

High School Kids in Immigrant Families

A Call to Action
for Michigan's Higher Ed
and Workforce Development Strategies



August 2023

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Executive Summary

Half of all Michiganders live in a county where more than 20% of high school students are from an immigrant family—families where at least one parent was born in another country. This total includes six out of the top 10 most populous counties in the state, which contain larger cities and population centers. **Michigan is home to 300,000 children in immigrant families, over 70,000 of whom are currently in high school. Overall, 15% of all high school-aged kids in Michigan live in immigrant families.** Among these high schoolers, 21,000 (30%) are immigrants themselves.

Key takeaways in this fact sheet:

- On the whole, Michigan community colleges serve a substantial number of immigrant families. Yet, immigrant families tend to be somewhat concentrated. Just six community college districts serve 75% of those families and four of those districts are in Southeast Michigan.
- Among high school kids in immigrant families, 50% are Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, or Latinx and over 40% are white. Many of these white high school-aged kids in immigrant families are likely Arab-American.
- At home, high schoolers in immigrant families fare about as well as their U.S.-born counterparts economically. There is a big difference, however, in their parents' own experience with college. While comparable numbers of parents in immigrant families have a bachelor's degree and a significant number have an advanced degree, 22% of parents in immigrant families do not have a high school diploma, compared to 5% in U.S.-born families.
- The English language proficiency of most parents is very high, though most also speak another language. Still, 46% of immigrant parents are considered limited English proficient (LEP) and speak English less than “very well.” However, among their high school-aged children, only 10% are considered LEP.



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In Michigan, 300,000 children live in immigrant families—families where at least one parent (or the child) was born in another country. Of these, about 70,000 kids are currently in high school, including around 17,000 of each of the next four years' graduating classes. These students and their families may be thinking about life after high school, which may include postsecondary education. Governor Gretchen Whitmer has made workforce development a priority of her policy agenda by developing a Sixty by 30 initiative to expand the skills and education of Michigan's workforce so that 60% of working-age Michiganders possess a professional certificate or credential or a college degree by 2030. **To be successful, Michigan's higher education and workforce development strategies must include and respond to the needs of these growing populations.**

SNAPSHOT: High School-aged Kids in Immigrant Families

Population

An estimated 70,802 Michigan kids live in immigrant families. That's 15% of students. Of these students, 30% are immigrants themselves.

Grade	Total in immigrant families	Total in U.S.-born families	Percent of students in immigrant families
9th Grade	16,964	102,620	14%
10th Grade	18,884	98,831	16%
11th Grade	17,901	102,323	15%
12th Grade	17,053	100,467	15%
Total	70,802	404,241	15%

And 4% of *all students* are immigrants themselves.

Grade	Total who are immigrants	Percent who are immigrants
9th Grade	3,983	3%
10th Grade	5,144	4%
11th Grade	5,466	4%
12th Grade	6,293	5%
Total	20,886	4%

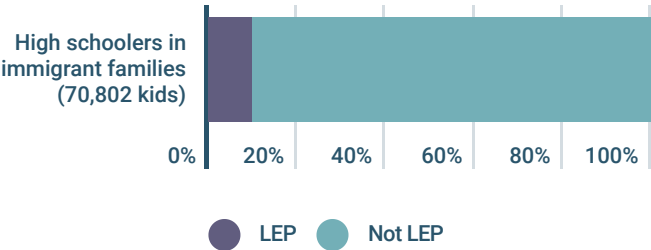
The data used throughout this fact sheet is from an Immigration Research Initiative analysis of 5-year 2021 American Community Survey estimates (U.S. Census Bureau).

SNAPSHOT: High School-aged Kids in Immigrant Families

Language



Overall, 10% of high school-aged kids in immigrant families are considered limited English proficient (LEP) and speak English less than "very well," which is consistent across grade levels. In other words, 90% of high schoolers in immigrant families either speak English as their first language or very well.



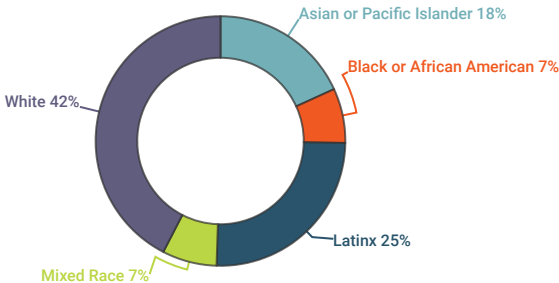
Race and Ethnicity

A large proportion of all high schoolers who are Asian or Pacific Islander or Latinx are a part of immigrant families (86% and 46%, respectively). Among the smaller group of high schoolers in immigrant families (70,802 kids), 43% are either Asian or Pacific Islander or Latinx and over 40% are white.

Family nativity by race/ethnicity, among all high schoolers

Race/Ethnicity	Share of kids within race/ethnicity group who are in immigrant families
Asian or Pacific Islander	86%
Black or African American	7%
Latinx	46%
Mixed Race	20%
White	9%

Race/ethnicity of high schoolers in immigrant families (70,802 kids)



HOWEVER...



Many of these white high school-aged kids in immigrant families are likely Arab-American. Because there is currently no Middle East and North Africa (MENA) reporting category, data about Arab Americans is often obscured, including accurate race and ethnicity information. In fact, per this same data, nearly 3/4 of all high schoolers (74%) who are white in immigrant families live in Wayne (32%), Oakland (22%), or Macomb Counties (20%). These counties also have the largest Arab-American populations in Michigan, especially Wayne County, which includes the city of Dearborn.

Economic Security

Students in immigrant families make up 16% of all low-income high schoolers, 15% of all middle-income high schoolers, and 15% of all upper-income high schoolers. On the whole, the income breakdown of high schoolers in immigrant families and U.S.-born families is similar across low, middle, and high income categories.

Among high schoolers in immigrant families...



Among high schoolers in U.S.-born families...



Economic Security by Metropolitan Area

	High School Kids in Immigrant Families			High School Kids in U.S.-Born Families		
	Low Income	Middle Income	Upper Income	Low Income	Middle Income	Upper Income
Ann Arbor	21%	37%	42%	18%	38%	44%
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn	31%	41%	28%	29%	41%	30%
Grand Rapids-Wyoming	28%	59%	13%	21%	50%	30%
Jackson	47%	37%	16%	29%	47%	23%
Kalamazoo-Portage	23%	64%	13%	26%	51%	23%
Lansing-East Lansing	39%	45%	16%	23%	51%	26%
Muskegon	55%	43%	2%	41%	49%	10%
Niles-Benton Harbor	10%	78%	13%	36%	44%	19%
Saginaw	58%	18%	24%	39%	43%	18%

SNAPSHOT: Parents of Kids in Immigrant Families

There are 103,510 parents to high schoolers in immigrant families in Michigan, which takes into account both single-parent households as well as immigrant families in Michigan with more than one child. This total includes parents who were born outside the U.S. and are immigrants themselves (87,000 parents) as well as U.S.-born parents who are a part of immigrant families (16,000 parents).

Language

The English language proficiency of most parents is very high, though most also speak another language. For over half of these parents, English is the only language they speak or they speak it very well. 46% of immigrant parents are considered limited English proficient and speak English less than "very well." Only 3% of U.S.-born parents in immigrant families are considered limited English proficient.

	Among all parents of high schoolers in immigrant families	Among immigrant parents	Among U.S.-born parents in immigrant families
Does Not Speak English	4%	4%	0%
Only English	22%	12%	72%
Speaks English Very Well	39%	41%	24%
Speaks English Well	22%	26%	2%
Speaks English, but Not Well	14%	16%	1%

Education

Across parental nativity, the largest educational discrepancy is between those with and without a high school diploma: overall, one in five parents in immigrant families has not completed high school—compared to one in 20 parents in U.S.-born families. Yet, all parents' post-secondary attainment is more similar, particularly for bachelor's and advanced degrees, with an even greater number of parents in immigrant families holding advanced degrees.

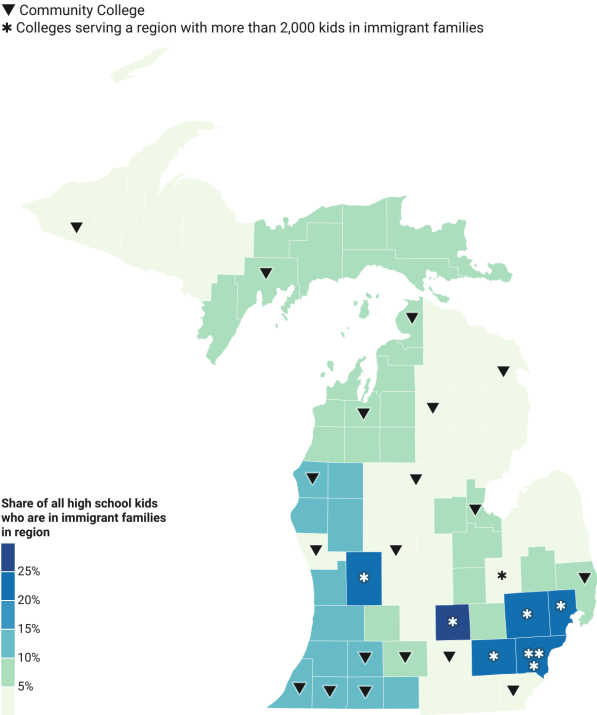
	Among parents in immigrant families	Among parents in U.S.-born families
No high school diploma	22%	5%
High school diploma or equivalent	20%	23%
Some college	11%	24%
Associate's degree	6%	12%
Bachelor's degree	21%	22%
Advanced degree	19%	13%

Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

SNAPSHOT: Community Colleges and Immigrant Families

28 community colleges across the state serve immigrant families—with 9 schools based in regions/school districts with over 2,000 high school-aged kids in immigrant families. In addition, there are 3 Tribal colleges in Michigan, which first and foremost serve indigenous communities. The first 6 schools listed on the table serve regions/school districts with over 75% of all high school-aged kids in immigrant families in Michigan.

The map also shows the share of high school kids in immigrant families (out of all high schoolers) in a given county/region. See table below for more county/region details.



This analysis uses Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs, which contain no fewer than 100,000 people). In cases where counties are grouped by PUMA, every county will reflect the same share of high school-aged kids in immigrant families.

Community College	High School Kids in Immigrant Families in Community College's District	Share of all High School Kids in Immigrant Families That Live in Community College's District
Oakland Community College	15,419	20%
Wayne County Community College District	10,701	14%
Grand Rapids Community College	10,641	14%
Macomb Community College	9,809	13%
Henry Ford College	7,542	10%
Lansing Community College	5,417	7%
Schoolcraft Community College	3,938	5%
Washtenaw Community College	2,750	4%
Mott Community College	2,000	3%
Glen Oaks College	1,594	2%
Lake Michigan College	1,430	2%
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	1,360	2%
Delta College	1,152	1%
St. Clair County Community College	767	1%
Montcalm Community College	607	<1%
Muskegon Community College	442	<1%
Northwestern Michigan College	442	<1%
Jackson College	329	<1%
Kirtland Community College	321	<1%
Bay College	314	<1%
Gogebic Community College	296	<1%
Alpena Community College	153	<1%
Monroe County Community College	122	<1%
Mid Michigan College	40	<1%

High school students in immigrant families live all across Michigan. In fact, **half of all Michiganders live in a county where more than 20% of high school students are from an immigrant family**—families where at least one parent (or the child) was born in another country. This total includes six out of the top 10 most populous counties in the state, which contain larger cities and population centers. In 13 Michigan counties and/or regions, 10% or more of high schoolers are part of immigrant families, with Ingham and Wayne Counties approaching 30% of all high schoolers. In the City of Detroit alone, about one in every five high school students is part of an immigrant family.

County or Region (PUMA)	Percent of high schoolers in immigrant families
Ingham County	28%
Wayne County	26%
Oakland County	23%
Washtenaw County	22%
Macomb County	21%
Kent County	21%
Detroit City	17%
Van Buren & Cass Counties	14%
Ottawa County	13%
St. Joseph & Branch Counties	13%
Allegan County	12%
Newaygo, Mason, Oceana & Lake Counties	10%
Berrien County	10%
Kalamazoo County	10%
St. Clair County	7%
Calhoun & Barry Counties	6%
Saginaw County	6%

County or Region (PUMA)	Percent of high schoolers in immigrant families
Eastern Upper Peninsula	6%
Genesee Area, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties	5%
Northwest Lower Peninsula	5%
Bay & Midland Counties	5%
Livingston County	5%
Muskegon County	4%
Jackson County	4%
Eaton & Clinton Counties	4%
Ionia, Montcalm, Mecosta & Osceola Counties	4%
Lenawee & Hillsdale Counties	3%
Western Upper Peninsula	3%
Tuscola, Sanilac & Huron Counties	3%
Genesee County	3%
Northeast Lower Peninsula	3%
Monroe County	2%
Isabella, Gratiot & Clare Counties	1%
Iosco, Gladwin, Roscommon, Ogemaw & Arenac Counties	1%

This analysis uses PUMAs (Public Use Microdata Areas, which contain no fewer than 100,000 people). Although larger counties may map onto the PUMA, smaller counties/regions are grouped to form the PUMA.

Source for all data: Immigration Research Initiative analysis of 5-year 2021 American Community Survey estimates (U.S. Census Bureau).