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# St. Cloud Immigration: A fact sheet

A review of Census data

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## St. Cloud Immigration: Fact sheet

Immigration is not a recent event in Minnesota. In 1920 20% of the state's total population was foreign born. After falling below 4% in the 1980s, Minnesota's foreign born population was 7.1% in 2010 (American Community Survey (ACS) 1 year estimates). The latest (2012) estimate puts the immigrant population at almost 8%. Unlike the national trend, Minnesota's immigrant population has increased in part because of the increase in refugee population, with the bulk of refugees arriving before 2009.

Like Minnesota, local perception is that St. Cloud has experienced a surge in immigration in recent decades. The purpose of this fact sheet is to analyze immigration in the St. Cloud area. However, first we need to define what we mean by "St. Cloud area". A 2011 article in the *StarTribune* included a statement that, "while estimates of Somali immigrants living in the St. Cloud area vary," a local social worker put the number between 6,000 and 7,000. (Allie Shah, "Finding refuge in St. Cloud," January 19, 2011.) We have read blogs that claim the number more recently being 10,000 or even 13,000. Given that the city of St. Cloud in the 2010 Census had only 65,842 persons, of which 5,152 are listed as "African-American", it seems likely these claims ascribe the word "St. Cloud" to a geography much larger than the city. There could be other explanations such as surveys that include all members of a family/household even though the children were born in the United States.

### Different geographies matter

St. Cloud City includes parts of Stearns, Sherburne and Benton Counties. This definition is based on its legal city boundaries, which we refer to hereafter as "City of St. Cloud." There has been no change in the boundaries of St. Cloud since 1995, so comparisons between the 2000 and 2010 Census should be valid.

Meanwhile, St. Cloud MSA includes a larger geographic area: Stearns County, Benton County and the areas of Sartell, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and St. Joseph. It does not include Sherburne County. This means that the MSA does not count everything in the City of St. Cloud (the difference is approximately 10,000 in the Sherburne County portion of the city.) It often comes up that we should include Sherburne County, but this then means we would consider places like Elk River and Big Lake to have "a high degree of social and economic integration" with St. Cloud. It seems more reasonable to view these communities as integrated with Minneapolis-St. Paul.

This sheds light on a third definition. Census data are frequently broken down by county. The State of Minnesota uses county lines to create definitions of "economic development regions" and "planning areas". St. Cloud is in Economic Development Region 7W, which includes all of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright counties, and it is in the Central Planning Area, which includes 13 counties in the middle of Minnesota. But as one expands the number of counties, the meaningfulness of the definition of St. Cloud diminishes. Even the MSA definition makes Sauk Centre part of St. Cloud. We have therefore chosen not to use any broader definitions of the area.

For our purposes we provide both the City of St. Cloud and St. Cloud MSA information on immigration. While it might make more sense to exclude the more distant portions of Stearns and Benton counties, it is difficult to get data on the other cities one might include, even if all could agree on a list. Because the more distant portions of the county do not contain large populations, we feel the MSA number is likely to be most relevant for regional planners. St. Cloud city officials may prefer to use the smaller City of St. Cloud definition. Therefore, for the sake of consistency in our analysis, we will follow the two official definitions for St. Cloud area to compare demographic changes across years with emphasis on recent immigration.

### Different methodologies matter

Another issue that arises is the different methodology of the surveys and censuses that we use. Questions differ between the 2000 and 2010 Census that are relevant to our interest in immigration. Since 1790, decennial censuses included detail questions about socioeconomic and household characteristics of each unit. This detailed version was referred to as the long form decennial census which was given to 6% of the total population; the remaining 94% received a shorter form.

Starting in 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau substitutes the decennial long form census with the American Community Survey. Published since 2005 for populations of 65,000 or more, the ACS is a continuous survey that currently samples nearly 3 million addresses each year, which is almost six times smaller than the 2000 Census (approximately 18 million addresses).

The ACS is designed for reporting over different intervals (1 year, 3 years, 5 years) and estimates are quickly released to the public.<sup>2</sup> When using the 5-year ACS, as we do herein, the result is more accurate but less current. The 2008-2012 ACS you read here is the average over those 5 years, centered on 2010. But with this approach we get 5 samples, where for the City of St. Cloud each sample likely has less than 800 households. To report the 2012 numbers means that you get only one rather small sample. In the data below we always rely on the 5-year estimates, so that we would say there are 4,484 foreign-born persons living in the city of St. Cloud, with a margin of error of +/-640. That is to say, we are 90% sure the actual average for the years 2008 through 2012 for immigrants to St. Cloud lies between 3,844 and 5,124. For a one year estimate for 2012, ACS reports there is 5,265 foreign-born persons in the city, but the margin of error is 1,997! For a geography as small as the city, this estimate is simply too imprecise for use by policymakers.

Following the consensus in the literature on immigration, we consider an immigrant a person who was born abroad. So we consistently use foreign born and immigrant as synonymous in this document.

With these caveats in mind, let us turn to what the data say.

We present four tables in this report. The first four tables offer information for the two main definitions of City of St. Cloud and St. Cloud MSA. For the city definition we can only report the ACS data, as St. Cloud was considered too small in 2000 to identify accurately even with the basic data of the short form. Therefore throughout this document we report 2000 Census for the St. Cloud MSA, and 2008-12 ACS for both the MSA and the City.

Table 1 presents general information about the foreign born population such as sex, age, year of entry, citizenship status, among others. Foreign born population is 6.8% (4484 people) and 3.8% (7221 people) of total population in City of St. Cloud and St. Cloud MSA respectively. Although the larger area includes almost three thousand more immigrants, the total population more than doubles resulting in a smaller foreign born population proportion for the metropolitan area. This shows how misleading the use of proportions would be in small areas. It is important to maintain the analysis at raw numbers to actually see the size of the population we are talking about.

Despite this difference, the composition of immigrants across major categories is very similar whether one uses a city or MSA definition of St. Cloud. Almost half of immigrants are U.S. citizens, young, tend to carpool or use public transportation, and tend to lack of insurance (especially the population in the MSA).

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<sup>2</sup> The Census Bureau explains that “data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The value shown here is the 90 percent margin of error. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value.”

**Table 1: General Estimates St. Cloud City and St. Cloud MSA (ACS 5-years 2008-2012)**

	St. Cloud City		St. Cloud MSA			
	2008-2012		2000		2008-2012	
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE
<b>Population</b>	<b>65787</b>	<b>1046</b>	<b>168856</b>	<b>2630</b>	<b>188867</b>	
Foreign Born	4484	640	4748	642	7221	627
Citizen	1945	427	2682	470	3353	461
<b>Entry Year</b>						
2010 and later	273	152			391	175
Non Citizen	251	156			369	178
2000-2009	1995	495	110	52	3131	587
Non Citizen	1780	467	110	52	2455	481
1990-1999	1245	296	2567	432	2051	345
Non Citizen	433	164	1857	369	841	228
1990 and before	971	287	2071	325	1648	278
Non Citizen	75	59	715	170	203	98
<b>Naturalization</b>						
2010 and later	65	52			202	136
2005-2009	415	144			636	150
2000-2004	328	164			581	219
1995-1999	304	162			502	182
1990-1994	195	162			395	193
1985-1989	144	86			213	100
1980-1984	226	119			337	135
Before 1980	268	139			487	191
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	2170	369	2162	301	3625	411
Female	2314	395	2586	315	3596	339
<b>Age</b>						
0-5 yrs			179	106	76	76
6-17 yrs	445	247	779	207	1146	437
18-24 yrs	1130	306	859	148	1959	344
25-34 yrs	1013	304	1052	215	1292	434
35-44 yrs	727	187	659	149	1110	286
45-54 yrs	462	168	610	143	917	270
55-59 yrs	283	154	167	70	387	184
60-61 yrs	25	28	130	73	48	47
62-64 yrs	136	84	116	71	89	84
65-74 yrs	74	53	68	48	223	142
75 yrs and more	189	149	129	55	375	225
<b>Median Age</b>	31.5	1.9	31.2	2.5	30.6	2.5
US Citizen	40.3	3.5	37.4	3.1	38.4	3.3
Non US Citizen	25.6	1.6	24.5	2.1	25.6	1.8
<b>Health Insurance</b>						
Uninsured	710	252			1790	386
Citizen	232	144			559	251
Non Citizen	478	195			1231	312
<b>Means of Transportation</b>						
Total Workers 16yrs and older						
Drive	26754	934			78060	1119
Carpool	2757	383			8539	596
Public Transportation	745	163			1389	246
Percentage of Foreign Born (%)						
Drive	4.6	1			2.6	0.5
Carpool	12.6	4.4			8.3	2.5
Public Transportation	8.2	8.2			6.3	4.9
Percentage of Foreign Born -Citizen (%)						
Drive	2.5	0.8			1.4	0.4
Carpool	3.2	3.1			2.4	1.6
Public Transportation	-	-			0.1	0.3
Percentage of Foreign Born-Non Citizen (%)						
Drive	2.1	0.7			1.2	0.3
Carpool	9.4	4.6			5.9	2
Public Transportation	8.2	8.2			6.2	4.9

Source: Decennial Census 2000 and ACS 5-year estimates 2008-2012.

Note: MOE=Margen of Error; "-" no data or no representative data.

Table 2 offers more detailed information on ancestry for the entire population and place of birth for the foreign population. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, St. Cloud and Central Minnesota also received a large number of immigrants, mainly from Europe. According to data presented by the Minnesota State Demographic Center, in 1950, 90% of foreign-born Minnesotans came from Europe in 1950, but in 2009-2011, that share has fallen to 10%. Nowadays, recent immigrants in St. Cloud come from Eastern Africa, Vietnam, Korea, and Mexico. We want to highlight two important differences here. One, the Mexican population is significantly larger when the MSA definition is used. The areas that are included in this definitions include sectors with high concentration of people from Mexico. Second, immigrants from Laos and Philippines increase when the MSA definition is used, however the number of Malaysian immigrants dropped to insignificant levels. In the St. Cloud MSA, 33% of immigrants are from Asia, 27% from Africa, 26% from Latin America and 11% from Europe.



We report as well some supplemental data on national origins provided to us by the Human Services department of Stearns County. They report that, of the 18,266 individuals using one of their benefits (SNAP or food stamps, Minnesota Family Investment Program or MFIP cash benefits, or public assistance for health care) 16,309 or 89.2% of them primarily spoke English in the home in January 2010. In January 2014, this amount was 84.8% (18,043 of 21,255 recipients.) Of the remainder, a majority spoke primarily a language of East African origin (Somali, Amharic, Arabic, Oromo or Swahili.) This amounted to 1,243 or 6.8% in January 2010 and 2,532 or 11.9% in January 2014. (Around 1% were unknown.) The share of public assistance recipients who required an interpreter rose from 8% in January 2010 to 12% in January 2014. We did not attempt to obtain similar data from Benton County.

This is of course not a representative sample. Data from the Census (not displayed here due to incompleteness) suggests that the longer a foreign-born person is in the United States, the higher is their income. It also stands to reason that the longer one is in the United States the more likely it is one adopts English as one's primary language. Thus the sample above should be skewed to newer immigrants who have lower language skills, less job experience and therefore lower income. Overall, according to the ACS, 26% of immigrants in St. Cloud MSA speak English only at home, while 41% speak English "less than well".

Table 3 shows an important component of immigrant households: Many foreign-born non-citizens have children who are citizens. That is one reason why we show ancestry in the previous table. However, we should also look at the younger population. Children of immigrant parents would likely be part of the same immigrant community. When using community surveys there is a probability that all the members of the household are counted in the same group, even though the children in the family are not 'officially' considered immigrants. In the city of St. Cloud there are 1,185 children under age 18 who are U.S. citizens but are born to foreign-born parents. In the MSA, the number is 2,434.

Table 3: Children of Foreign Born Parents

	St. Cloud city, Minnesota		St. Cloud, MN Metro Area	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	11,271	+/-595	43,044	+/-215
Under 6 years:	4,221	+/-382	14,774	+/-341
Living with two parents:	2,701	+/-338	11,154	+/-452
Child is native	2,701	+/-338	11,053	+/-452
Child is foreign born	0	+/-20	101	+/-65
Both parents native	2,296	+/-325	10,089	+/-429
Both parents foreign born:	306	+/-157	753	+/-216
Child is native	306	+/-157	710	+/-194
Child is foreign born	0	+/-20	43	+/-50
One native and one foreign-born	99	+/-93	312	+/-119
Child is native	99	+/-93	312	+/-119
Child is foreign born	0	+/-20	0	+/-20
Living with one parent:	1,520	+/-318	3,620	+/-465
Child is native	1,520	+/-318	3,608	+/-463
Child is foreign born	0	+/-20	12	+/-17
Native parent	1,487	+/-311	3,360	+/-432
Foreign-born parent:	33	+/-43	260	+/-124
Child is native	33	+/-43	248	+/-123
Child is foreign born	0	+/-20	12	+/-17
6 to 17 years:	7,050	+/-487	28,270	+/-412
Living with two parents:	4,439	+/-450	21,573	+/-561
Child is native	4,170	+/-486	21,027	+/-623
Child is foreign born	269	+/-205	546	+/-234
Both parents native	3,561	+/-413	20,147	+/-564
Both parents foreign born:	561	+/-203	762	+/-239
Child is native	413	+/-248	553	+/-273
Child is foreign born	148	+/-176	209	+/-185
One native and one foreign-born	317	+/-184	664	+/-184
Child is native	235	+/-148	554	+/-154
Child is foreign born	82	+/-90	110	+/-87
Living with one parent:	2,611	+/-435	6,697	+/-565
Child is native	2,440	+/-436	6,406	+/-545
Child is foreign born	171	+/-146	291	+/-170
Native parent	2,341	+/-448	6,248	+/-557
Foreign-born parent:	270	+/-186	449	+/-212
Child is native	99	+/-105	191	+/-115
Child is foreign born	171	+/-146	258	+/-164

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey



Table 4 offers a view into poverty levels and allows us to compare the distribution between immigrants and native.

Table 4: Native and Foreign Born Poverty Level						
Subject			Population for whom poverty status is determined	Native	Foreign born	Naturalized citizen
St. Cloud city, Minnesota	Total	Estimate	60709	56702	4007	1827
		Margin of Error	1186	1228	613	417
	Less than 50 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	12.10%	11.40%	22.30%	13.60%
		Margin of Error	1.5	1.6	8.7	7.2
	Less than 100 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	23.10%	22.50%	30.70%	21.70%
		Margin of Error	1.8	1.9	8.9	9.1
Less than 125 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	29.40%	28.80%	37.10%	28.60%	
	Margin of Error	1.7	1.8	8.3	10.5	
St. Cloud, MN Metro Area	Total	Estimate	180,269	173,825	6,444	3,178
		Margin of Error	+/-649	+/-854	+/-586	+/-447
	Less than 50 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	6.1%	5.8%	15.8%	9.6%
		Margin of Error	+/-0.6	+/-0.5	+/-6.0	+/-4.6
	Less than 100 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	13.1%	12.5%	28.7%	18.3%
		Margin of Error	+/-0.7	+/-0.7	+/-6.7	+/-6.3
Less than 125 percent of the poverty level	Estimate	17.5%	16.8%	36.5%	24.7%	
	Margin of Error	+/-0.8	+/-0.8	+/-6.3	+/-7.2	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

What we see from this and other data (not shown) is that the longer an immigrant is here, the more likely they are to escape from poverty. New immigrants, often coming with very few resources, start from poverty but those that become naturalized citizens do not look significantly different from native-born central Minnesotans in terms of family income. 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.

The 1-year ACS estimate for immigrants from all countries arriving to St. Cloud MSA is 936, though the 90% confidence interval indicates that number of immigrants is between 262 and 1,610: Once more, estimates of small populations over short time horizons in a geography even as large as St. Cloud MSA is too imprecise for use. Yet the data suggest that after a period of a few years, immigrant populations' experience with the labor market, and their use of social services, do not significantly differ from those of native-born populations.