midwestern MSAs. Ohio's three largest MSAs, Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, rank 9th, 4th, and 2nd from the bottom, respectively, relative to the remaining 37 most populous U.S. MSAs.

Figure 5. Foreign-Born Share of Total Population, 2017 (2017 quantiles)
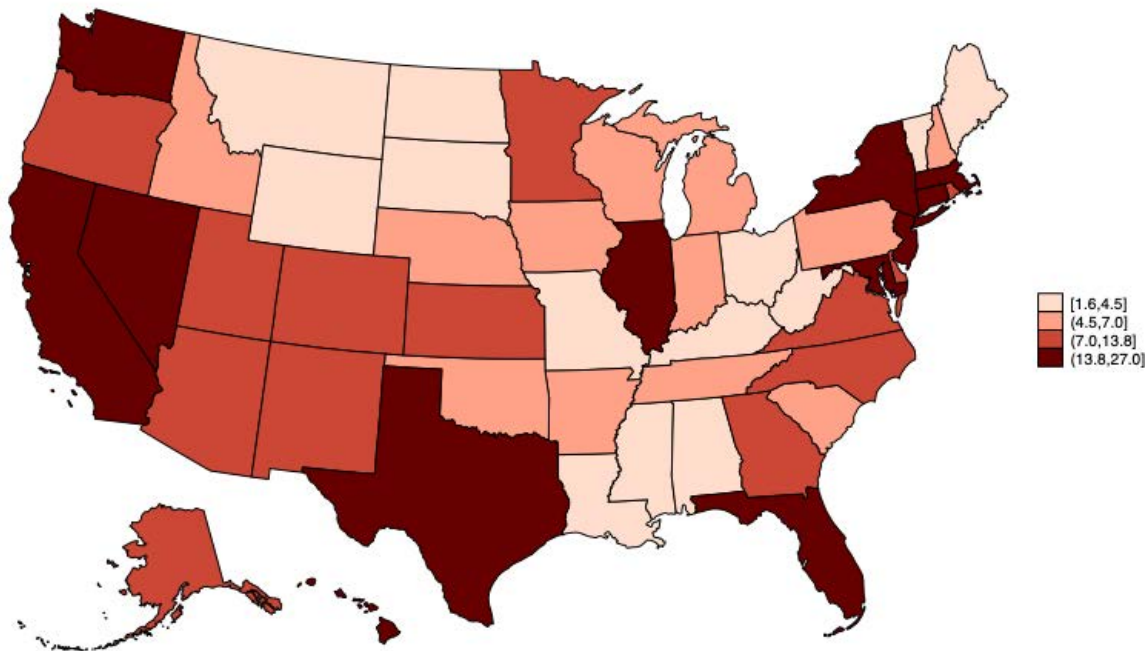
Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

Table 1. Foreign-Born Share of Total Population, 40 Largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas, 2017

Metropolitan Statistical Area	Share
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	40.0%
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	38.1%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	33.4%
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	30.5%
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	28.9%
San Diego-Carlsbad, CA	23.6%
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	23.2%
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	22.6%
Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	22.3%
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	21.4%
Sacramento--Roseville--Arden-Arcade, CA	18.3%
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	18.2%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	18.1%
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	17.8%
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	17.7%
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	17.3%
Austin-Round Rock, TX	14.9%
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	14.3%
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	13.6%
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	13.3%
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	13.2%
Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	12.6%
Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO	12.3%
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	11.7%
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	10.5%
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	10.4%
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	10.2%
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	9.8%
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	9.6%
Jacksonville, FL	8.8%
Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN	7.8%
Columbus, OH	7.5%
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	7.1%
Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN	6.7%
Kansas City, MO-KS	6.6%
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	6.4%
Cleveland-Elyria, OH	5.7%
St. Louis, MO-IL	4.6%
Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	4.5%
Pittsburgh, PA	3.8%

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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## Immigrant Educational Attainment and Skills

While understanding how the immigrant population is distributed geographically across the country is important for assessing its impact on outcomes for natives, it is equally important to develop an understanding of the demographic characteristics of the immigrant population. In particular, to assess the effects President Trump's or President-Elect Biden's proposed immigration policies that more favor highly skilled immigrants, it is important to understand the skill levels (i.e. educational attainment) of the current immigrant population.

The average educational attainment of the immigrant population varies across the country. Immigrants in southern states are typically less educated than their counterparts who reside in northeastern and upper Midwest states. Figures 6 and 7, respectively, show the percentage of the foreign-born population 25 years old and above in each state with less than a high school degree and a bachelor's degree or higher. Less-educated immigrants are a larger share of the total foreign-born population in western and southern states and a smaller share of the total foreign-born population in upper Midwest and northeastern states (Figure 6). Over 40% of immigrants in New Mexico, Nebraska, Arkansas, Idaho, and Texas have less than a high school degree.

In contrast, highly educated immigrants compose a larger share of the total foreign-born population in upper Midwest and northeastern states and a smaller share of the total foreign-born population in western and southern states (Figure 7). Over 40% of immigrants in the District of Columbia, West Virginia, Vermont, Ohio, Maryland, New Hampshire, Virginia, Michigan, and Delaware have a bachelor's degree or higher. Specifically, 42.3% of Ohio's immigrants have at least a bachelor's degree, putting it 4th in the nation behind Vermont, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Ohio is among the states that is the greatest benefactors of a "brain-gain" from immigration.

The fact that Ohio has a relatively educated immigrant population compared to other states is encouraging for improving economic growth, for spurring innovation, and continuing support high-skill jobs, especially given the state's relatively less-educated native population. Figure 8 shows the percentage of the native population 25 years old and above in each state with a bachelor's degree or higher. Ohio falls in the lowest quantile, with just 26.4% of the native population possessing a bachelor's degree or higher. The native population is also relatively less educated in Ohio's neighbors (Michigan, West Virginia, Illinois, and Kentucky), but this disadvantage is offset by their relatively more educated immigrant populations. Unlike Midwest states, southern states have an immigrant population that is *less* educated than natives, which further widens their already large native skill deficit relative to the rest of the country (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee).

Figure 6. Share of Foreign-Born Population 25 Years Old and Above with Less Than a High School Degree

Legend:
- [13.2,20.3]
- (20.3,27.5]
- (27.5,31.4]
- (31.4,44.8]
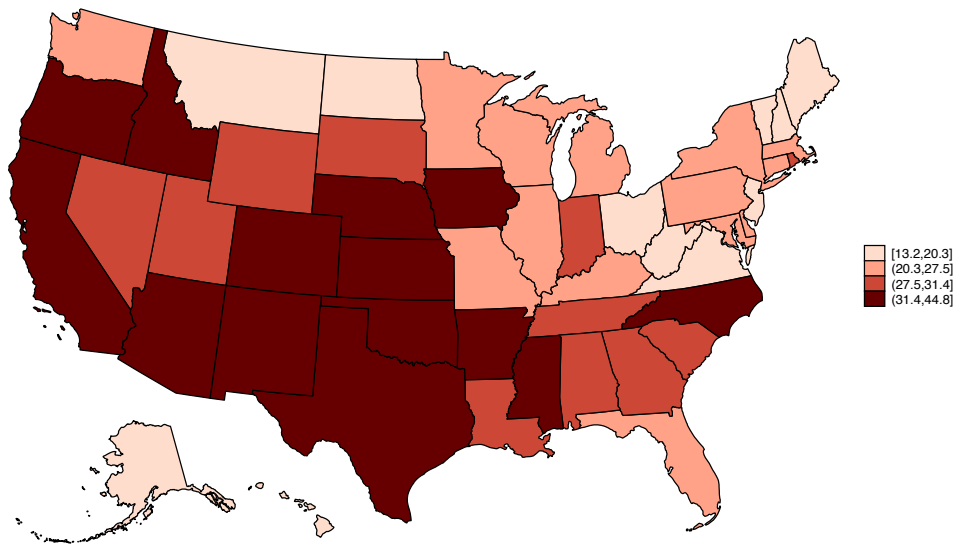
Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 7. Share of Foreign-Born Population 25 Years Old and Above with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Legend:
- [18.1,25.9]
- (25.9,30.0]
- (30.0,37.1]
- (37.1,54.1]
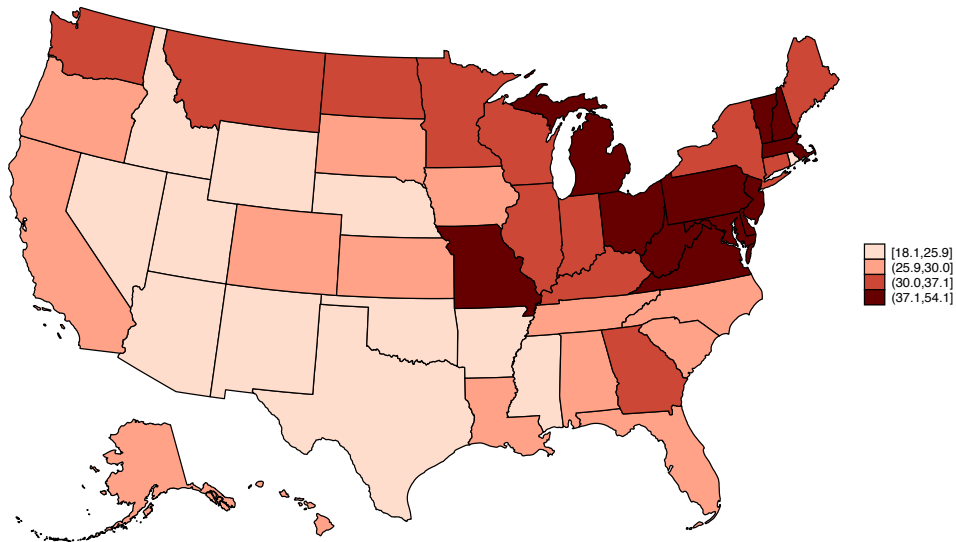
Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 8. Share of Native Population 25 Years Old and Above with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher
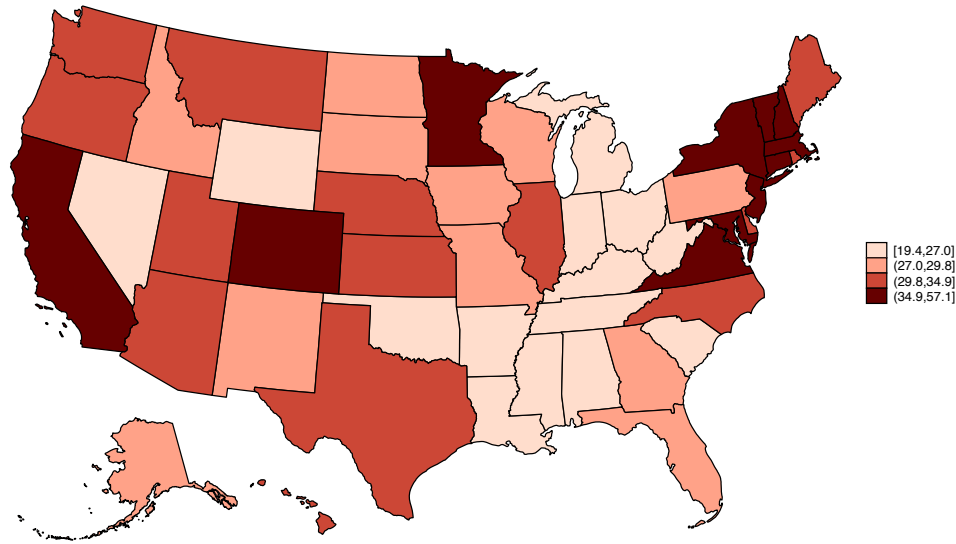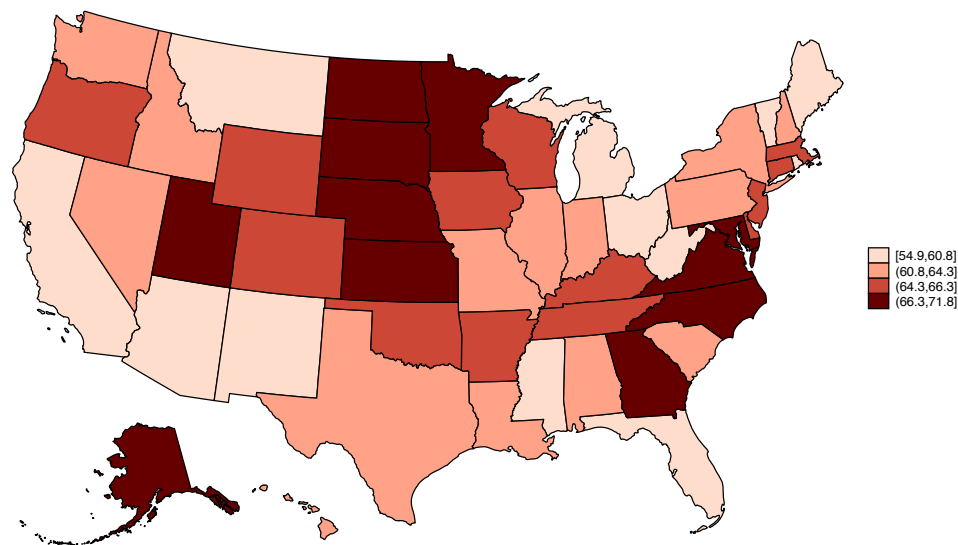

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Immigrants in the Labor Force

As immigrant educational attainment varies across the nation, so does the employed share of the immigrant population and the share of the immigrant population that is in the labor-force. Figure 9 demonstrates this geographical variation, showing differences in the employment to population ratio of the foreign-born population aged 16 and over. The employment to population ratio is the number of employed immigrants divided by the state's immigrant population 16 and over, allowing an easy comparison of the total number of employed immigrants with the total number of *employable* immigrants. Immigrants residing in East-coast and Plains states are more likely to be employed than those in the west or the south. Over 68% of all immigrants in North Dakota, District of Columbia, Alaska, Maryland, Virginia, and South Dakota are employed. In contrast, under 58% of immigrants are employed in Arizona, New Mexico, Michigan, Maine, Montana, and West Virginia. Ohio falls towards the bottom of the pack with 60.1% of immigrants employed, which is driven by a larger share of immigrants staying out of the labor force as opposed to having a larger share of unemployed immigrants (which would mean that these immigrants would be actively seeking work).

For comparison, Figure 10 shows the native employment-to-population ratio across states. Figure 10 clearly show that states with the highest (or lowest) employed shares of natives are geographically clustered: states with the largest (smallest) native employed share are located in the north-central (southeastern) U.S. However, Figure 9 shows that employment shares of immigrants are more dispersed. While some states with large shares of employed natives also have large shares of employed immigrants (e.g., Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska), others have small shares of employed natives and large shares of employed immigrants (e.g., Georgia

and North Carolina). States like Ohio, where the employed share of the native population (59%) is close to the middle (though immigrants are slightly more likely to be employed than native-born Ohioans).

Figure 9. Employment to Population Ratio of the Foreign-Born Population

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Note: The employment to population ratio is equal to the number of employed foreign-born people in the state divided by state's foreign-born population aged 16 and older.

Figure 10. Employment to Population Ratio of the Native-born Population
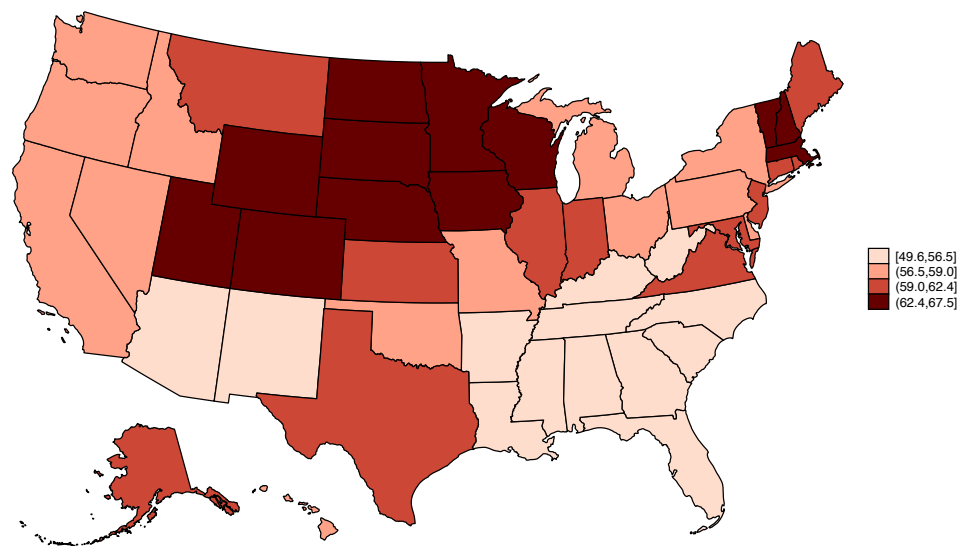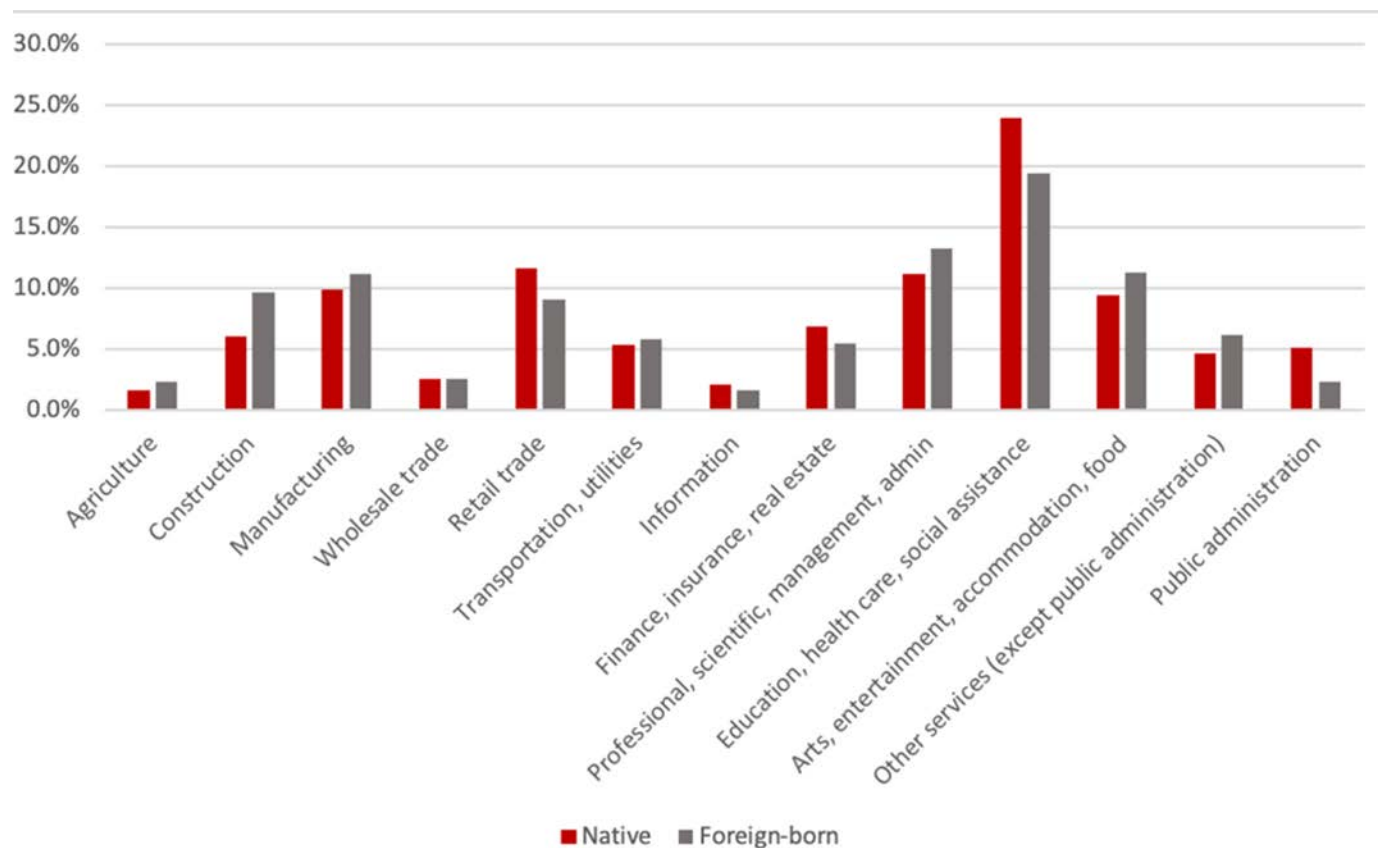

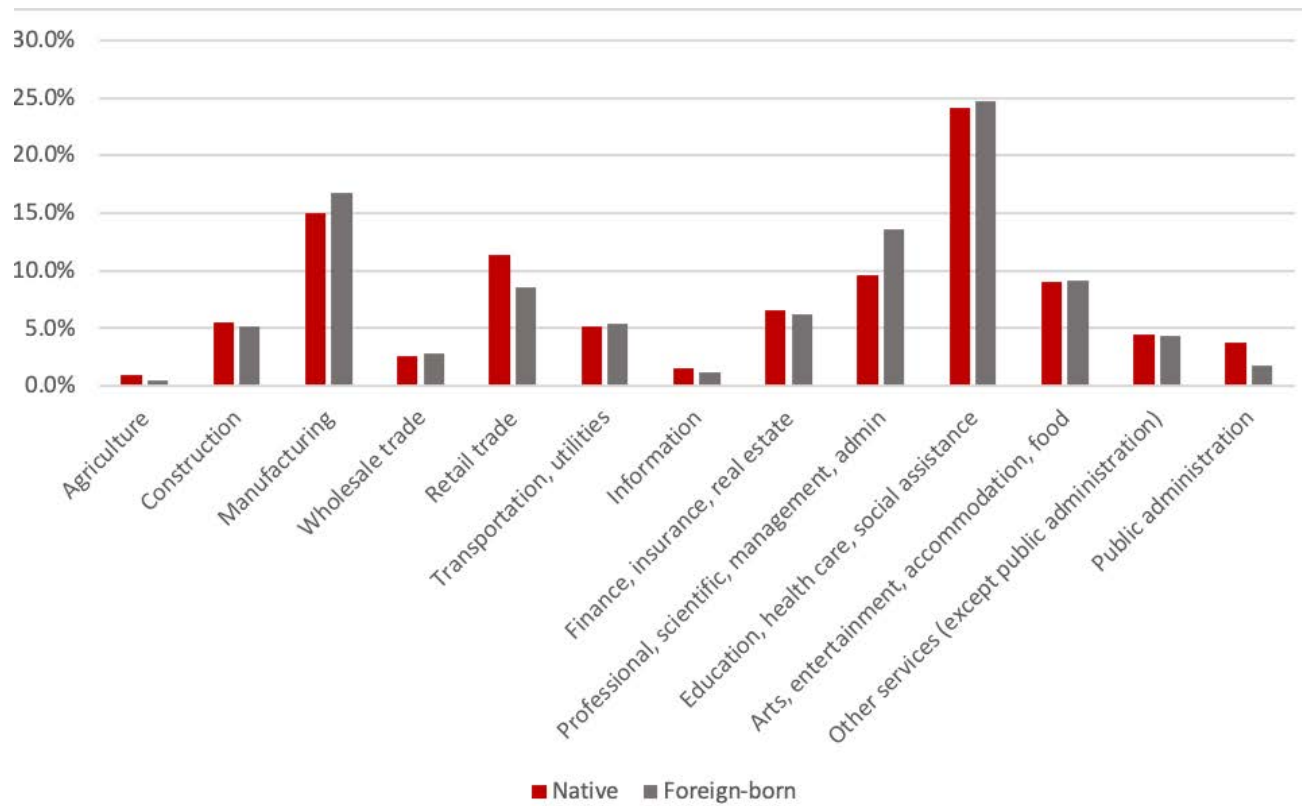Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Nationally, compared to natives, employed immigrants are more likely to work in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, transportation, professional and management services, and entertainment and food services (Figure 11). Similarly, they are more likely to work in service-production, transportation, natural resource, or construction occupations than natives (Figure 13). However, in Ohio, employed immigrants are more likely to work in education and healthcare in addition to manufacturing, transportation, and professional and management-service industries (Figure 12). Likewise, they are more likely to be employed in management, business, science and arts occupations than natives (Figure 14), which contrasts with the national pattern shown in Figure 13. This likely reflects Ohio's relatively educated immigrant workforce.

In addition, the relatively small share of immigrants employed in Ohio's agriculture sector is driven its heavy mechanization, meaning Ohio agriculture is less labor intensive. This is because Ohio's main crops (corn, soybeans) require less labor than (say) dairy and other livestock operations, as well as seasonal operations producing fruit and vegetables. The Midwest agriculture sector, like Ohio, is fairly mechanized. Michigan grows more specialty crops, like cherries and apples, than Ohio, but overall agriculture is less labor-intensive in the Midwest than as (say) in Florida and California

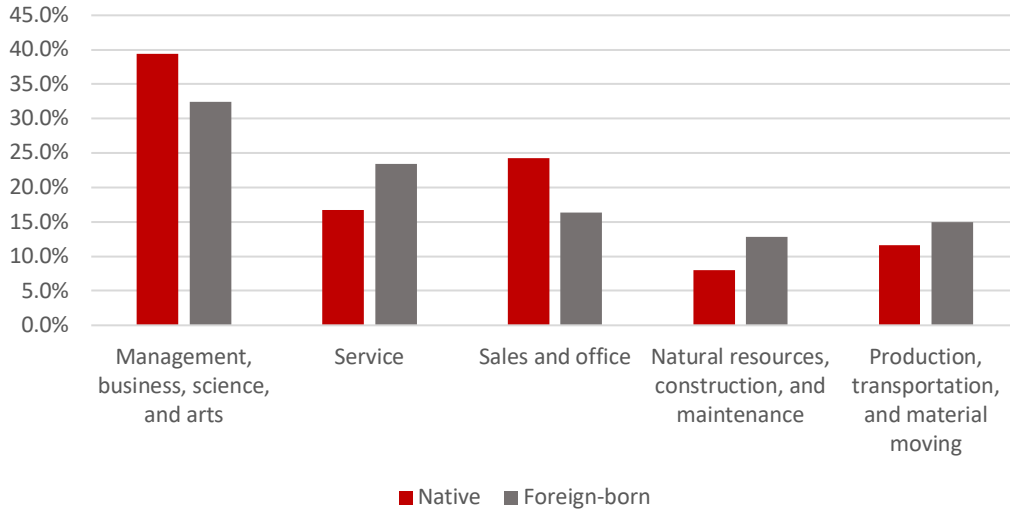**Figure 11. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Industry**

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

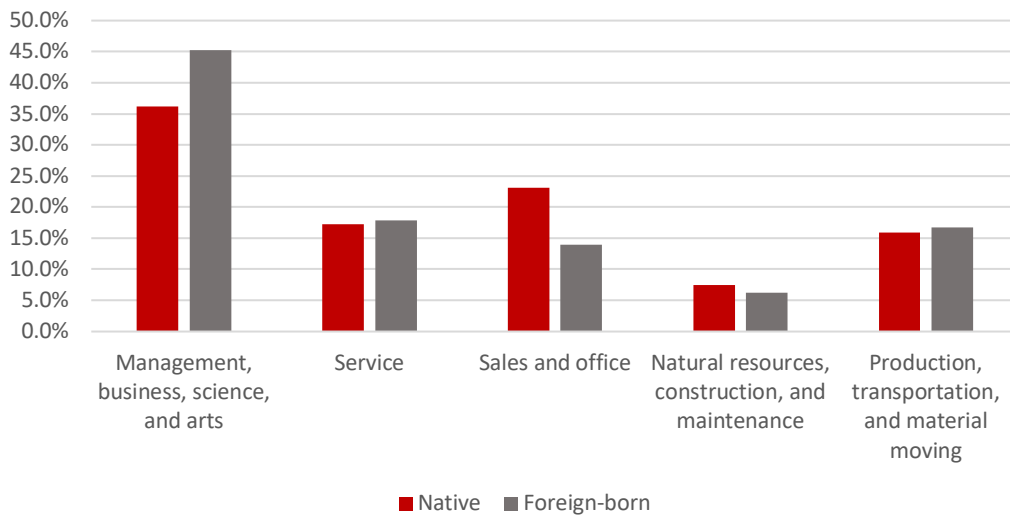**Figure 12. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Industry in Ohio**

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure 13. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Occupation in the United States

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure 14. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Occupation in Ohio
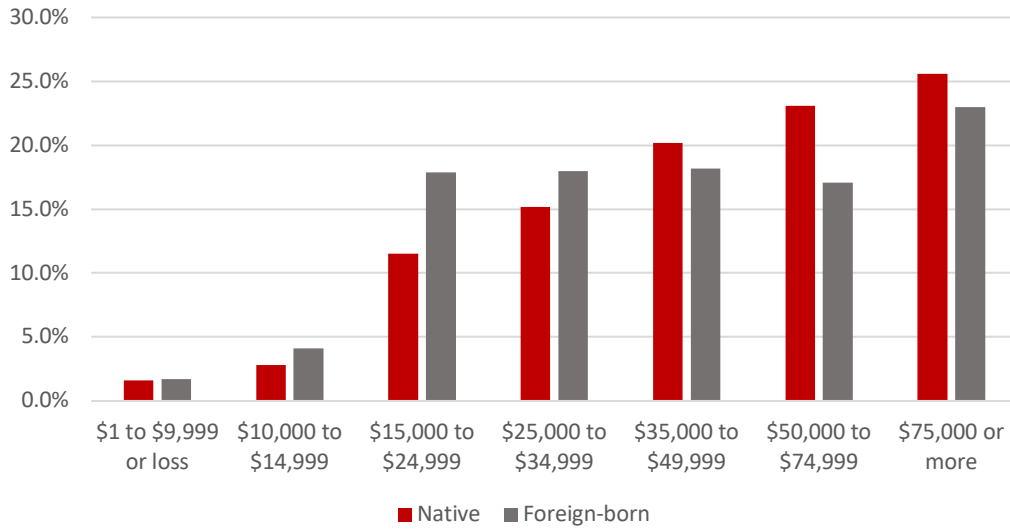

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Differences in both educational attainment and occupations/industries of work between immigrants and natives contribute to differing incomes (as well as English proficiency and years in the U.S.). Immigrants earn less average income than natives. Figure 15 shows distributions of earnings for native and foreign-born populations who are 16 years and older (with earnings) who work full-time and year-round).[5] The share of foreign-born workers who earn less than 35,000 annually (44.4%) is greater than the corresponding share of native workers (32.2%). However, the share of native workers who earn $35,000 or more annually (67.8%) is larger than the corresponding share of foreign-born workers (55.5%).

[5] Note: $75,000 is the largest earnings income group reported by the ACS.

Figure 15. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Annual Earnings

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

In contrast, Figure 16 shows Ohio's earnings distribution for immigrants is more U-shaped than nationally, meaning that immigrants are more likely than natives to be either at the bottom (in the less than $15,000 or $15,000 to $34,999 income buckets) or at the top (in the $75,000 or more income bucket) than their native counterparts.

Figure 16. Share of Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Annual Earnings in Ohio
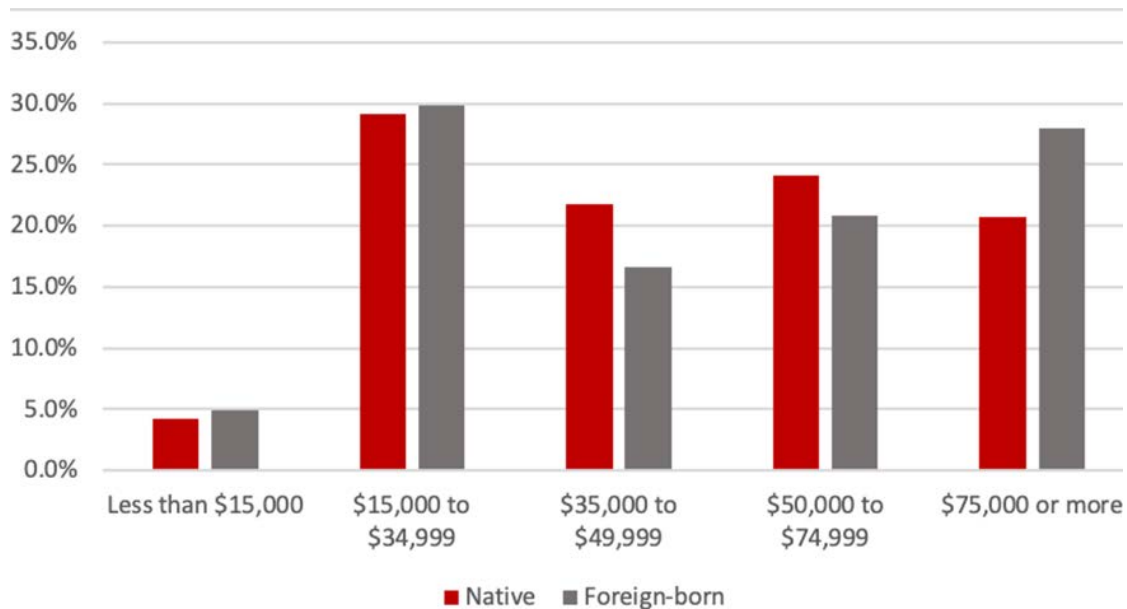
Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Undocumented Immigrants

Policymakers and the media have long highlighted the effects of undocumented immigrants. Some express concern that undocumented immigrants take jobs from and use resources intended for legal residents. Others express concerns that the path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants is fraught with unnecessary obstacles and that many are inhumanely treated as the process draws out.

Despite the uptick in public discussion in the Trump era, the number of undocumented immigrants began to decline well before his Presidency. The Pew Research Center estimated that 10.7 million undocumented immigrants lived in the U.S. in 2016, the lowest in a decade. They further estimate that the undocumented immigrant population decreased by about 1.55 million people from 2007 to 2016. Moreover, of the 15 states that experienced a statistically significant change in the number of undocumented immigrants from 2007 to 2016, the size of the undocumented immigrant population declined in all but three (Louisiana, Maryland, and Massachusetts).[6] Ohio did not experience a statistically significant change in undocumented immigrants from 2007 to 2016.

Figures 17 and 18 respectively show the percent of total population and of the immigrant population accounted for by undocumented immigrants in 2016. Overall, U.S. undocumented immigrants compose 3.3% of the total population and about a quarter of the immigrant population.[7] However, undocumented immigrants compose a larger share of the total population in coastal and southern border states and a smaller share in central and northern border states. At one end, undocumented immigrants represent 7.1% and 5.7% of the total overall population in 2016 in Nevada and Texas, respectively. At the other end, undocumented immigrants represent just 0.1% and 0.2%of the total population in Vermont and West Virginia, respectively.

In contrast, undocumented immigrants make up a larger share of the *immigrant* population in central and south-central states. 41% of Arkansas and Nebraska immigrants are undocumented versus only 4% and 9% in Vermont and Maine, respectively.

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[6] www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/
[7] www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/

Figure 17. Undocumented Immigrant Percent of Total Population, 2016
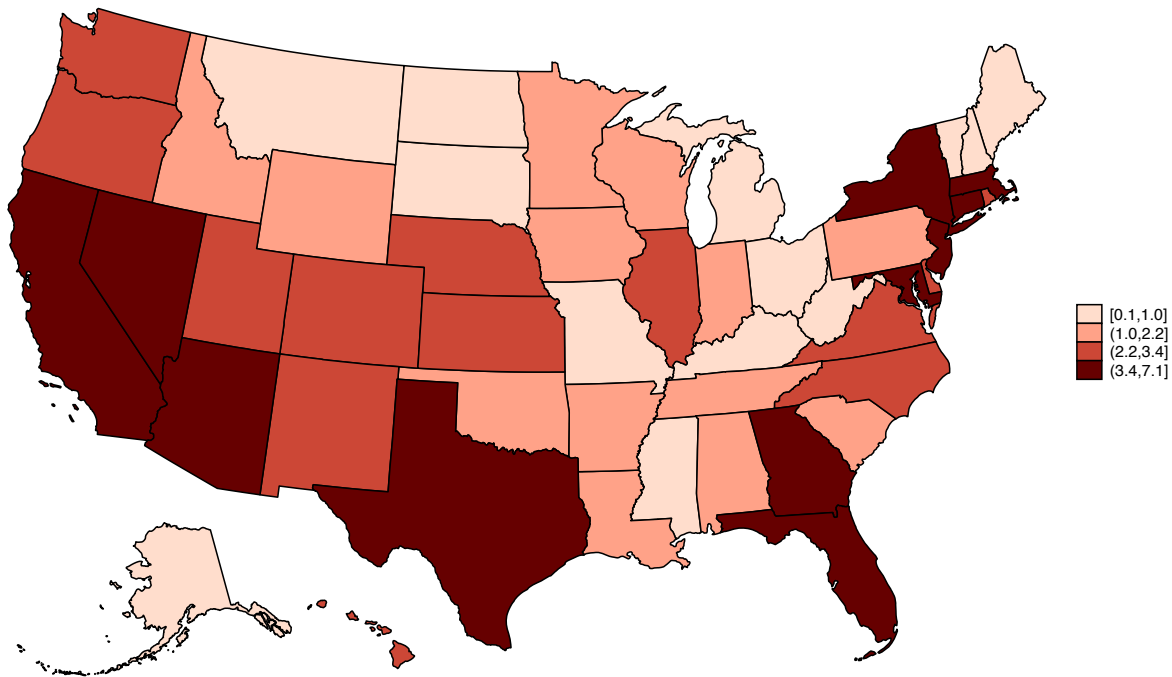
Source: 2016 Pew Research Center Estimates

Figure 18. Undocumented Immigrant Percent of Immigrant Population, 2016
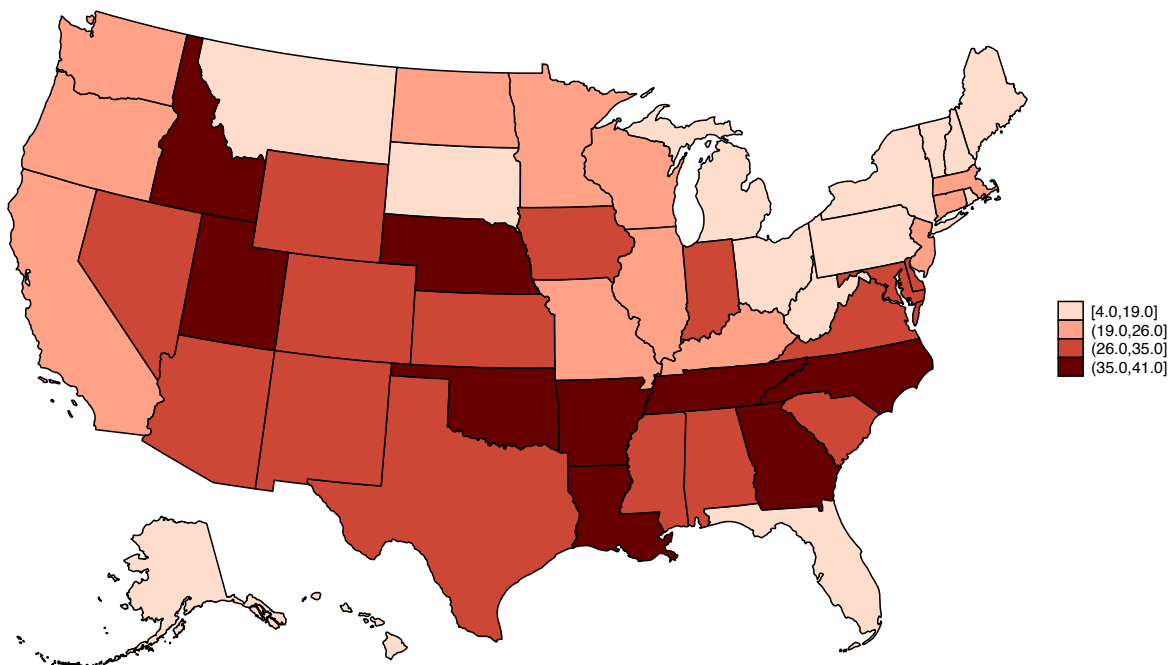
Source: 2016 Pew Research Center Estimates

Attitudes Towards Immigrants

With the wide geographical dispersion of immigration's role across the country and the sharp cultural and political divisions that rule, it is expected that attitudes about immig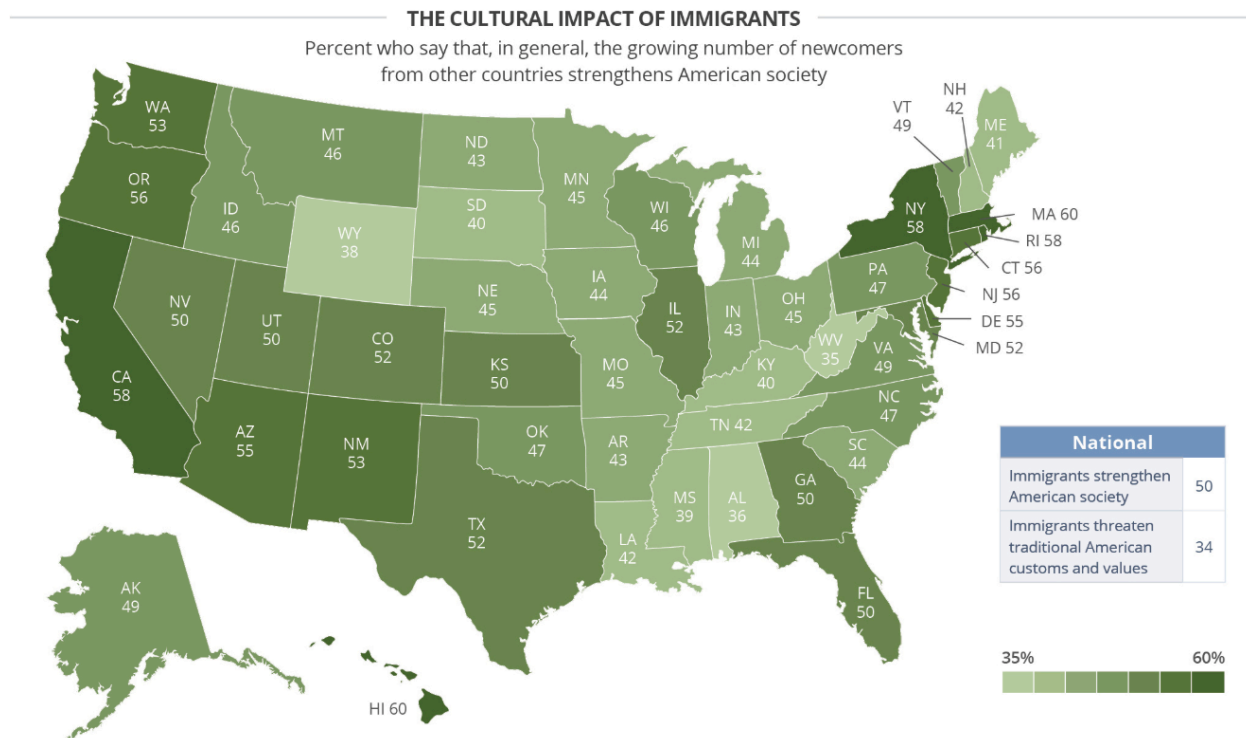rants also vary across the country. Indeed, Figure 19 shows how attitudes towards immigrants vary by state using a poll conducted by Public Religion Institute (PRRI). The map shows the percent of respondents in each state who say that the growing number of immigrant newcomers strengthens American society. Overall, perhaps reflecting wider divisions, about 50% of Americans said that immigrants strengthen American society versus 45% who said they do not.

In general, states with negative views of immigrants are in the Deep South, Appalachia, or in north-central states. States with larger immigrant shares "usually coastal or southern-border states" view that immigrants strengthen American society, i.e. states with larger foreign-born shares of the population (see Figure 4). Interestingly, for the states in red in Figure 17, i.e. states with highest shares of *undocumented* immigrants, the percent who say that the growing number of immigrants strengthens American society is less than or equal to the national average of 50%. Only 45% of Ohio respondents believe that newcomers from other countries strengthen American society, or 5 percentage points less than the national average.

However, on average across the United States, attitudes towards immigrants have improved significantly over time. According to a recent national poll by Gallup, 77% of Americans in 2020 think immigration is a good thing for the country relative to just 62% when Gallup began asking this question two decades ago.[8] In addition, recent poll from the Pew Research Center found that the percent of Americans who think immigrants are seen more as a strength than a burden to the country has also increased, rising from 31% in 1994 to 66% in 2019. Over three-quarters of Americans surveyed in 2020 believe that undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs that citizens do not want.[9]

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[8] www.news.gallup.com/poll/313106/americans-not-less-immigration-first-time.aspx
[9] www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ft_2020-08-20_immigrants_12/; https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/10/a-majority-of-americans-say-immigrants-mostly-fill-jobs-u-s-citizens-do-not-want/

Figure 19. The Cultural Views of Immigrants, 2015

THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS

Percent who say that, in general, the growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society

National	
Immigrants strengthen American society	50
Immigrants threaten traditional American customs and values	34

35%   60%

Source: PRRI 2015 American Values Atlas, https://www.prri.org/research/poll-immigration-reform-views-on-immigrants/

IV.   Immigrants in Ohio

Immigrants compose only 4.3% of Ohio's population, or the 12th-smallest foreign-born population share, far below the national average of 13.4%. Ohio's immigrant populations differ from the national immigrant population in a number of dimensions. Understanding the characteristics of Ohio's immigrant population will allow us to gain insight into how changes in national immigration policy could affect our state's communities.

Ohio's Immigrants by World Region of Origin
The composition of Ohio's immigrants by region of birth differs significantly from the U.S. as shown in the left two bars in Figure 20. Compared to the nation, larger shares of Ohio's immigrant population originate from Asia (42.6% vs. 30.5%), Europe (21.7%vs. 11.1%), and Africa (12.6% vs. 4.7%), with a much smaller share originating from Latin American (19.6% vs. 51.2%).

The rightmost bars in Figure 20 show how Ohio's immigrant composition by world region of birth differs from its neighbors. Ohio's region-of-birth distribution most closely follows Michigan, except Ohio has a much larger African share of immigrants (12.6% vs. 4.4%) and Michigan has a larger Asian immigrant share (50.7% vs. 42.6%). The region-of-birth distributions for Ohio's other neighboring states-Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania-are more akin to the overall U.S., except with slightly smaller Latin American immigrant shares and larger Asian and European immigrant shares.

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Figure 20. Foreign-Born Population Shares in the United States, Ohio, and Ohio's Neighboring States by Region of Birth, 2017
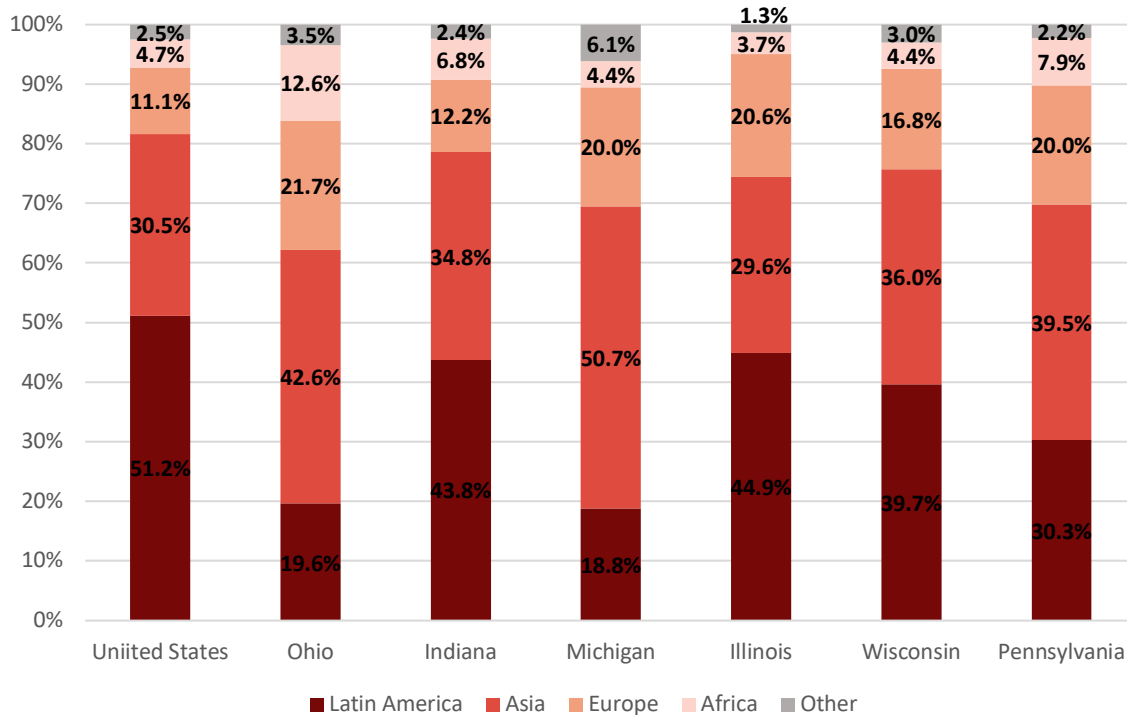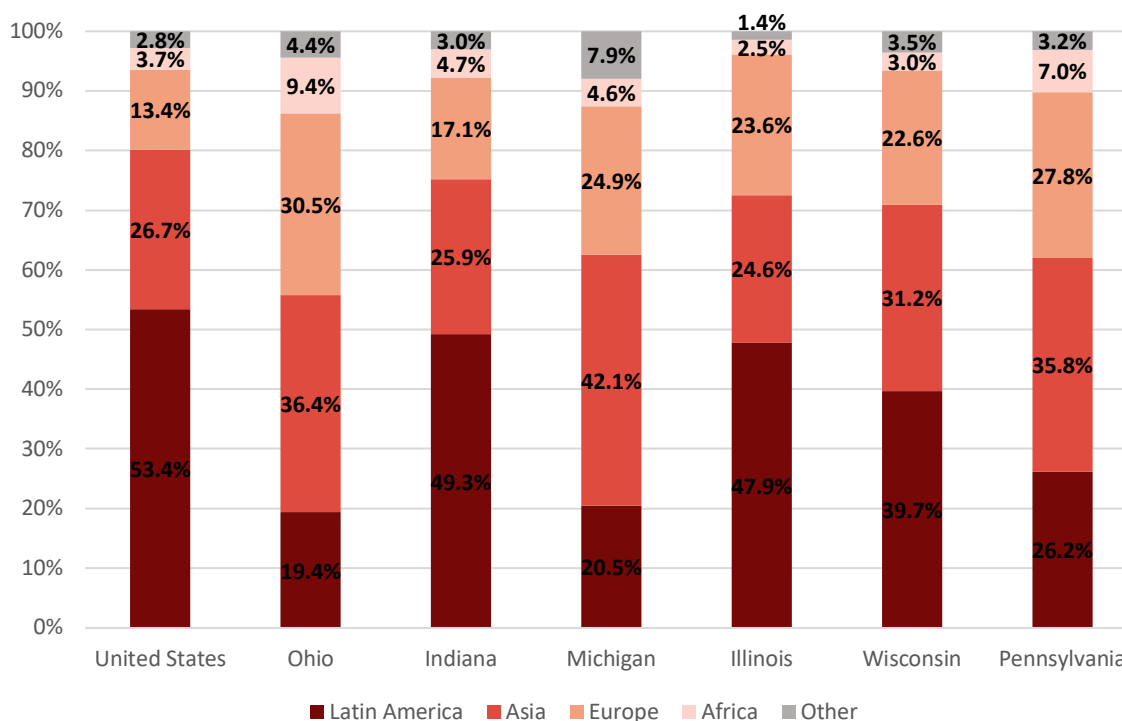

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 21 is analogous to Figure 20 but uses data from 2007, i.e. just before the financial crisis. The general patterns are similar to Figure 20, but all five states and the nation as a whole have larger Asian immigrant shares and smaller European immigrant shares post-Great recession. The national Latin American immigrant share has remained relatively stable over the 10-year period and in Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The Latin American immigrant share fell in Indiana and Illinois by 5.5 and 3 percentage points, respectively, but rose in Pennsylvania by 4.1 percentage points.

Educational Attainment of Ohio's Immigrants

42.3% of Ohio's immigrants have a bachelor's degree or higher, marking them as some of the nation's most educated immigrants, behind only District of Columbia (54.1%), West Virginia (46.1%), and Vermont (44.0%). In contrast, only 26.4% of Ohio's native-born population holds a bachelor's degree or higher. The difference in educational attainment between Ohio's immigrant and native-born populations, 15.9 percentage points, is the second largest in the nation behind only West Virginia, which has the lowest share of college-educated native-born residents. On average, 29.7% of immigrants and 31.2% of native-born U.S. residents are college-educated, yielding a gap of -1.5 percentage points, showing that Ohio is a "brain-gain" winner from immigration relative to other states. Clearly, Ohio's relatively more educated immigrant population is a key contributor to its continued economic growth in the face of a relatively less educated native population.

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Figure 21. Foreign-Born Population Share in the United States, Ohio, and Ohio's Neighboring States by Region of Birth, 2007
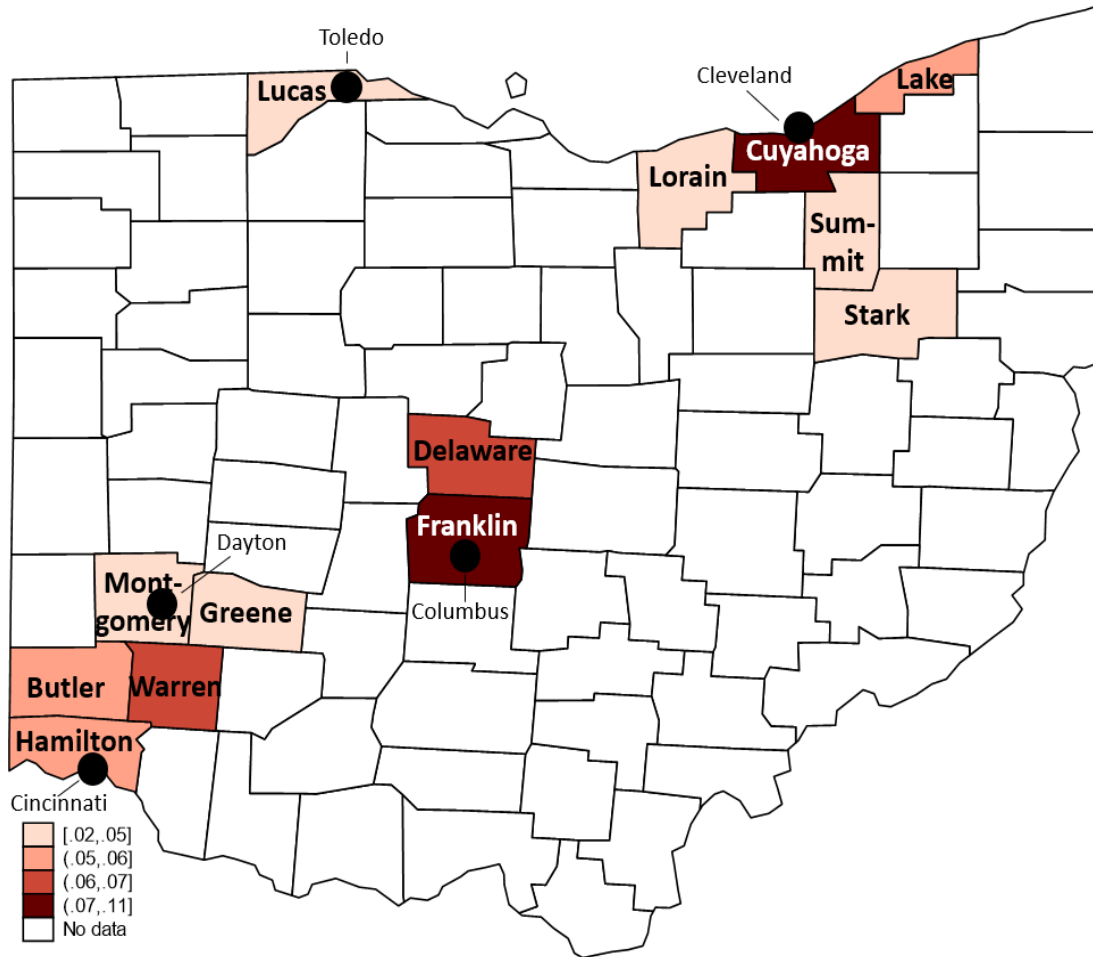

Source: 2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

Immigrants in Ohio's Labor Force

A relatively small share of Ohio's immigrants are employed: only 60.1% compared to the national average of 62.3%, which is the 10th-lowest share of employed foreign-born residents. Ohio is in the middle with respect to the percentage of foreign-born residents unemployed at 3.5%, but a larger share of Ohio's immigrants are not in the labor force (36.5%), which is the 10th-highest across all states. This contrasts with a national average of 33.7%.

Ohio's employed immigrants are more likely employed in management, business, science and arts occupations than the average American immigrant (45.2% vs. 32.4%) and less likely to work in service occupations (17.9% vs. 23.4%), natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (6.2% vs. 12.8%). Regarding industries, Ohio's immigrants are more likely employed in manufacturing (16.8% vs. 11.1%), educational services, healthcare, and social assistance (24.7% vs. 19.4%). In contrast, Ohio's immigrants are less likely to work in construction (5.2% vs. 9.6%) and agriculture (0.5% vs. 2.3%). We conclude that Ohio's immigrants, relative to the national average, are more likely to work in high-skill occupations and sectors. This is likely driven by higher education levels for Ohio's immigrants relative to natives and further underscores the importance of Ohio's immigrant population for its future economic growth, especially in high-skill sectors.

Figure 22 maps the foreign-born share of total population in Ohio's counties. Counties with larger foreign-born shares are shaded dark red and those with smaller foreign-born shares are orange, light orange, or tan. These data are available for Ohio's most populated counties only, and counties with missing data are not shaded. Immigrants compose relatively large shares of the population in Franklin and Cuyahoga counties, which are the core of the Columbus and Cleveland metropolitan areas, respectively. In contrast, core counties of smaller metropolitan areas, like Toledo and Dayton, have relatively smaller foreign-born population shares.

Figure 22. Foreign-Born Share of Total Population in Ohio's Counties, 2017

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 23 shows the distribution of immigrant earnings in the U.S. and Ohio. A larger share of Ohio's immigrants earn over $50,000 annually than nationally. Similarly, a smaller share of Ohio's immigrants fall in the lower income buckets relative to the nation. These facts are unsurprising given that Ohio's immigrants are more likely to work in high-skill occupations and industries relative to the average American immigrant. It is important to remember that Figure 23 shows income for Ohio's immigrants *with earnings*. Since a larger share of Ohio's immigrants (relative to the national average) are not in the labor force, Figure 23 paints an incomplete picture of the well-being of Ohio's immigrants relative to their counterparts nationally. In order to finish this picture, further analysis needs to establish why relatively large shares of the state's immigrants are out of the labor force. In turn, doing so will enable the state to craft policies to better utilize its workforce.

Figure 23. Share of the Foreign-Born Population Aged 16 or Older with Earnings in the United States and Ohio, 2017
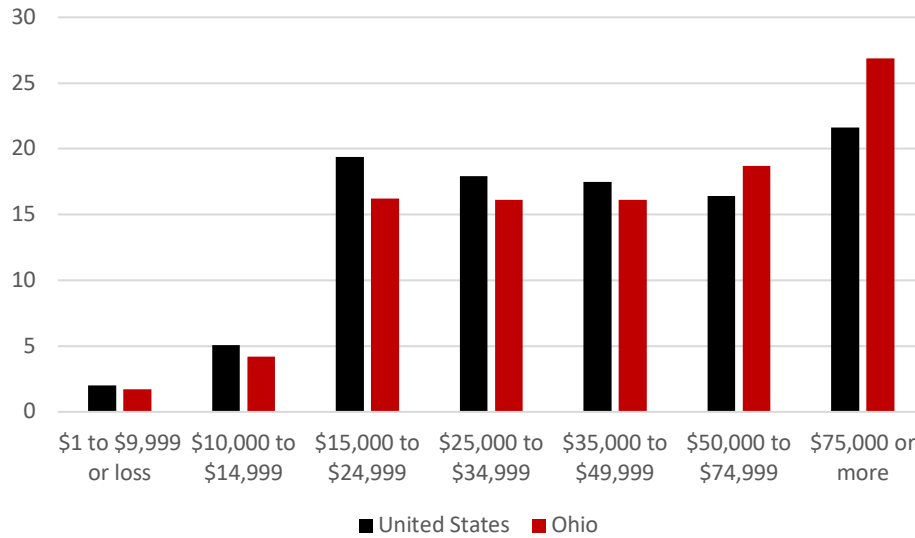
Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Undocumented Immigrants in Ohio

According to the Pew Research Center, an estimated 90,000 undocumented immigrants resided in Ohio in 2016, which is 17% of the state's immigrant population, but just 0.8% of the state's total population. About 1.4% of Ohio's children in kindergarten to 12th grade have at least one undocumented immigrant parent, and roughly 33% of the state's undocumented immigrant adults have been in the country five years or less (as of 2016). Ohio did not experience a statistically significant change in the undocumented immigrant population from 2007 to 2016.

Undocumented immigrants represented just 1.0% of Ohio's 2016 labor force, much smaller than the 4.8% national share. Manufacturing employs the largest number of Ohio undocumented immigrants, in contrast with construction, which employs the largest share of undocumented immigrants nationally. However, the industry share of undocumented immigrant workers is largest in agriculture in both Ohio and the United States. Similarly, in both Ohio and the United states, the largest number of undocumented immigrants work in service occupations, but the share of workers who are undocumented is largest in farming occupations. This is due to how agriculture relies heavily on immigrant labor to meet growing consumer demand. Simply put, there are not enough native workers available to meet demand (at least in the medium term at the current wage). So the U.S. will either have to increase the rate at which it imports workers or start importing more food to ensure that household needs are met. Immigrant labor is required on farms that grow labor-intensive crops, like dairy, other livestock operations, and seasonal operations that produce fruits and vegetables. Human labor is valued heavily in these operations because of the care that is needed when handling livestock or picking fruits and vegetables. Despite the increasing pace of technological change, there is ongoing needs for immigrant agricultural labor unless wages rise sufficiently to attract native workers, but that would eventually imply higher food prices.

Characteristics of the Ohio's Metropolitan Immigrant Populations

Just as there are significant variations states, there is also significant variations in immigrant populations across Ohio's metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas. Tables 2 and 3 show Ohio's foreign-born population share in its metropolitan and micropolitan areas, respectively, along with their poverty rates for native and foreign-born populations. On average, 5.1% of Ohio's metro population is foreign-born, and 17.5% of foreign-born individuals in metro areas are in poverty. This is 3.3 percentage points larger than the poverty rate among Ohio's metro native population.

The immigrant population share is highest in Columbus (7.5%), and the poverty-rate gap between native and foreign-born populations is also the widest (8.4 percentage points). In contrast, the foreign-born population share and the foreign-born population share in poverty are much smaller in both Cincinnati and Cleveland. Only 5% of Cincinnati's population is foreign-born, and 13.2% of the foreign-born population is in poverty. Similarly, 5.7% of Cleveland's population is foreign-born and 14.2% of the foreign-born population is in poverty. The differences in poverty rates between the native and foreign-born populations in Cincinnati and Cleveland are much smaller than for Columbus at just 1.5 percentage points and -0.5 percentage points, respectively. Of course, a key reason is that Columbus accepted large numbers of refugees and became one of the U.S. destinations for Somalia immigrants.

Table 2. Poverty Status of Native and Foreign-Born Populations, Ohio Metropolitan Statistical Areas, 2017

Metropolitan Area	Total Population	Foreign-born Share	Share of Native Below Pov. Lvl.	Share of Foreign-born Below Pov. Lvl.	Difference
Columbus, OH	2,023,695	7.5%	13.0%	21.4%	8.4 ppts
Wheeling, WV-OH*	68,889	1.0%	13.2%	19.6%	6.3 ppts
Toledo, OH	605,204	3.5%	17.1%	23.0%	5.9 ppts
Dayton, OH	800,893	4.3%	15.0%	19.1%	4.1 ppts
Akron, OH	703,398	4.8%	13.3%	16.7%	3.4 ppts
Springfield, OH	135,520	2.0%	16.2%	18.1%	1.9 ppts
Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN*	1,654,238	5.0%	13.2%	14.7%	1.5 ppts
Canton-Massillon, OH	402,098	2.0%	13.7%	14.6%	0.9 ppts
Weirton-Steubenville, WV-OH*	67,349	1.2%	16.9%	16.6%	-0.3 ppts
Cleveland-Elyria, OH	2,062,764	5.7%	14.6%	14.2%	-0.5 ppts
Mansfield, OH	121,533	1.5%	14.6%	12.9%	-1.7 ppts
Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA*	435,198	2.1%	17.1%	12.2%	-4.8 ppts
Lima, OH	104,157	1.3%	14.6%	8.0%	-6.6 ppts
Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY-OH*	61,057	0.7%	18.4%	10.8%	-7.6 ppts
Total	9,245,993	5.1%	14.3%	17.5%	3.3 ppts

*Indicates only the Ohio part of the MSA is counted.
Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Unsurprisingly, immigrants compose much smaller shares of Ohio's micropolitan-area populations (1.6%) relative to its metropolitan areas (5.1%).[1] However, the gap between the share of the native and foreign-born populations in poverty is larger (5.1 percentage points vs. 3.3 percentage points). Additionally, the distribution of the gap between the share of the foreign-born and native populations in poverty varies considerably, reaching a high of 33.2 percentage points in Jackson and a low of -10 percentage points in Wilmington. While not all cases are easily explained, cases like Athens, Ohio, home to Ohio University are relatively easy to explain in that students in general, including international students, tend to have high poverty rates.

[1]A micropolitan area is defined the same as a metropolitan area, but that the population of the principle city falls between 10,000 and 50,000, while a metropolitan area requires a principle city of at least 50,000 residents.

**Table 3. Poverty Status of Native and Foreign-Born Populations, Ohio Micropolitan Statistical Areas, 2017**

Micropolitan Area	Total Population	Foreign-born Share	Share of Native Below Pov. Lvl.	Share of Foreign-born Below Pov. Lvl.	Difference
Jackson, OH	32,624	1.0%	20.0%	53.2%	33.2 ppts
Washington Court House, OH	28,659	1.6%	16.9%	36.3%	19.4 ppts
Athens, OH	65,563	4.6%	24.8%	43.4%	18.6 ppts
Marion, OH	65,483	1.7%	14.7%	31.6%	16.9 ppts
Wapakoneta, OH	45,778	1.1%	8.7%	25.3%	16.6 ppts
Point Pleasant, WV-OH*	30,203	1.0%	20.2%	36.2%	16.0 ppts
Fremont, OH	59,559	1.6%	13.1%	25.7%	12.6 ppts
Zanesville, OH	85,933	1.3%	16.0%	27.3%	11.3 ppts
Tiffin, OH	55,549	1.5%	14.2%	23.7%	9.5 ppts
Celina, OH	40,723	1.1%	7.2%	16.5%	9.3 ppts
Findlay, OH	75,508	3.9%	11.5%	19.2%	7.7 ppts
New Philadelphia-Dover, OH	92,531	1.6%	13.6%	17.4%	3.9 ppts
Mount Vernon, OH	60,945	1.3%	12.9%	16.1%	3.2 ppts
Bucyrus, OH	42,231	1.0%	16.0%	19.1%	3.1 ppts
Bellefontaine, OH	45,323	1.4%	13.5%	15.9%	2.4 ppts
Salem, OH	104,584	1.1%	14.8%	17.0%	2.1 ppts
Greenville, OH	51,919	1.0%	11.4%	12.1%	0.7 ppts
Ashtabula, OH	98,622	1.4%	19.1%	19.7%	0.5 ppts
Wooster, OH	115,915	2.1%	12.6%	12.1%	-0.6 ppts
Norwalk, OH	58,497	2.3%	14.1%	13.3%	-0.8 ppts
Defiance, OH	38,311	1.9%	10.8%	9.6%	-1.2 ppts
Sidney, OH	48,902	2.0%	8.8%	7.3%	-1.5 ppts
Sandusky, OH	75,369	2.2%	12.8%	11.2%	-1.6 ppts
Ashland, OH	53,299	2.3%	13.6%	11.8%	-1.8 ppts
Marietta, OH	60,871	1.3%	15.0%	13.1%	-1.9 ppts
Portsmouth, OH	76,871	0.9%	22.7%	20.8%	-1.9 ppts
Port Clinton, OH	40,769	0.8%	10.4%	8.1%	-2.3 ppts
Van Wert, OH	28,262	0.7%	12.5%	9.2%	-3.4 ppts
Cambridge, OH	39,414	0.8%	20.0%	15.1%	-4.9 ppts
Urbana, OH	39,005	1.0%	10.9%	4.8%	-6.0 ppts
Chillicothe, OH	77,125	1.0%	16.8%	10.3%	-6.6 ppts
Coshocton, OH	36,602	0.7%	14.9%	7.1%	-7.8 ppts
Wilmington, OH	41,869	1.3%	14.4%	4.4%	-10.0 ppts
Total	1,912,818	1.6%	14.7%	19.8%	5.1 ppts

*indicates only the Ohio part of the micropolitan area is counted
Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 24 shows immigrant share by world-region of origin for Ohio, Ohio's "big-3" metropolitan areas, Ohio's remaining metropolitan areas, and Ohio's non-metro areas. All metropolitan areas and the state have relatively small Latin American immigrant shares, but Ohio's non-metro areas have a slightly larger shares at 33%, likely due to higher demand in agricultural- and food-related industries. Cincinnati and the remaining metropolitan areas have larger Asian immigrant shares. Cleveland has relatively large share of European immigrants at 39.0% compared to Cincinnati and Columbus, which total only 15.6% and 10.3%, respectively. Columbus, on the other hand has a large African immigrant share, which at 25% is more than twice as large as in Cincinnati, the metro area with the second largest African share at 12.2%.

Figure 24. Share of the Foreign-Born Population in the Ohio, Ohio's Metropolitan Areas, and Ohio's Nonmetro Areas by World Region of Origin, 2017
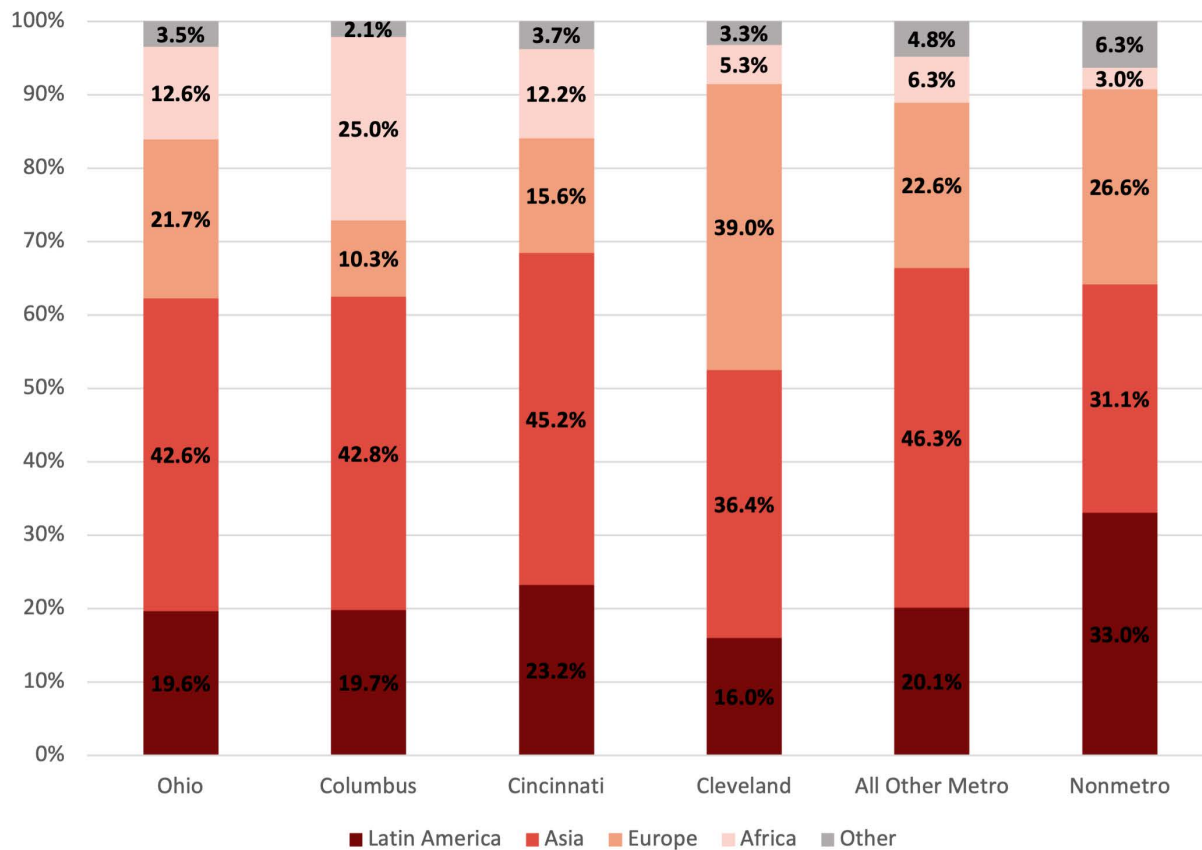
Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Immigrant Characteristics in Ohio's Counties

A more nuanced picture of foreign-born Ohioans relative to their native counterparts is obtained by examining counties. Yet, we can only examine a subset of Ohio's counties for which data are available (which eliminates the most sparsely-populated counties). Table 4 shows that in addition to the foreign-born and native population shares, as well as native and foreign-born poverty rates, it also reports differences in labor market and educational outcomes for immigrants relative to native Ohioans in the most populous counties.

The share of the population that is foreign-born is largest in Franklin and Cuyahoga counties (i.e., the core of the Columbus and Cleveland MSAs) at 11.2% and 7.7%, respectively. At the other end, the foreign-born population share is smallest in Lorain and Stark counties, at 3.0% and 2.1% respectively.

Columns 6 and 8 of Table 4, respectively, show differences in median household income and poverty rates between native and foreign-born residents in these ten Ohio counties. As expected, differences among native and foreign-born residents tend to move closely in tandem. Counties with wider gaps in median household income among native and foreign-born residents also experience larger poverty rate gaps among the two groups. In general, immigrants fare better relative to their native counterparts in counties where immigrants are a larger share of the population, like urban counties such as Cuyahoga, Delaware, and Warren County. Franklin County is an exception with the widest income and poverty rate gaps, though as described above, this is likely due to its attractiveness to Somalis and other groups.

Column 10 shows that in counties where foreign-born residents make up a smaller of the total population (Summit, Greene, Lorain, and Stark County), a smaller share of foreign-born residents are employed. This contrasts with "mid-sized" counties where foreign-born residents make up a larger population share and where larger shares of foreign-born residents are employed (Warren, Butler, and Hamilton).

Finally, Column 12 shows differences in the shares of the native and foreign-born populations with a bachelor's degree or higher in each county. In every county with available data, the share of immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher is larger than the share of the native population with a bachelor's degree or higher. The gap tends to be widest in counties where immigrants are a smaller share of the total population (Greene, Montgomery, Lucas, and Lorain) and smaller in counties where immigrants represent a larger share of total population (with Warren County being an exception). Yet, the data clearly indicates that immigrants represent a key group that offsets Ohio's disadvantage in educational attainment for natives.

Table 4. Poverty Status, Labor Market Outcomes, and Educational Attainment of Native and Foreign-Born Populations, Selected Ohio Counties, 2017

County	Total Pop.	Foreign-Born Share	Place of Birth	Med. HH Income	Med. HH Inc. Diff.	Pov. Rate	Pov. Rate Diff.	Employed	Emp. Diff.	Bachelor's Deg. or Higher	Bachelor's Deg. or Higher Diff.
Franklin County	1,253,507	11.2%	Native	$ 57,939		10.2%		65.7%		38.4%	
			Foreign-born	$ 42,673	-26.3%	24.4%	14.2%	66.2%	0.5%	40.5%	2.1%
Cuyahoga County	1,257,401	7.7%	Native	$ 46,509		14.2%		57.6%		30.5%	
			Foreign-born	$ 50,038	7.6%	12.2%	-2.0%	56.2%	-1.4%	42.1%	11.6%
Delaware County	193,024	7.3%	Native	$ 99,265		3.4%		68.1%		52.5%	
			Foreign-born	$113,188	14.0%	4.0%	0.6%	67.9%	-0.2%	66.5%	14.0%
Warren County	223,868	6.8%	Native	$ 78,636		3.6%		62.7%		39.6%	
			Foreign-born	$ 94,941	20.7%	3.9%	0.3%	66.9%	4.2%	68.9%	29.3%
Butler County	375,702	6.0%	Native	$ 62,501		8.0%		61.0%		29.0%	
			Foreign-born	$ 57,091	-8.7%	16.2%	8.2%	64.2%	3.2%	37.5%	8.5%
Hamilton County	808,703	5.6%	Native	$ 52,356		12.0%		61.3%		35.5%	
			Foreign-born	$ 53,276	1.8%	15.0%	3.0%	64.0%	2.7%	47.7%	12.2%
Lake County	229,701	5.6%	Native	$ 61,212		5.5%		62.7%		27.0%	
			Foreign-born	$ 59,243	-3.2%	6.0%	0.5%	60.3%	-2.4%	30.4%	3.4%
Summit County	541,318	5.3%	Native	$ 53,095		9.7%		60.4%		31.1%	
			Foreign-born	$ 57,847	8.9%	12.5%	2.8%	55.0%	-5.4%	39.7%	8.6%
Greene County	164,825	5.3%	Native	$ 65,249		8.6%		57.5%		37.4%	
			Foreign-born	$ 61,875	-5.2%	9.4%	0.8%	51.2%	-6.3%	60.4%	23.0%
Montgomery County	531,987	4.8%	Native	$ 46,975		13.6%		56.4%		26.0%	
			Foreign-born	$ 48,574	3.4%	22.1%	8.5%	57.1%	0.7%	40.4%	14.4%
Lucas County	433,404	3.9%	Native	$ 44,831		15.2%		57.4%		24.8%	
			Foreign-born	$ 44,549	-0.6%	19.3%	4.1%	59.1%	1.7%	42.9%	18.1%
Lorain County	305,405	3.0%	Native	$ 54,886		10.0%		57.7%		23.2%	
			Foreign-born	$ 60,465	10.2%	9.6%	-0.4%	52.3%	-5.4%	38.2%	15.0%
Stark County	374,273	2.1%	Native	$ 50,196		10.1%		58.7%		22.6%	
			Foreign-born	$ 46,094	-8.2%	13.2%	3.1%	52.0%	-6.7%	30.2%	7.6%

Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

V.   Policy Discussion

Myths about U.S. Immigration

We now turn to a policy discussion. To frame this discussion, it is important to first address several key myths associated with immigrant populations.

Myth #1: Most immigrants are in the United States illegally

Of the 44.5 million U.S. immigrants in 2017, roughly 11 million or about 25% are undocumented. Moreover, the size of the undocumented immigrant population has decreased in recent years-dropping by about 1.55 million between 2007 to 2016.

Myth #2: Immigrants cause crime

The effect of immigration on local crime rates has been extensively studied. Almost all studies find little to no effect of immigration on crime, and in studies that do find a positive effect, the effect is mitigated when immigrants have more labor market opportunities.

Myth #3: Immigrants take away jobs from natives, reducing native wages

The labor market effects of an increase in the numbers of immigrants has also been closely examined. Almost all studies find little to no difference in labor market outcomes for natives between areas with high and low immigrant population shares. Although a negative effect was found when examining the broader, national labor market, this effect is likely small.

Myth #4: Undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes and are therefore a burden to the national economy.

Like legal immigrants and natives, undocumented immigrants pay sales whenever they purchase goods and services and property taxes when they buy or rent apartments and houses. They also pay income taxes when their employer reports income (though often under fake Social Security numbers). Additionally, they contribute to Social Security and Medicare, two programs that few of them ever end up receiving benefits. Lastly, the 1996 Welfare Reform significantly reduced the eligibility and generosity of the social safety net for immigrants in the United States, decreasing the tax burden immigrants place on natives thereafter.

President Trump's Immigration Plan

Despite their falsehood, these myths are pervasive in contemporary American society and have spurred debate about immigration policy. We turn to a discussion of first President Trump's proposed immigration plan and contrast it with President-Elect Biden's plan. In May 2019, President Trump outlined his plan for immigration reform. He stated that his proposed policy "puts the jobs, wages, and safety of American workers first."[2]

In his address, the President emphasized the importance of securing the southern border via both border-security infrastructure (e.g., a wall) and the legal system. He wants to target smuggling women and children across the border and wants to return those that do cross the border back to their home countries. Additionally, he supports more carefully screening asylum claims to ensure that only individuals with "legitimate" claims gain asylum. In order to deter undocumented immigrants, he has stepped-up immigration enforcement and has tried to accelerate the legal process to deport unlawful immigrants.

President Trump also proposes to reform the U.S. legal immigration system. He wants to eliminate the lottery process that currently helps determine green card recipiency and instead advocates for "a clear path for top talent" by prioritizing skilled workers. Towards this end, he proposes to implement a points system based on immigrant skills (like Canada or Australia) that determines which individuals receive green cards. He argues that a points system is more transparent than the current lottery system. In this system, younger immigrants receive more points because they have the potential to contribute more to the social safety net. Additionally, skilled workers, workers with verified employment offers, highly educated and entrepreneurial individuals, and high-wage workers all receive more points. President Trump's goal is to "bring

in people who will expand opportunity for striving, low-income Americans, not to compete with those low-income Americans."[2]

President Trump's plan limits the prioritizing immediate family members, defined only as spouses and children of new American citizens. Thus, his proposal is a marked shift away from the family unification emphasis dating back to the 1965 reforms. Instead, President Trump argues that immigration policy should incentivize and encourage immigration by highly-skilled individuals that he believes contribute more to the American economy and society. Of course, others argue that this closes the door to many potentially successful immigrants.

President Trump's plan is controversial because it clear is more restrictive. Its focus on high-skilled immigration and moving away from prioritizing family unification is also contentious. His proposal has been generally criticized as being inconsistent with the historical notion of the American dream. Others claim that his proposal is veiled racism because it would restrict immigration from certain regions of the world.

President Trump's plan has its impractical elements. It would represent a major overhaul of how undocumented immigrants are treated and other structural changes would alter existing skill-related immigration programs such as H1B.[10] Some sort of amnesty program would be necessary to avoid massive economic disruptions, such as outlined above. Others may find the proposed wide-scale immigration enforcement/ deportations to be rather harsh. Finally, his proposal generally lacks stricter penalties for employers who hire undocumented immigrants to incentivize their compliance. While the legal number of immigrants could theoretically increase under his plan (though efforts since the COVID-19 outbreak suggest otherwise[11]), it is hard to imagine a scenario in which large numbers of undocumented immigrants would still remain in the country. Thus, extensive resources to deport undocumented immigrants would still be necessary.

There are international examples of an effective points-based immigration system, suggesting that the skill-based component of President Trump's plan, if crafted and executed properly, would potentially succeed. Canada has a skill-based immigration system that lends itself to less divisive debate about immigration than the United States. In Canada, immigrants receive points based on skills, including English (and French) fluency, educational attainment, and on employment opportunities.[12] The system is tailored to admit high-skilled immigrants and has resulted in relatively large immigrant populations from places like Hong Kong and India. Of course, an analogous U.S. system would differ because Canada's membership in the UK commonwealth.

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[10]https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/us/politics/h1b-visas-foreign-workers-trump.html
[11] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/us/politics/trump-border-coronavirus.html
[12] Securing a job in Canada is not necessary but can help immigrants cross the point threshold to gain entry.

President-Elect Biden's Immigration Plan

President-Elect Biden's immigration plan is starkly different from those advocated by the Trump administration.

First and foremost, President-Elect Biden's plans to end Trump's national emergency declaration that reallocates funds from the Department of Defense's budget towards the construction of a border wall. Instead, he wants to direct resources towards improved screening at ports of entry. President Trump wants to return women and children that either enter the country illegally or as asylum seekers back to their home countries. President-Elect Biden wants to offer these people the traditional legal protections and he places a high priority in protecting the status of undocumented immigrants brought into the country as children ("Dreamers") (and their parents) by reinstating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created by the Obama Administration in 2012. DACA protected Dreamers who successfully pass a background check from deportation and provide them with temporary work permits and an eventual path to citizenship. Biden wants to restore prior asylum policies so that they successfully protect people who cannot safely return home. He plans on ending Trump's Migrant Protection Protocols, which require individuals entering the United States from Mexico to return to Mexico and wait there for the duration of their immigration proceedings. Biden also wants to end Trump's "metering" policy, which limits the number of asylum applications per day, and plans to allocate sufficient resources to ensure that applications are efficiently processed.

While President Trump's plan to reform the U.S. legal immigration prioritizes high-skilled immigration, President-Elect Biden wants to revitalize the Task Force on New Americans, which was aimed at providing support to all immigrants through increasing access to language instruction, promoting immigrant entrepreneurship, and providing resources about financial management. In addition, under his plan, family unification, not skills, will remain the foundation of the U.S. immigration system, and he plans to support family-based immigration by exempting the spouses and children of green card holders from country-specific caps by allowing parents to bring children with them when they immigrate. Further, Biden wants to grants approved applicants temporary visas until their permanent visas are processed. It is less clear how Biden plans to address employer sanctions for hiring undocumented immigrants, though without such sanctions, undocumented immigrants will likely remain in large numbers.

Overall, President-Elect Biden's proposed immigration plan is much less restrictive than President Trump's plan and appears to represent a significant loosening of immigration standards that existed in the Obama years. Given the stark differences in these two approaches to immigration reform, the debate about which one is best for the country will likely continue well into Biden's term, in which there are many sticking points that will be difficult to achieve buy-in from a Republican Senate.

Welfare Reform

In addition to changing immigration policy, studies show that changing the generosity of the social safety net could affect the success of U.S. legal immigrants. Specifically, more generous welfare benefits for immigrant families increases high school graduation rates for low-income Latino and Asian immigrant children, regardless of whether their

family was the direct recipients, i.e., there are positive human capital spillovers from more generous payments to immigrants (Condon et al., 2016). Previous research has shown that high school graduation is key to success and achieving the American dream. Therefore, preventing immigrants from falling through the safety net helps equip them with the necessary skills to become more productive and, to the extent that a more educated population is more productive, increases the nation's prosperity.

VI.   Conclusion

Since 1965, immigrants have constituted a growing share of the U.S. population. Immigration policy has long had its ebbs and flows as a heated topic, in which recent years have been particularly divisive. Opponents of immigration (especially undocumented immigration) argue that immigration increases crime and steels native-worker employment opportunities, as well as reduces their wages. Yet, a large peer-reviewed literature largely refutes these claims.

Understanding the characteristics of the immigrant population is essential for crafting good policy. While immigrants are typically less educated and earn less than their American native counterparts, Ohio's immigrant population differs from the U.S. average. Ohio's immigrant population is a smaller share of the population (4.3%) compared to the nation (13.7%). Ohio's immigrants are more educated than the average and less likely to originate from Latin America. Instead, Ohio's immigrants are more likely from Asia or Europe. Ohio's immigrants are also likely to be in the upper portion of the income distribution compared to the national average, and they are more likely to work in ""white-collar" occupations in management, business, science, and arts. Undocumented immigrants are a much smaller share of Ohio's workforce relative to the nation. Like the nation, Ohio's undocumented immigrants are most likely to work in agriculture and farming. Yet, given that Ohio's immigrant's population is more educated than its native population on average, it makes important contributions in alleviating a brain-drain out of state.

The contentious debate about immigration policy stems from the fact that policymakers and citizens disagree about the proper goals of immigration policy. The first step in creating an efficient U.S. immigration system is to create concrete and transparent goals that are informed by an objective evidence. It is only after evidence-based goals for immigration policy are settled upon that policies aimed at achieving these goals can be implemented. We have discussed the differing proposals put forth by Biden and Trump. The evidence suggests that Trump's proposals are impractical given their extreme nature, but Biden's proposals have their own shortcomings. In particular, without clear employer sanctions for employing undocumented immigrants, it is hard to see how undocumented immigrants will be deterred from entering the country. In turn, it is hard to see how Biden's proposals (or Trump's) would achieve a long-term immigration compromise, though a political barrier is that the business community would fight strict employer sanctions. Unfortunately, that may be the straw that breaks immigration reform's back in terms of actually achieving bi-partisan Congressional support.

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