

# New Americans in the Siouxland Tri-State Region

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions  
of Immigrants<sup>1</sup>



## POPULATION GROWTH

### SIOUX CITY METRO AREA<sup>2</sup>



Immigrant share of  
the population in metro  
Sioux City in 2015

Between 2010 and 2015,  
the population in metro  
Sioux City grew 1.3%.

The immigrant  
population  
increased 12.3%.

#### Total population

166,727 → 168,889

**1.3%**

#### Immigrant population

13,194 → 14,817

**12.3%**



Share of  
overall popu-  
lation growth  
attributed to  
immigrants

### DAKOTA COUNTY, NE<sup>3</sup>



Immigrant share of the population  
in Dakota County in 2015

Between 2010 and 2015, the population  
in Dakota County grew **0.6%**.

#### Total population growth

20,674 → 20,798

**0.6%**

#### Immigrant population growth

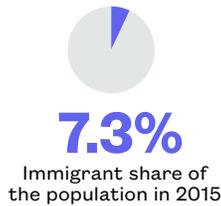
4,258 → 4,330

**1.7%**

## POPULATION CONT.

### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

In 2015, **9,278** immigrants lived in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties, making up **7.3%** of the overall population.



## HOUSING WEALTH

### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

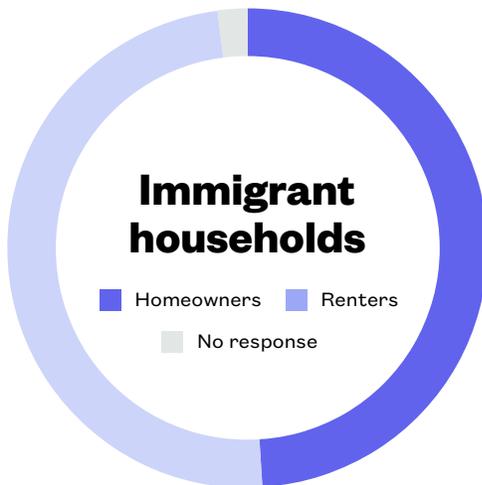
In the metro area in 2015,

# 48.6%

of immigrant households owned their own homes, compared to

# 48.9%

who rented.



The total property value of immigrant households was **\$156.4M**. Their total annual rent was **\$12.2M**.

## SPOTLIGHT ON

# Mohamed Warsame

**M**ohamed Warsame began at Tyson’s Dakota City plant as a meat cutter, but, lacking knife skills, was soon assigned to pack and lift boxes. “They say, ‘We will know if you are really hardworking guy,’” he says, laughing.

Now, seven years later, Warsame has cross-trained at every job on the floor and works in Food Safety and Quality Assurance inspecting production lines. Throughout his tenure, he has worked either the 5 a.m. shift or the evening shift, and spent his free time attending school or developing his business, Sugul Consulting, where he acts as a cultural liaison and helps connect new Americans with professionals who can provide tax, legal, and real estate services. He graduated from Western Iowa Tech Community College in 2017.

“When I came here in 2011, I realized a majority of my community, from Somalia and East Africa, they don’t have much information,” he says. Many were making a 10-hour roundtrip to Minneapolis for help. Warsame, whose family fled civil war in Somalia, had offered the same help at a Kenyan refugee camp when he was 16. It was natural he would do the same in his 20s, in South Sioux City.

“My main goal is just to listen to people and give consultation,” he says. “Most of them need dentistry or doctor’s appointments, so I make all those connections.” Once word got out, apartment managers called for advice on how to help refugees adapt. Hospitals, city leaders, and businesses sought an interpreter. Soon other refugees began asking more complex questions.

“A lot of people here, especially those from Muslim countries, they would like to buy a house or a business, but they don’t have a credit score,” he says. “So they come to me: ‘Mohamed, is there a way you can help?’”

If Warsame can help newcomers buy property—he is studying for his real estate license now—it will both boost real estate values for Siouxlanders and ease the rental shortage. “Immigrants and refugees, when they buy houses, they integrate into the community,” says Warsame, who in 2018 was recognized by the South Sioux City Chamber of Commerce with the Cardinal Heritage Award for his service. “It creates a good neighborhood environment and the city becomes very happy.”

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

In 2015, foreign-born residents contributed **\$522.2M** to the GDP of Woodbury and Plymouth Counties.<sup>4</sup>

Given their income, immigrants contributed significantly to state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state or municipal governments.

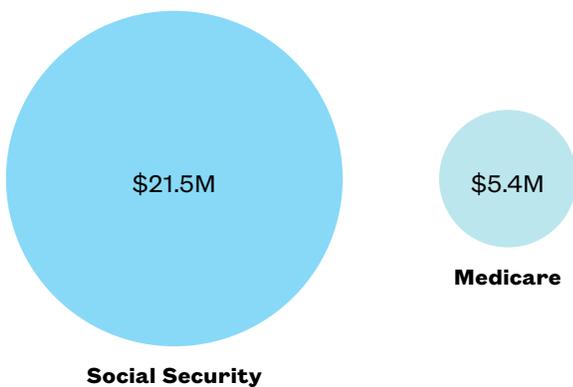
Amount earned by immigrant households in 2015: **\$195.2M**

**\$39.9M**  
went to federal taxes.<sup>5</sup>

**\$17.7M**  
went to state and local taxes.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving them with **\$137.6M** in spending power.<sup>7</sup>

Immigrants in these counties also support federal social programs. In 2015, they contributed **\$21.5M** to Social Security and **\$5.4M** to Medicare.



About **60.2%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **15.7%** had public healthcare coverage.



**15.6%** of immigrants received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **34.2%** of the U.S.-born.



## LABOR FORCE GROWTH

### SIOUX CITY METRO AREA

Despite representing **8.8%** of the overall population, immigrants made up **9.2%** of the employed population in the metro area in 2015.



### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

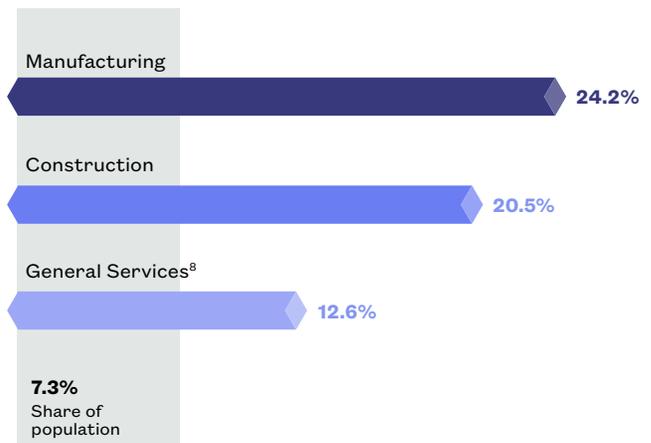
Although the foreign-born made up **7.3%** of the counties' overall population, they represented **10.1%** of its working-age population and **9.4%** of its employed labor force in 2015.



They tended to concentrate in these occupations:



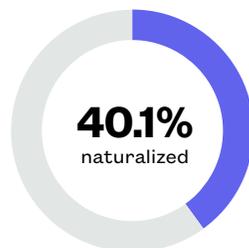
Immigrants are significantly overrepresented in several key industry groups in the counties. This includes:



## NATURALIZATION

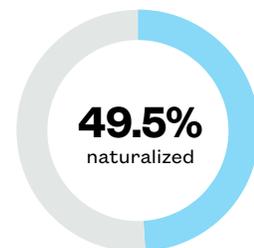
### SIOUX CITY METRO AREA

In 2015, **5,949** immigrants, or **40.1%** of the foreign-born population, in the Sioux City metro area were naturalized citizens.



### DAKOTA COUNTY, NE

In 2015, **49.5%** of the immigrants in Dakota County were naturalized citizens.



SPOTLIGHT ON

# Joanne Nguyen

Like so many Vietnamese people, Joanne Nguyen has lived a life shaped by American foreign policy.

When she was born, in 1966, U.S. troops were already engaged in the ground war and her father, an English professor in Saigon, had been drafted into the South Vietnamese Army to assist U.S. forces. When America withdrew in 1975, he was among the tens of thousands of U.S.-backed fighters who, left behind, were sent to concentration camps under the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

“The communists come and tell him, ‘Pack your bags. You need to go for re-education,’” Nguyen recalls. “They said it would be 10 days. They took him for 10 years.” Ten days after his arrest, the youngest of his six children was born. Upon his release, in 1985, the little boy said, “Who are you?”

Nguyen is now writing a book, called *Letters to My Children’s Children*, to address a broader version of that same question. “It was a hard road for us, living under communism,” she says. “I want to leave for the next generation where I’m coming from, what this country means to me.”

In 1990, Nguyen’s family had been among the first to leave Vietnam in the final wave of post-war emigres: the South Vietnamese soldiers, and their families, who had helped U.S. forces but who had been left behind 15 years earlier to face persecution. Nguyen’s family resettled in Sioux City, Iowa, where a cousin, one of the earlier refugee “boat people,” had ended up for college.

“My whole family worked at the meatpacking plant,” says Nguyen, who, after several career changes now works in a nail salon. Her father became a public school teacher; the cousin now owns several businesses in Oregon; and her daughter is studying to become a pediatrician and her son a mechanical engineer.

“I talk to my daughter a lot about Vietnam and the wonderful opportunity she has in this country,” says Nguyen, who also hosts events to honor Vietnam-era soldiers. “I know the price of freedom, and I don’t take this country for granted.”

## NATURALIZATION CONT.

### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

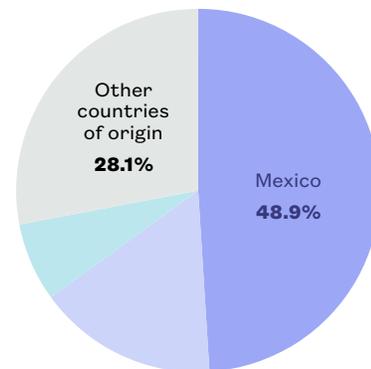
In 2015, **26.8%** of the immigrants in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties were naturalized citizens.



## COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

### WOODBURY & PLYMOUTH COUNTIES, IA

The three top countries of origin for immigrants living in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties:



- 1 Mexico . . . . . 48.9%
- 2 Guatemala . . . . . 15.6%
- 3 Vietnam . . . . . 7.4%

For more city, district, and state-level data,  
visit [MapTheImpact.org](https://MapTheImpact.org) and explore our interactive map.



- 1 The Tri-State Siouxland Region does not have an official geographic definition. For the purposes of this research brief, the scope was limited to the Sioux City, Iowa-Nebraska-South Dakota Metropolitan Statistical Area (including Plymouth and Woodbury Counties in Iowa, Dakota and Dixon Counties in Nebraska, and Union County in South Dakota), with additional analyses done for Plymouth and Woodbury Counties in Iowa and Dakota County in Nebraska. This scope was chosen due to the majority of the MSA's workforce commuting within those boundaries, and the available data. Unless otherwise specified, the data come from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2010 and 2015.
- 2 Sioux City, Iowa-Nebraska-South Dakota Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Plymouth and Woodbury Counties in Iowa, Dakota and Dixon Counties in Nebraska, and Union County in South Dakota. Data for the metro area comes from American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau.
- 3 Data for Dakota County comes from American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau.
- 4 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2015 and the statistics of GDP by the National Association of Counties.
- 5 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 6 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 7 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- 8 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.