

Understanding Immigration

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Immigration Regulations

The Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) provides for an annual worldwide limit of 675,000 permanent immigrants, with some exceptions for close family members. Congress and the President determine the number of refugee admissions. Historically, immigration into the U.S. has been based on three principals: the reunification of families, work-related admissions, and protection of refugees.

IMMEDIATE RELATIVES:

No limit to the number of visas. Immediate relatives include:

- Spouses of U.S. citizens
- Unmarried minor children of U.S. citizens (under 21)
- Parents of U.S. citizens (U.S. citizen must be at least 21 years old to petition)

FAMILY-BASED IMMIGRATION:

The family-based immigration category allows U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents (LPRs) to bring certain family members into the United States. There are 480,000 family-based visas annually.

FAMILY PREFERENCE:

A minimum of 226,000 family preference visas are available annually. Those eligible for family preference visas include:

- Adult children (married and unmarried) and siblings of U.S. citizens (U.S. citizen must be at least 21 years old to petition)
- Spouses and unmarried children (minor or adult) of LPRs.

EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRATION:

- The employment-based immigration category allows workers with a valuable skill to come to the U.S. on either a permanent or temporary basis. More than 20 types of temporary visas are available to skilled workers depending on occupation.
- Permanent employment-based immigration is limited to 140,000 visas per year, divided into 5 categories.
- The INA limits the number of immigrants from any one country to 7% of the total number of immigrants coming into the United States in a single year.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers seek protection in the U.S. on the grounds that they fear persecution in their homelands. A refugee applies for protection while outside the United States; an asylee applies for protection once in the United States.

The number of refugees to be accepted annually is determined by the President in consultation with Congress and are broken down into limits by geography. The number of refugees actually admitted to the U.S. is often significantly lower than this "target" number. In 2012, the target was set at 76,000, was the actual number of refugees was 58,238. Between 2003 and 2012, 30,208 refugees from 42 countries resettled in Minnesota. Of these, 75% came from Somalia, 18% from Burma, 17.5% from Laos and nearly 8% from Ethiopia.

Immigration Statistics – St. Cloud

HOW MANY IMMIGRANTS LIVE IN ST. CLOUD?

The Census says that the average number of foreign-born persons in the city of St. Cloud between 2008 and 2012 was 4,484. For the St. Cloud Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the same period there were 7,221 persons born outside of the United States.

WHEN DID THEY GET HERE?

For St. Cloud MSA from the Census, we know 3,699 were here before 2000, 3,131 came between 2000 and 2009 and 391 arrived since 2010 through 2012. According to the Resettlement Programs Office of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 401 refugees from all countries have been resettled in Stearns County between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2013. According to the Census, 251 non-citizens entered the city since 2010.

HOW MANY OF THESE IMMIGRANTS ARE CITIZENS?

1,945 of the 4,484 (43%) in the city are naturalized citizens; 3,353 of the 7,221 (46%) of the MSA foreign-born population are now U.S. citizens.

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?

There are 438 children under age 6 in the City of St. Cloud who are born to one or two immigrants. All those children are born in the United States. There are also 1,148 children of immigrants between ages 6 and 17. For the St. Cloud MSA there 1,325 children under age 6 with at least one foreign born parent (all but 55 born in the U.S.) and 1,875 children between ages 6 and 17, of whom 610 are immigrant minors.

WHAT LANGUAGE DO THEY SPEAK?

26% of immigrants in the MSA speak only English. 41% speak English “less than well.”

WHAT IS THE POVERTY STATUS OF ST. CLOUD IMMIGRANTS?

Many immigrants arrive in the United States poor, and the data reflect this for St. Cloud. 30.7% of immigrants in the City of St. Cloud live under 100% of the Federal poverty guideline as opposed to 22.5% of non-immigrants. Immigrants who are naturalized citizens -- a process that takes years -- have a lower poverty rate (21.7%.) For the St. Cloud MSA, 12.5% of natives, 28.7% of immigrants and 18.3% of naturalized citizens live below 100% of the Federal poverty guideline.

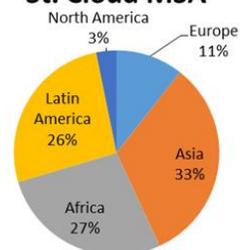
ARE THEY WORKING?

Approximately 2/3rds of immigrants in the MSA are in the labor force; their unemployment rate is 9.7% for 2008-2012. The numbers for those immigrants who arrived before 2010 are not significantly different from those for the native population.

WHERE DO IMMIGRANTS IN ST. CLOUD COME FROM?

20% of the 4,484 foreign-born residents of the city of St. Cloud (888 residents) come from “other East African countries.” These include Somalia. Kenya and Vietnam are the origins of another 10% each. 18% of the MSA’s 7,221 foreign-born residents come from Mexico, followed by 14% of “other East Africa”, 8% from Vietnam and 7% from Korea.

Immigration by Continent of Origin, St. Cloud MSA



Source: SCSU School of Public Affairs Research Institute

Immigration Myths

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF IMMIGRATION ON OUR ECONOMY?

Immigrants fill two key niches in our economy: low-skilled jobs that do not require a high school diploma and high skilled jobs that require advanced degrees in math and science. Legal pathways are not available to enough workers to fill the demand for both types of jobs.

More immigrants will likely be needed for workforce growth, as baby boomers retire and fewer young people are prepared to take their place. Minnesota is also losing residents to other states.

DO IMMIGRANTS PAY TAXES? DO THEY COME FOR WELFARE? WHAT ABOUT WORKER'S RIGHTS?

All immigrants pay taxes, including sales, income, and property taxes. However, most immigrants are barred from receiving public assistance. Only refugees, asylees, and some legal immigrants are eligible to receive public benefits and those are subject to time limits.

- Emergency medical service is the only service for which temporary and undocumented immigrants are eligible. All children, regardless of their parents' immigrant status, receive free public education in the United States.
- Although they contribute to Social Security, undocumented workers have no workplace protections and their fear of deportation is often exploited by employers in the form of long hours, unsafe conditions, and lower pay.
- Each year undocumented immigrants contribute approximately \$7 billion to Social Security for benefits that they will never be able to claim. A reduction in legal immigration would devastate the Social Security system, into which new legal immigrants will contribute more than \$600 billion over the next 75 years.

DO IMMIGRANTS TAKE JOBS AWAY FROM NATIVE BORN AMERICANS? DO THEY SUPPRESS WAGES?

Studies have shown little or no impact on the wages of native-born residents. According to the Minnesota State Legislative Auditor's Office, "most studies suggest that any adverse wage impacts are offset by the economic benefits of immigration - including more efficient use of labor, lower prices, and increased economic activity. Economists have usually concluded that, in aggregate, non-immigrants are slightly better off economically due to immigration."

DO IMMIGRANTS COMMIT CRIMES AT A RATE HIGHER THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION?

Studies have shown that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes or be behind bars than the native-born.

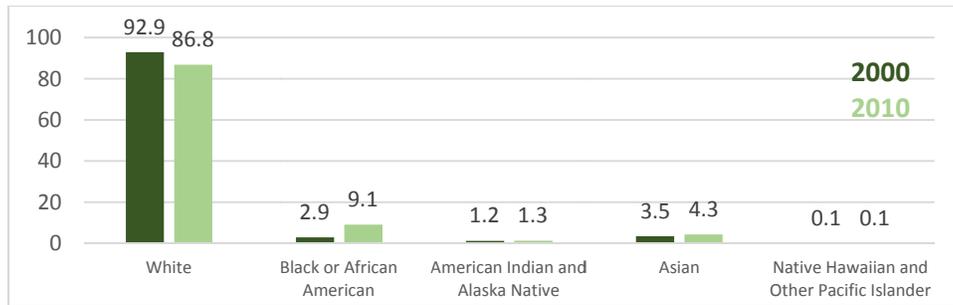
- Immigrants – especially undocumented immigrants – are also vulnerable to crime due to language barriers, fear of deportation, and a reluctance to use bank accounts.
- Immigrants often revitalize distressed neighborhoods, making them safer, generating revenue and tax dollars, and attracting additional economic and residential development.
- None of the 9/11 terrorist attackers arrived in the U.S. without authorization.

CAN A CITY OR SCHOOL DISTRICT REGULATE IMMIGRATION?

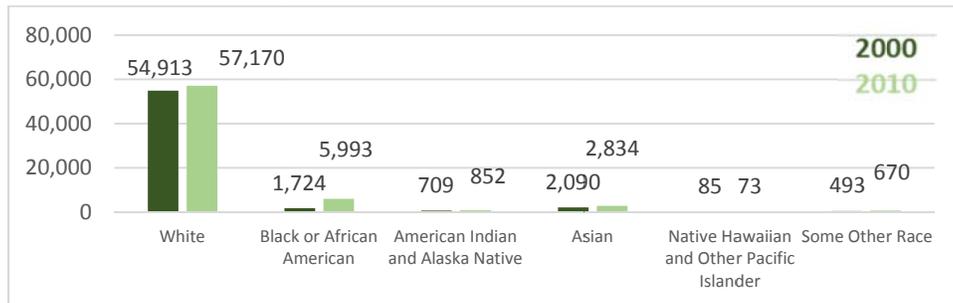
The City of St. Cloud and Independent School District 742 have no role in establishing immigration law or immigration and refugee limits. The City and Independent School District may not establish policy or practices that discriminate against persons lawfully residing within the community.

Source: Minneapolis Foundation - www.minneapolisfoundation.org (2008) and City of St. Cloud

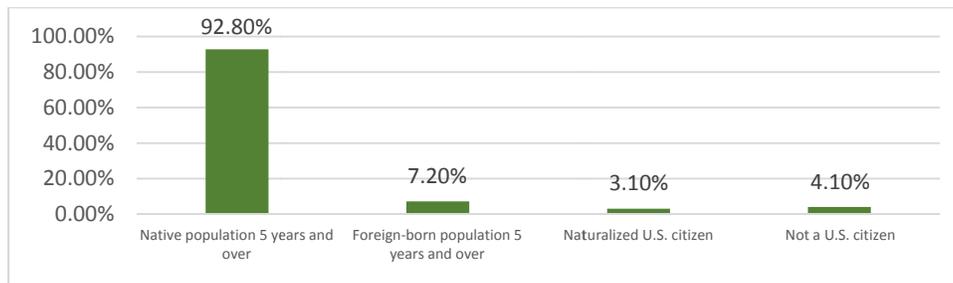
Demographics – St. Cloud



St. Cloud, Minnesota – Race by % - 2000-2010 US Census



St. Cloud, Minnesota – Race by Total - 2000-2010 US Census



St. Cloud, Minnesota – Nativity and Citizenship - 2012 American Community Survey

Additional Resources

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

www.us-immigration.com

U.S. Department of State

www.state.gov/j/prm/

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.dhs.gov/office-immigration-statistics

State of Minnesota Demographic Center

www.demography.state.mn.us/immigration.htm