

AN EXPLAINER:

RANKING OF METROS WHERE IMMIGRANTS ARE THRIVING AND WHERE THEY ARE MOVING

The George W. Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative has ranked U.S. metro areas for where immigrants are thriving best in America today, in a new report [“Immigrants and Opportunity in America’s Cities.”](#)

Table 1

Where Immigrants are Thriving Best: Top 25 Large Metros
(out of America’s 100 largest metro areas)

	Metro Area	Avg z-score
1	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	2.23
2	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	1.21
3	San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	1.18
4	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	1.11
5	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	1.08
6	St. Louis, MO-IL	1.02
7	Pittsburgh, PA	1.01
8	Raleigh-Cary, NC	0.84
9	Jackson, MS	0.80
10	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	0.71
11	Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, CT	0.67
12	Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	0.67
13	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	0.58
14	Madison, WI	0.56
15	Worcester, MA-CT	0.56
16	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	0.52
17	Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	0.51
18	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	0.51
19	Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA	0.50
20	Richmond, VA	0.48
21	Colorado Springs, CO	0.40
22	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	0.35
23	Dayton-Kettering, OH	0.33
24	Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	0.32
25	Jacksonville, FL	0.28
	Population-Weighted Average, Top 100 Metros	0.00

Source: Author’s calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau data. See full ranking of America’s 100 largest metros in Appendix 2 of the main report and all underlying data in the [online data appendix](#) to this report.

- **Best-performing metros** for immigrant well-being include major technology centers, college towns, and mid-Atlantic and Midwestern metros that have been intentional in welcoming immigrants and helping them thrive, based on new rankings from the Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative.
- Immigrant populations in most metro areas are **thriving better** in suburban counties than neighboring core counties, county-level data in our report confirm.

Immigrants moving within the United States over the past decade are making very different choices regarding where to live and work than newly arriving immigrants, according to the report.

Table 2

Immigration Rates, 2010-2020: Top 25 Metros
(of America's 100 largest metro areas)

	Metro Area	% Immig Rate	Absol Net Immigration	
			Rank	Abs Number
1	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	12.1%	2	678,385
2	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	9.5%	11	203,049
3	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	8.6%	14	157,896
4	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	7.0%	6	320,383
5	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	6.7%	3	378,696
6	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	6.4%	9	221,774
7	Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	6.2%	4	369,811
8	Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	5.6%	29	51,164
9	San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	5.5%	8	237,403
10	Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	4.9%	48	30,517
11	Urban Honolulu, HI	4.9%	32	46,772
12	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	4.8%	1	910,113
13	Springfield, MA	4.7%	46	32,428
14	Worcester, MA-CT	4.3%	39	39,538
15	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	4.3%	16	119,843
16	Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, CT	4.2%	28	51,371
17	Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	4.2%	55	25,422
18	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	4.1%	7	265,113
19	New Haven-Milford, CT	4.1%	42	35,231
20	Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	4.1%	21	70,042
21	Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	4.0%	58	22,452
22	Columbus, OH	3.7%	22	69,678
23	Raleigh-Cary, NC	3.5%	36	40,111
24	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	3.3%	50	27,334
25	San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA	3.3%	18	102,942
	Pop-Weighted Average, Top 100 Metros	3.6%		

Source: Author's calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau data. See full ranking of America's 100 largest metros in Appendix 2 of the main report and all underlying data in the [online data appendix](#) to this report.

Newly arriving immigrants tend to choose traditional metros consistent with historical patterns— **New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami**. But in all four metros, immigrants experience relatively low median living standards after adjusting for local costs of living—driving large out-migration to other metro areas.

Table 3

Estimated Net Inbound Domestic Migration* Rates by Immigrants, 2010-2020: Top 25 Metros
(of America's 100 largest metro areas)

	Metro Area	Estimated % Net Dom Mig Rate	Absolute Net In-Migration	
			Rank	Absolute Number
1	Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	2.9%	25	17,831
2	Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	2.8%	4	55,070
3	North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL	2.8%	24	19,601
4	Jacksonville, FL	2.1%	18	28,758
5	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	2.0%	23	23,845
6	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	2.0%	5	54,396
7	Knoxville, TN	1.9%	29	15,713
8	Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom, CA	1.9%	6	40,617
9	Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	1.9%	12	32,448
10	Tulsa, OK	1.9%	26	17,397
11	Nashville-Davidson--Murfreeseboro--Franklin, TN	1.7%	20	27,299
12	Scranton--Wilkes-Barre, PA	1.6%	43	9,283
13	Charleston-North Charleston, SC	1.6%	38	10,977
14	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	1.6%	32	14,171
15	Pittsburgh, PA	1.6%	7	36,937
16	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	1.6%	11	33,515
17	Boise City, ID	1.5%	42	9,510
18	Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL	1.5%	45	9,062
19	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	1.5%	10	33,858
20	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	1.5%	52	8,132
21	Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA	1.5%	53	7,680
22	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	1.5%	34	12,900
23	Kansas City, MO-KS	1.5%	15	29,608
24	Dayton-Kettering, OH	1.5%	36	11,681
25	Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	1.4%	51	8,138
Population-Weighted Average, Top 100 Metros		-0.1%		

*We define Net Inbound Domestic Migration Rate for each metro area as the estimated number of foreign-born people moving into the metro area from elsewhere in the United States between 2010 and 2020 divided by the metro's total 2010 population.

Source: Author's calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau data. See explanation of our methodology in Appendix 1 of our main report and a full ranking of America's 100 largest metros in Appendix 2. All underlying data is available in the [online data appendix](#) to this report.

Among metros smaller than America's 100 largest, top performers for immigrant well-being, immigration rates, and domestic in-migration rates primarily consist of college towns, as we define them in the report. They also include a handful of metros with one high value-added, dominant employer or industry: **Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Arkansas (home to Walmart); Rochester, Minnesota (headquarters of the Mayo Clinic); and Midland, Texas (center of the West Texas oil and gas industry).**

Immigrants making secondary moves within the United States mirror those of native-born people, except immigrants are more likely to choose metros focused on welcoming them. Leading destinations include **Dallas-Fort Worth; Austin, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Nashville, Tennessee; Knoxville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; Tampa, Florida; Jacksonville, Florida; Northport-Sarasota-Bradenton, Florida; Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Florida;** and **Boise, Idaho.**

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