

Is there an immigrant influx?

Who are Upstate's newcomers?

How are immigrants reshaping communities?

What role can immigrants play in upstate's future?

# Upstate's Recent Arrivals

While upstate immigrants differ substantially from downstate and national immigration trends—in number, origin, and reason for entry—they are playing a larger role in the lives of upstate communities than they have in decades. Filling critical gaps in urban neighborhoods and key economic sectors, and contributing to the region's global outlook, their importance to the region will like grow as the native population ages, requiring coordinated efforts to accommodate newcomers and link them to regional revitalization strategies.

## Is there an immigrant influx?

Thousands of immigrants have settled in upstate New York in recent years, though arriving at a slower pace than elsewhere. Between 2003 and 2006, over 27,000 foreign nationals received legal permanent resident status in upstate's five largest metro areas, led by Rochester with 7,130. This upstate influx, however, represented just five percent of the statewide total—508,921—dominated by New York City. And while these recent arrivals represent 26.4 of every 1,000 residents statewide and 13.5 nationally, they range from 5.5 per 1,000 in Buffalo to 9.0 in Utica.

In addition to the scale of immigration, upstate metros also differ from wider trends in immigrant origins. Although Mexico is the leading source of immigrants to the U.S. and the Dominican Republic leads New York State, neither group is prominent upstate. Instead, Canada leads in Buffalo, China in Rochester, Bosnia in Syracuse and Utica, and the Philippines in Albany.

### Immigration to Upstate Metro Areas and Top Five Countries of Origin, 2003-2006

Buffalo (6,302)	Rochester (7,130)	Syracuse (4,676)	Utica (2,680)	Albany (2,680)
1 Canada	1 China	1 Bosnia	1 Bosnia	1 Philippines
2 Yemen	2 Ukraine	2 Cuba	2 Ukraine	2 India
3 India	3 India	3 Ukraine	3 Burma	3 China
4 China	4 Cuba	4 China	4 Belarus	4 Guyana
5 Ukraine	5 Canada	5 Vietnam	5 Vietnam	5 Pakistan
5.5 Per 1,000 residents	6.9 Per 1,000 residents	7.2 Per 1,000 residents	9.0 Per 1,000 residents	7.6 Per 1,000 residents

Source: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, Profiles on Legal Permanent Residents, aggregated for years 2003-2006.



New York State (508,921)	United States (4,038,321)
1 Dominican Republic	1 Mexico
2 China	2 India
3 Jamaica	3 China
4 India	4 Philippines
5 Guyana	5 Dominican Republic
26.4 Per 1,000 residents	13.5 Per 1,000 residents

# Who are Upstate's newcomers?

Compared to immigrants in the rest of New York and the U.S., children and young families represent a greater share of immigrants in upstate's largest metro areas. From 2003 to 2006, 28% of persons obtaining legal permanent residency in these metros were younger than 18, compared to 22% statewide and 20% nationwide. Conversely, only 34% were 35 years or older compared to 41% in both New York and the U.S.

Relationships can be drawn between these younger-than-average immigrants and their class of admission as legal permanent residents. With the exception of Albany, admission as refugees or asylees is far more prevalent among upstate immigrants, a characteristic that coincides with youthful immigrant profiles. Utica has the highest concentration of these immigrants, at 67%, as well as the highest concentration of persons younger than 18, at 32%, suggesting the prevalence of young families and children among refugee and asylee groups. As nationally, family sponsorship represents the largest class of admission in metro Buffalo, Rochester and Albany. Albany, though, stands out for its unusually high proportion of immigrants admitted under employment-based preferences (29%), coinciding with a higher-than-average concentration (30%) of young-adult immigrants between ages 25 and 34.

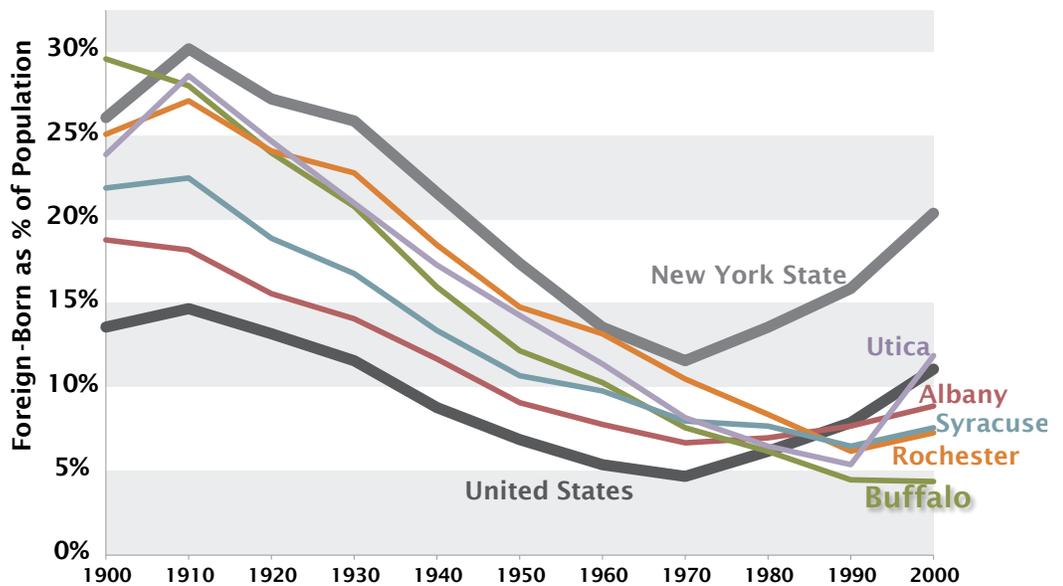
While aspects of recent upstate immigration deviate from state and national trends, upstate was well-aligned with wider immigration trends during most of the 20th century. Between 1910 and 1970, the proportion of foreign-born residents in the U.S., New York State, and major upstate cities gradually declined, as immigrant

## Characteristics of Immigrants to Upstate Metro Areas, 2003-2006

	Buffalo	Rochester	Syracuse	Utica	Albany	Upstate Metros	NYS	USA
<b>Female</b>	53%	54%	53%	51%	55%	54%	54%	55%
<b>Age</b>	<18	30%	27%	30%	32%	24%	28%	22%
	18-24	13%	13%	13%	15%	11%	13%	13%
	25-34	24%	25%	24%	21%	30%	25%	24%
	35-54	26%	26%	25%	25%	26%	26%	30%
	55+	8%	9%	9%	7%	8%	8%	11%
<b>Class of Admission</b>	Employment based preferences	12%	17%	9%	2%	29%	16%	12%
	Family Sponsorship	50%	50%	39%	24%	55%	47%	69%
	Diversity	4%	6%	4%	1%	6%	5%	6%
	Refugees/Asylees	31%	24%	46%	67%	9%	30%	10%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, Profiles on Legal Permanent Residents, aggregated for years 2003-2006.

## Foreign-born Population in Upstate Cities, 1900-2000



Source: "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-2000", by Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, U.S. Census Bureau, 2006.

families gave birth to native born children and, especially, after the Immigration Act of 1924 slowed immigration to a trickle. In 1910, more than one of every four residents in Buffalo, Rochester and Utica (the cities, not metros) were foreign-born, falling to one out of ten or fewer by 1970. After 1970, immigration to the U.S. and New York State once again climbed,

in response to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. In upstate's largest cities, however, foreign-born concentrations continued to decline, falling behind the U.S. average for the first time in 1990. Since then, the refugee influx to Utica has pushed that city's foreign-born population past national levels.

# How are immigrants reshaping communities?

Immigrant populations have long played an important role in forming the urban fabric of upstate cities, especially those along the Erie Canal corridor. Irish laborers were vital to the canal's construction and settled in large numbers in the developing communities along the canal. By the Civil War, Irish, Germans and Canadians represented the largest non-native groups in most upstate cities. And by 1900, the rapid industrialization of upstate was attracting scores of Southern and Eastern Europeans, an influx that slowed abruptly in the 1920s with strict federal constraints on immigration.

Immigrants to upstate cities in recent decades, though fewer in number than in the early 20th century, have distributed themselves geographically in ways that mirror earlier waves of immigration, but also in ways that differ substantially. These differences reflect the wide ranging socio-economic characteristics of

## The bulk of recent immigrants are settling outside the traditional immigrant gateways

these "new" immigrants. In the Buffalo area, for example, several recent groups have settled in traditional "gateway" neighborhoods close to downtown—places that have historically received incoming populations into working-class housing proximate to major employment centers. Today's gateway residents include Vietnamese and refugees from war-torn Somalia and Sudan living near downtown, as well as Yemeni inhabiting neighborhoods near former steel plants in Lackawanna.

The bulk of recent immigrants to the Buffalo area, however, are

## Distribution of Foreign-born Residents Arriving After 1980 in Metro Buffalo



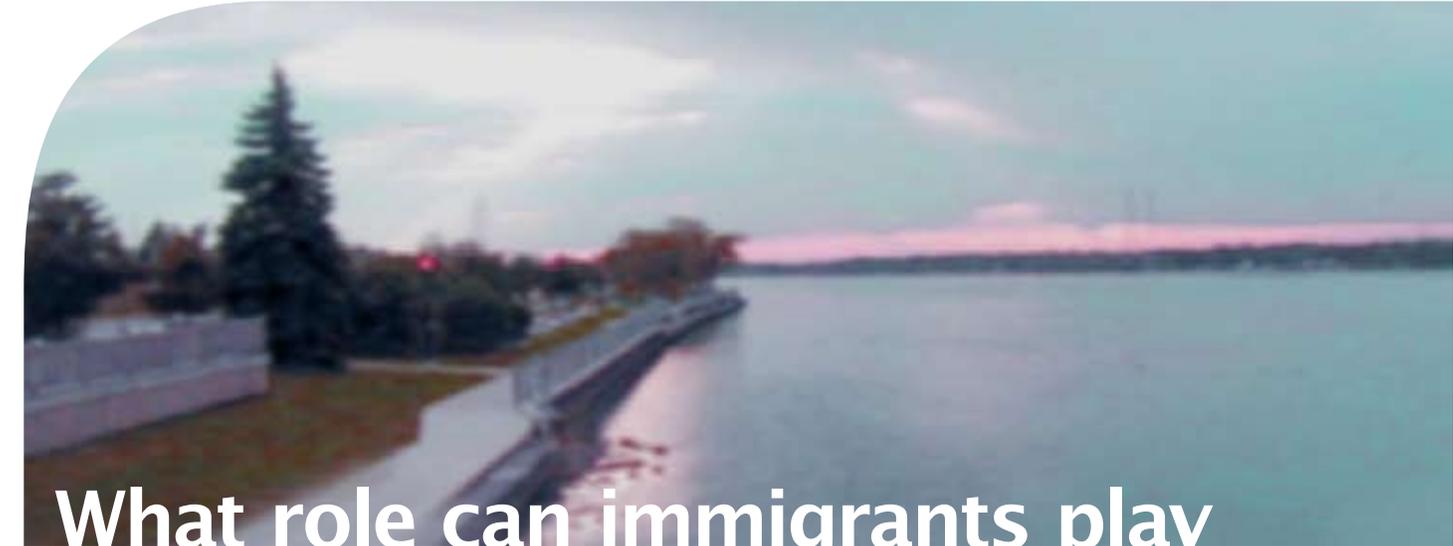
Source: Regional Institute analysis of foreign-born concentrations, by nation of origin, in metro Buffalo census tracts from Census 2000.

settling outside the traditional immigrant gateways. Many distinct concentrations of foreign-born residents arriving since 1980—especially Chinese and Indians—can be found around and between the University at Buffalo's campuses in North Buffalo and Amherst, residing in middle- and upper-middle class neighborhoods. Many bear a relationship to the university, as either faculty or students (15.4% of UB's enrollment was international in 2006-07—the highest of any major public university in the U.S.), while many are also employed as professionals in health care institutions and suburban office parks where the bulk of the region's job

growth has occurred in recent years. Although the presence of these groups is often subtle, it can be felt in selections in supermarket aisles and in ethnic restaurants that populate many suburban plazas.

These geographic dichotomies between working-class, city-based immigrant groups and the more suburban-based professional-class immigrants can be observed, to some degree, across other metropolitan areas upstate and nationally.

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# What role can immigrants play in upstate's future?

Slow-growth economies generally fail to attract large numbers of immigrants, as has been the case in upstate New York and other regions with tepid job markets. As a result, immigration has been less of an issue upstate than the rest of the country, where it is likely to be a leading topic in 2008 political races. Nonetheless, immigration to upstate in recent years has helped to fill critical gaps in upstate communities and labor markets.

In many aging cities, recent working-class immigrants have helped to reactivate and revitalize gateway neighborhoods, filling housing that might otherwise sit vacant and spurring investment—and making investments themselves—in long-neglected properties. Often located near downtowns and key regional assets, these neighborhoods help support and accelerate other revitalization efforts. In Utica, the growing refugee population has helped stabilize several neighborhoods that had been in steep decline. And in the Buffalo area, middle-class immigrants are bolstering housing and retail markets in aging first-ring suburban neighborhoods. As the region's native population and workforce ages, immigrants at all skill levels will likely play a significant role in the region's economy. As nurses, home health-care aides, university faculty, science and engineering specialists in knowledge-economy firms, service-sector employees, and a host of other positions, immigrants currently fill and will increasingly fill key economic gaps. While filling those gaps, they also lend regions the diversity and global-mindedness that is advantageous in a global economy.

Of course, communities that receive immigrants incur obligations, such as language training programs in schools and efforts to avoid sub-standard living conditions. Groups like the International Institute of Buffalo and the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees help immigrants acclimate to their new homes and educate local residents and officials about their new neighbors. Unlike the New York

Immigration Coalition, which serves as an umbrella for immigrant support groups in the New York City area, upstate efforts at accommodating immigrants is, understandably, less coordinated. Creating a similar coalition of upstate organizations and linking them to economic and community development efforts at the state and local levels may be an important step toward ensuring successful outcomes for upstate immigrants and their host communities.

## For More Information

"The Foreign-Born Population in Upstate New York" (Orr, Wieler and Pereira) in *Current Issues in Economic and Finance*, October 2007, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, available online at [http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/current\\_issues/ci13-9.html](http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/current_issues/ci13-9.html)

Profiles on Legal Permanent Residents, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, available online at <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/data/dslpr.shtm>

*Working for a Better Life: A Profile of Immigrants in the New York State Economy, November 2007*, Fiscal Policy Institute, available online at <http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/immigration2007.html>

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