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CLEVELAND: 3631 PERKINS AVENUE SUITE 4C - EAST • CLEVELAND, OHIO, 44114 • TEL: 216/361-9801 • FAX: 216/361-9810
COLUMBUS: 300 EAST BROAD STREET, SUITE 490 • COLUMBUS, OHIO, 43215 • TEL: 614/ 221-4505 • FAX: 614/ 224-8132
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Contact: David Dyssegaard Kallick
Director, Fiscal Policy Institute's Immigration Research Initiative
212-721-7164 (desk), 646-284-1240 (mobile)
ddkallick@fiscalpolicy.org

Piet van Lier
Senior Researcher, Policy Matters Ohio
216-361-9801 (desk), 216-832-2102 (mobile)
pvanlier@policymattersohio.org

Full report available at <http://www.policymattersohio.org/ImmigrantsAndTheEconomy2009.htm>
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Outsized economic impact seen for immigrant communities in Cincinnati and Cleveland metro areas

Ohio cities home to smaller immigrant populations with strong economic contributions

In metropolitan areas around the country, immigrants are contributing to the economy in very close proportion to their share of the population. In the Cincinnati and Cleveland metropolitan areas, immigrants have higher labor force participation and higher total earnings per worker than in most of the other metro areas studied, according to a report released today.

In the Cincinnati metropolitan area, 3 percent of the population is foreign born, but their share of economic output is 5 percent; in the Cleveland metro area, the 6 percent who are immigrants contribute 7 percent of economic output.

The national report, *Immigrants and the Economy*, was produced by the Fiscal Policy Institute and released in Ohio by Policy Matters Ohio. It examines the economic role of immigrants in the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, including Cincinnati and Cleveland.

The report looks at all immigrants—documented and undocumented, ranging across the economic spectrum. In the 25 largest metropolitan areas combined—comprising more than half of the country's Gross Domestic Product, and 66 percent of all immigrants—foreign-born workers are responsible for 20 percent of economic output and make up 20 percent of the population. The same relationship holds true for all 25 areas, from metro Pittsburgh, where immigrants represent 3 percent of population and 4 percent of economic output, to metro Miami, where immigrants make up 37 percent of the population and 38 percent of economic output. The outsized economic impact of immigrant communities in Cincinnati and Cleveland puts them both among the top five metro areas for ratio of immigrant earnings to immigrant population among the areas studied.



In most metro areas, somewhat lower economic contributions per worker are offset by a higher percent of immigrants of prime working age. Immigrants earn a little less, but they are more likely to be in the labor force.

In the Cincinnati and Cleveland metro areas, however, immigrants are well represented, given their populations, in higher-wage occupations, and are underrepresented in some lower-wage occupations. Immigrants in the Cincinnati metro area make up 4 percent of the labor force, but more than 13 percent of people in professional specialties (such as doctors or engineers); in the Cleveland metro area, immigrants are 6 percent of the labor force but more than 15 percent of people in professional specialties.

“Immigrant workers make a positive contribution to the economy in Ohio,” said Piet van Lier, senior researcher at Policy Matters Ohio. “Immigrants are well represented in high-paying occupations, despite the fact that overall economic growth and share of immigrants remain relatively low.”

Metropolitan areas with the greatest rise in immigrant share of the labor force also experienced the fastest economic growth, the report finds. The Phoenix, Dallas, and Houston metro areas had the biggest growth in immigrant share of the labor force between 1990 and 2006, and also had well above average metro area economic growth, while Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit metro areas experienced the slowest increase in immigrant share of the labor force and the smallest economic growth.

“It’s easy to understand why immigration and growth are closely connected. Immigrants are drawn to areas where there are jobs, and an expanding labor market can help fuel further growth,” says David Dyssegaard Kallick, director of the Fiscal Policy Institute’s Immigration Research Initiative. “Economic growth doesn’t guarantee that all workers benefit. But it’s clear that the problems associated with growth are better problems to be grappling with than the problems associated with stagnation.”

“Immigrants are an important part of economic reality in the United States today,” said Ray Marshall, former Secretary of Labor and a member of the project’s expert advisory panel. “This is a very valuable report, providing the factual basis for understanding the impact of immigration on American metropolitan areas.”

Other Findings:

- Charts are available that show the full range of occupations of immigrants in each metro area, and in the 25 metro areas combined.
- Immigrants working in the professions—doctors, engineers, lawyers, and others—earn about the same as their U.S.-born counterparts in almost all metro areas.
- Both U.S.- and immigrant workers earn well below the median in almost every service occupation examined in this report—including guards, cleaning, and building services; food preparation; dental, health, and nursing aides.
- Immigrants make up 20 percent of all union members in the 25 largest metro areas.

The Fiscal Policy Institute is a nonpartisan research and education organization in New York. Policy Matters Ohio is a nonpartisan policy research institute in Ohio. Funding for the report was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and 32BJ SEIU, the largest union representing building service workers.

