

# Rhode Island State Data Center Census Data Bulletin

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PROGRAM

State Data Center at the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program  
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## Rhode Island's Immigrants

Immigrants are a growing share of our state's population at a time when overall population numbers have stagnated. Between 2000 and 2012, the number of foreign-born Rhode Island residents grew from 120,000 to 140,000, accounting for 13.3% of the state's population today. This month's Bulletin explores a demographic profile of foreign-born populations in Rhode Island, using 2008-2012 5-year American Community Survey data.

Planners need to pay attention to characteristics of foreign-born communities so that plans, policies, and development reflect the needs of their communities' diverse populations. Planners need to communicate with foreign-born communities in culturally relevant language and settings, especially because immigrant populations are currently underrepresented on local planning boards. Planners also need to ensure that plans and policies actively include immigrants' housing and economic development needs. Immigrants, as an increasing share of residents, will shape Rhode Island's future.

### Snapshot of Immigrants in Rhode Island

Rhode Island's foreign-born populations reflect a diversity of backgrounds. While Latin American immigrants are often seen as the face of the foreign-born in Rhode Island, they account for less than half of all foreign-born residents of the state. As the chart below demonstrates, Latin American-born residents comprise the largest group of immigrants living in the state, but we have tens of thousands of residents who were born in Europe, Asia, or Africa. Looking at linguistics, 83.9% of immigrants in Rhode Island speak a language other than English at home, and about half speak English less than "very well."

According to ACS 5-year data, two-thirds of the foreign-born population of Rhode Island entered the

## BY THE NUMBERS

**136,356** - Foreign-born residents of R.I.

**44.5%** - Share of those residents who were born in a Latin American country

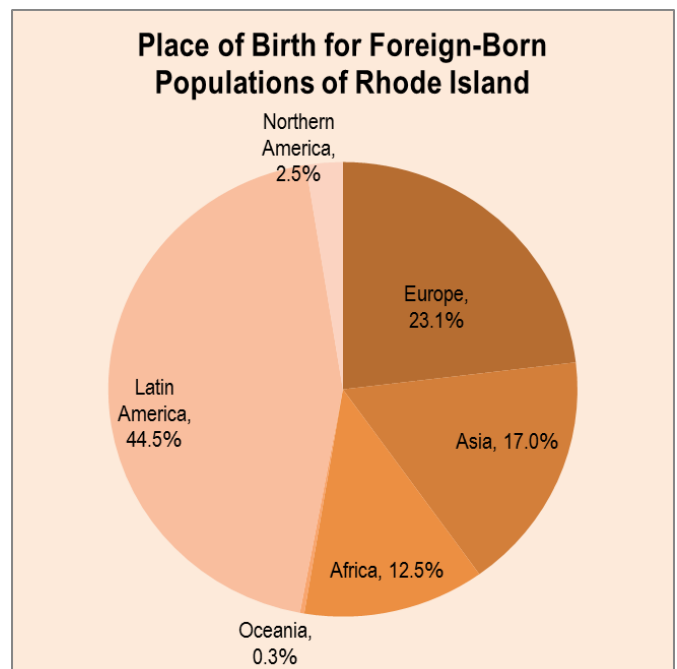
**6.8%** - Share of employed immigrants who work in public sector, versus 14.3% of non-immigrants

**8.3%** - Share of immigrants over 25 with grad degree

**\$24,700** - median earnings of non-citizen female worker

Source: American Community Survey 2012 5-year data

United States before 2000. Approximately half of these residents are naturalized citizens and half are non-citizens.



Source: 2008-2012 5-Year American Community Survey results

## ABOUT THE DATA

Data in this Bulletin are drawn from American Community Survey's 5-year dataset for 2008-2012. These are the most current 5-year data. Using 5-year data allows for the analysis of populations and characteristics with smaller numbers. All changes and differences described in this Bulletin are statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

### Immigrant Households

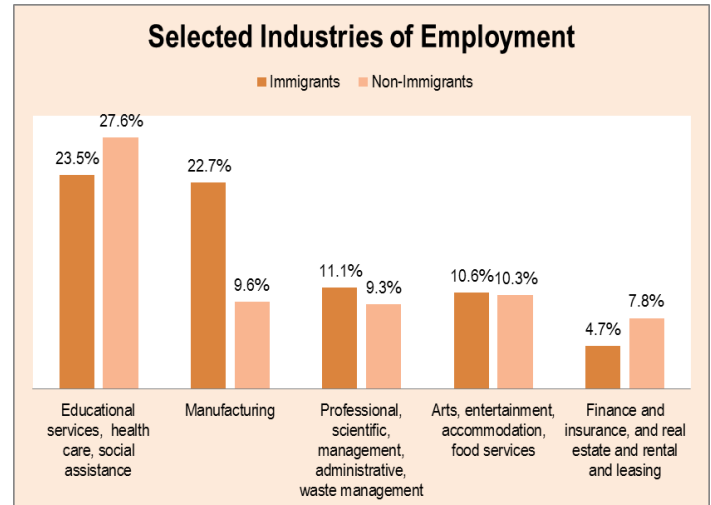
Foreign-born non-citizen Rhode Island residents are more likely to rent than are native-born residents or naturalized citizens. Over 70% of the non-citizen population lives in renter-occupied housing units, versus roughly 37% of native-born or naturalized citizens. Rental households that are headed by immigrants are just as likely to suffer housing cost burden (paying more than 30% of household income on housing) – one in two households – as are those that are headed by non-immigrants. However, cost burden for immigrants who own homes is more widespread (47.8%) than for non-immigrants (34.9%).

Average household size is larger for all foreign-born residents, whether they rent or own. Foreign-born residents in Rhode Island are six times as likely to live in a household with over 1.0 occupant per room, which is the statutory definition of overcrowded.

### Immigrants in the Work Force

The foreign-born population of Rhode Island has a slightly higher labor force participation rate, 67.4% versus 66.1% for non-immigrants, and the share of the labor force that is employed is the same for the foreign-born and the native-born populations.

However, the distribution of industries and occupations varies among immigrants and non-immigrations. For example, immigrants are much less likely to work in the public sector. Additionally, immigrants are more likely to



Source: 2008-2012 5-Year American Community Survey results

where the figures are 18% versus 16%. For the population with graduate degrees, the trend in Rhode Island is actually reverse that of the United States as a whole, where foreign-born residents are more likely to have graduate degrees than native-born residents.

	R.I. Native Born	U.S. Native Born	R.I. Foreign Born	U.S. Foreign Born
Less than high school graduate	11.3%	10.9%	35.7%	31.5%
Bachelor's degree	19.8%	18.2%	12.0%	16.2%
Graduate or professional degree	12.9%	10.5%	8.3%	11.4%

Source: 2008-2012 5-Year American Community Survey results

Class of Worker	Born in U.S.	Foreign-Born
Private wage and salary workers	80.3%	87.8%
Government workers	14.3%	6.8%

Source: 2008-2012 5-Year American Community Survey results

work in the manufacturing industry (22.7% of foreign-born versus 9.6% of native-born) and less likely to work in retail (8.4% versus 12.5%). Immigrants have lower median earnings than non-immigrants, ranging from \$45,900 for male naturalized citizens to \$24,700 for non-citizen women. By way of comparison, non-immigrant men have median earnings of \$54,360 and non-immigrant women, \$42,998.

The lens of educational attainment also provides some insight into the challenges facing Rhode Island's immigrant communities. The share of the foreign-born population that lacks a high school diploma is triple that of the native-born population: 35.7% versus 11.3%. Together, 15.2% of Rhode Island residents lack a high school diploma. Each of these figures is higher than the equivalent statistic for the United States as a whole.

At the other end of the educational spectrum, the disparities for educational attainment are greater than those for the nation as a whole. Among native-born Rhode Islanders, nearly 20% have a bachelor's degree versus 12% of immigrants, a larger spread than in the nation as a whole,

## TO LEARN MORE...

To explore the more data from the American Community Survey, visit the U.S. Census website, [American FactFinder](http://www.census.gov). You can locate data from a particular dataset or year by going to Advanced Search > Topics > Year or Advanced Search > Topics > Dataset. Municipalities under 20,000 residents will need to consult 5-year data, and for research on immigrant communities, the 5-year dataset is likely to give you the best data at the level of detail that you need.

The American Immigration Center has a great [data graphic](#) and [fact sheet](#) on immigrants in Rhode Island, including economic and political impact.

Rhode Island KidsCount published an [issue brief](#) of children of immigrant families in Rhode Island.

For information about RI State Data Center resources, contact Vincent Flood at [vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov](mailto:vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov) or Amanda Martin at [amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov](mailto:amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov) and visit the website at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/geodeminfo/data/index.php>.