

## Population in the Pioneer Valley Region: The Importance of Immigration

The pace of immigration to the Pioneer Valley region, and Massachusetts generally, has been steadily increasing for the last 25 years (See Figures 1 & 2). According to 2000 Census data, between 1995 and 2000 Massachusetts became home to about 190,000 new immigrants. Of this total, the Pioneer Valley region has welcomed over 9,500 new arrivals since 1995. These immigrants represent more than 22 percent of the foreign-born population residing in the region.

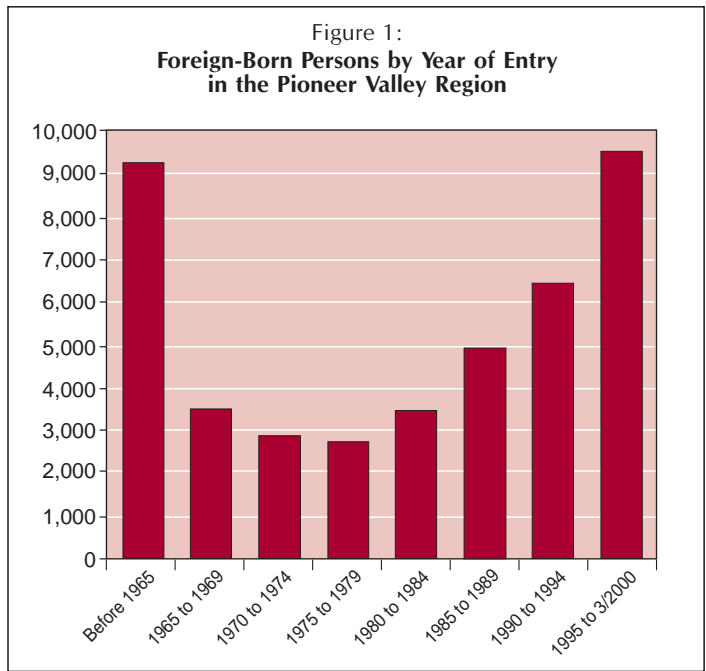
In 2000, there were 43,000 foreign-born persons living in the Pioneer Valley, or 7.1 percent of the region's population. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, the foreign-born population increased by more than 16,000, but the region's total net population gain was a meager 5,600 people. Without the substantial influx of immigrants during the last decade, the Pioneer Valley region would have suffered a net population loss of about 10,400 people. Under these circumstances, immigration appears to be crucial to the sustained growth and prosperity of the Pioneer Valley region.

The increasing pace of immigration naturally leads us to ask, "where are all these immigrants coming from?" Nearly one half of all foreign-born residents of the Pioneer Valley region are from Europe (See Figure 3). Of the European immigrants, one half are from Eastern Europe and just less than one third are from Southern Europe. However, more than half of all European-born residents of the region immigrated before 1980. Among other and more recent immigrants to the Pioneer Valley, one fourth of foreign-born people are from Asia and about 17 percent are from Latin America, particularly the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup>

Immigrants to the Pioneer Valley region have largely settled in urban areas. Cities and large suburbs—including Springfield, Amherst, West Springfield, Westfield, and Chicopee—contain the largest percentages of the foreign-born population (see Table 1). Springfield is home to 28.3 percent of the region's foreign-born population, while Chicopee, Westfield, and West Springfield are home to 10.4, 7.1, and 6.6 percent respectively. Farther north, 10.7 percent of the region's foreign-born population resides in Amherst.

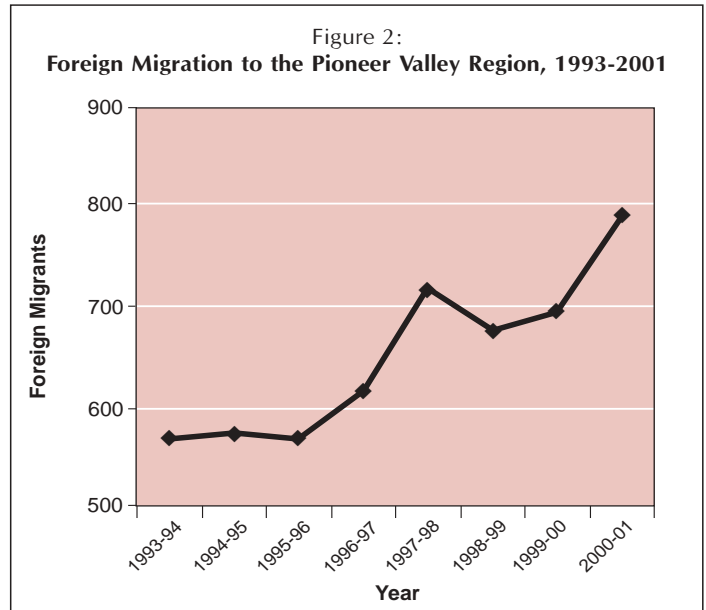
<sup>1</sup> Foreign-born persons are those born outside the United States and its territories (e.g. migrants from Puerto Rico are not included in this digest).

Figure 1:  
Foreign-Born Persons by Year of Entry  
in the Pioneer Valley Region



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Figure 2:  
Foreign Migration to the Pioneer Valley Region, 1993-2001



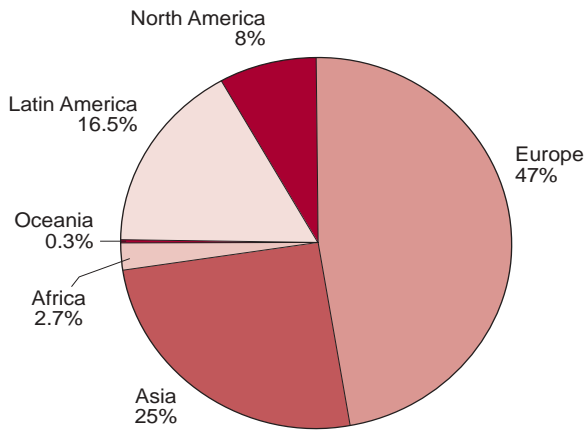
Source: Internal Revenue Service, County-to-County Migration Data

Table 1: Foreign-Born Population in the Pioneer Valley Region

	Pioneer Valley region total population	Foreign-Born Population			Immigrated from 1990 to 2000			
		Foreign-born population	Percent of total population	Percent of foreign-born population	Population entered 1990 to 2000	Percent of total population	Percent of foreign-born population	Percent of those entering 1990 to 2000
<b>Pioneer Valley</b>	<b>608,479</b>	<b>43,006</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16,025</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Agawam	28,144	1,502	5.3%	3.5%	423	1.5%	28.2%	2.6%
Amherst	34,873	4,605	13.2%	10.7%	2,686	7.7%	58.3%	16.8%
Belchertown	12,968	424	3.3%	1.0%	148	1.1%	34.9%	0.9%
Blandford	1,214	27	2.2%	0.1%	6	0.5%	22.2%	0.0%
Brimfield	3,339	43	1.3%	0.1%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Chester	1,306	17	1.3%	0.0%	2	0.2%	11.8%	0.0%
Chesterfield	1,201	19	1.6%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Chicopee	54,653	4,462	8.2%	10.4%	1,293	2.4%	29.0%	8.1%
Cummington	1,004	26	2.6%	0.1%	9	0.9%	34.6%	0.1%
East Longmeadow	14,100	614	4.4%	1.4%	119	0.8%	19.4%	0.7%
Easthampton	15,994	660	4.1%	1.5%	126	0.8%	19.1%	0.8%
Goshen	903	12	1.3%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Granby	6,132	147	2.4%	0.3%	19	0.3%	12.9%	0.1%
Granville	1,521	41	2.7%	0.1%	11	0.7%	26.8%	0.1%
Hadley	4,793	210	4.4%	0.5%	48	1.0%	22.9%	0.3%
Hampden	5,171	156	3.0%	0.4%	7	0.1%	4.5%	0.0%
Hatfield	3,249	67	2.1%	0.2%	5	0.2%	7.5%	0.0%
Holland	2,407	59	2.5%	0.1%	4	0.2%	6.8%	0.0%
Holyoke	39,838	2,152	5.4%	5.0%	570	1.4%	26.5%	3.6%
Huntington	2,192	31	1.4%	0.1%	6	0.3%	19.4%	0.0%
Longmeadow	15,633	1,086	6.9%	2.5%	229	1.5%	21.1%	1.4%
Ludlow	21,209	3,116	14.7%	7.2%	325	1.5%	10.4%	2.0%
Middlefield	580	16	2.8%	0.0%	2	0.3%	12.5%	0.0%
Monson	8,359	454	5.4%	1.1%	193	2.3%	42.5%	1.2%
Montgomery	656	15	2.3%	0.0%	7	1.1%	46.7%	0.0%
Northampton	28,978	1,870	6.5%	4.3%	742	2.6%	39.7%	4.6%
Palmer	12,497	359	2.9%	0.8%	90	0.7%	25.1%	0.6%
Pelham	1,403	71	5.1%	0.2%	16	1.1%	22.5%	0.1%
Plainfield	576	23	4.0%	0.1%	2	0.3%	8.7%	0.0%
Russell	1,655	69	4.2%	0.2%	55	3.3%	79.7%	0.3%
South Hadley	17,196	1,170	6.8%	2.7%	392	2.3%	33.5%	2.4%
Southampton	5,387	215	4.0%	0.5%	29	0.5%	13.5%	0.2%
Southwick	8,835	227	2.6%	0.5%	35	0.4%	15.4%	0.2%
Springfield	152,082	12,159	8.0%	28.3%	4,661	3.1%	38.3%	29.1%
Tolland	428	3	0.7%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Wales	1,737	24	1.4%	0.1%	2	0.1%	8.3%	0.0%
Ware	9,708	321	3.3%	0.7%	28	0.3%	8.7%	0.2%
West Springfield	27,899	3,034	10.9%	7.1%	1,979	7.1%	65.2%	12.3%
Westfield	40,072	2,850	7.1%	6.6%	1,667	4.2%	58.5%	10.4%
Westhampton	1,468	20	1.4%	0.0%	2	0.1%	10.0%	0.0%
Wilbraham	13,473	564	4.2%	1.3%	70	0.5%	12.4%	0.4%
Williamsburg	2,427	47	1.9%	0.1%	12	0.5%	25.5%	0.1%
Worthington	1,219	19	1.6%	0.0%	5	0.4%	26.3%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Figure 3:  
Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population  
in the Pioneer Valley Region

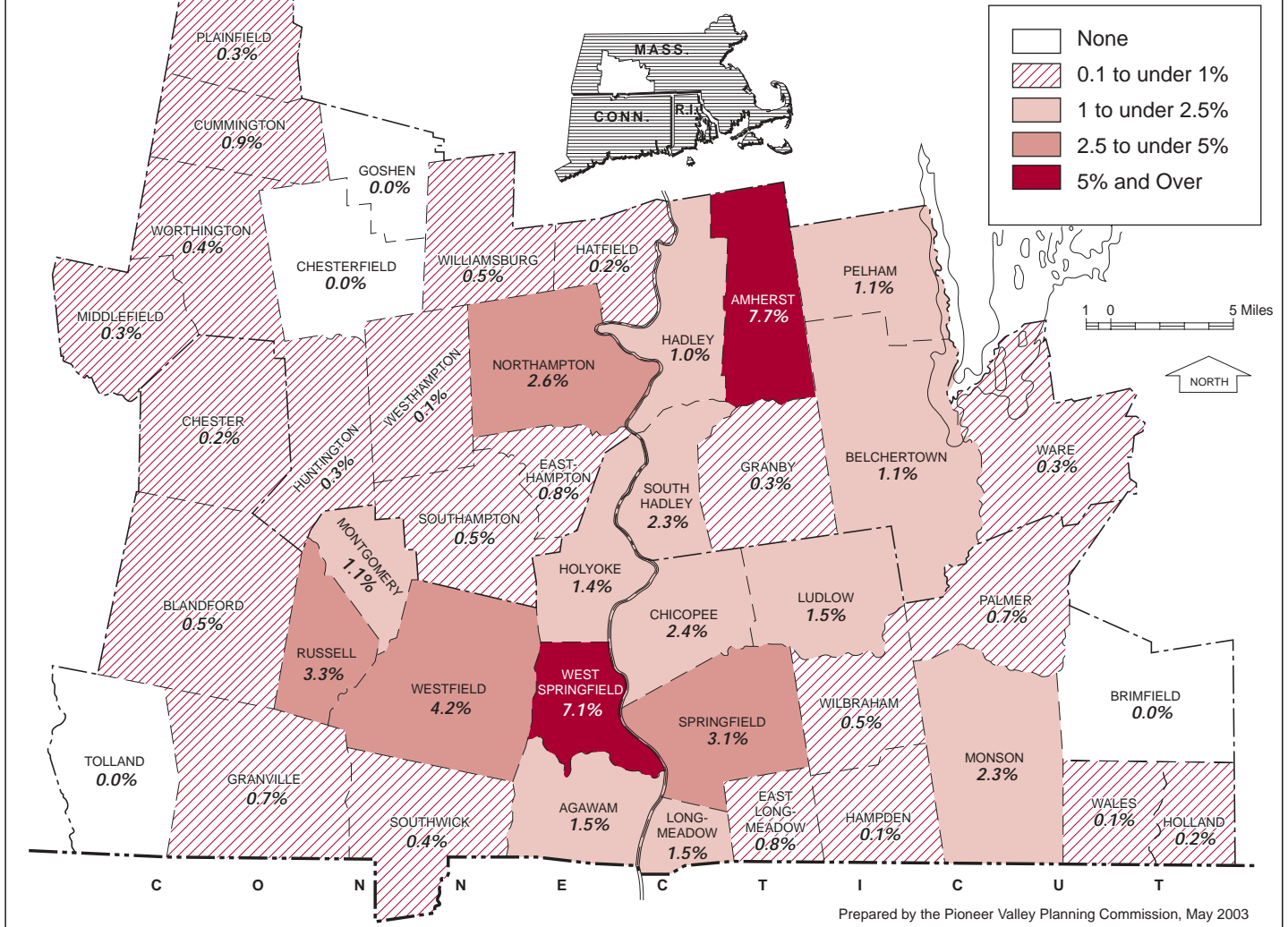


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Recently, immigrants to the region have been settling primarily in large suburban communities such as West Springfield and Westfield, where 7.1 and 4.2 percent of their respective populations are foreign-born people who immigrated between 1990 and 2000 (see Figure 4). Because immigrants tend to be younger than the total population, the proportion that is foreign-born is even higher among the school-age population.

Relative to the United States as a whole, the Pioneer Valley region maintains a rather low poverty rate among its foreign-born population (See Figure 5). In 1999, the poverty rate for the foreign-born population in the region was slightly under 14.8 percent while the poverty rate of the Pioneer Valley region as a whole was 13.5 percent. This small difference illustrates the region's ability to welcome immigrants and provide opportunities for them on an equal footing with the entire regional community. Furthermore, although the poverty rate among foreign-born non-citizens is 20.3 percent, that of foreign-born citizens is only 9.1 percent, or almost five percent less than the poverty rate of the entire region's population. This affirms the positive impact that established immigrants have had on the region, and also confirms the substantial economic advantages of obtaining citizenship.

Figure 4:  
Percent of the Total Population That Immigrated between 1990 and 2000  
in the Pioneer Valley Region



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

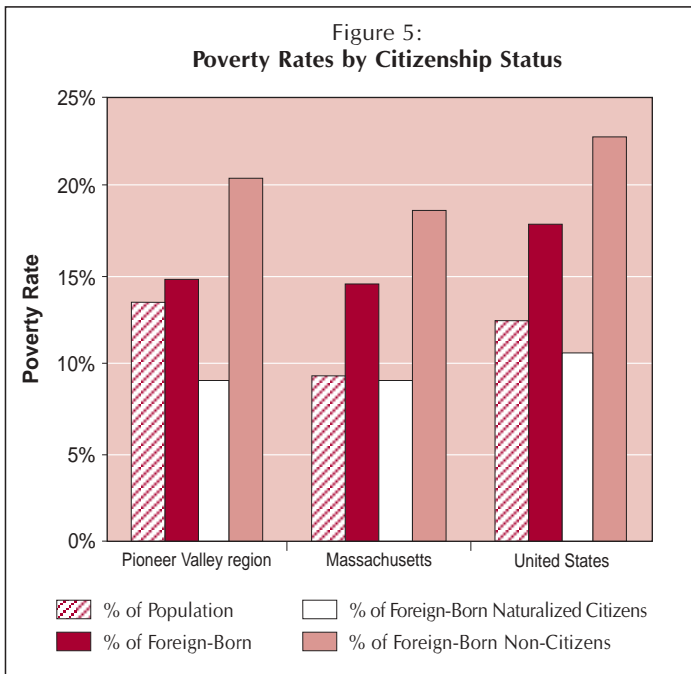
Prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, May 2003

Table 2: Language of Foreign-Born Population in the Pioneer Valley Region

	Persons	Percent of the region's population	Percent of foreign-born population
Total population of the Pioneer Valley (2000)	608,479		
Foreign-born:	42,360	7.0%	
Speak only English at home	10,941	1.8%	25.8%
Speak Spanish at home	3,743	0.6%	8.8%
Speak other Indo-European language at home	20,014	3.3%	47.2%
Speak Asian and Pacific Island language at home	6,167	1.0%	14.6%
Speak other languages at home	1,495	0.2%	3.5%
Foreign-born who speak English "less then well"	8,043	1.3%	19.0%
Foreign-born who speak a language other than English at home	31,419	5.2%	74.2%
Total Pioneer Valley population who speak English "less then well"	20,603	3.6%	3.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

For some new immigrants, the language barrier can present a significant challenge (see Table 2). Of the 608,479 people in the Pioneer Valley region, 20,600 residents, or 3.6 percent, are unable to speak English well (based on self-reporting). Of these, nearly 40 percent are foreign-born. Of the region's foreign-born population, nearly 20 percent speak English "less then well" and almost 75 percent speak a language other than English at home. Among languages spoken by the foreign-born, roughly 50 percent of foreign-born persons speak an Indo-European language other than English or Spanish.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

### Refugee Resettlement

Despite the increasing rate of immigration into the region and the nation, refugee resettlement has diminished as a component of immigration.

	Refugee arrivals to Mass.	Refugee arrivals to WMass.	WMass as percent of Mass.
1998	2,545	738	29.0%
1999	2,692	727	27.0%
2000	2,224	526	23.7%
2001	2,358	589	25.0%

Source: MA Office of Refugees and Immigration

Since 1993, the Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that refugee arrivals to the United States have fallen from 110,000 per year to 70,000 per year in 2000. Within 2000, nearly half of all refugee arrivals came from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the former Soviet Union. In the case of western Massachusetts, including the Pioneer Valley, the number of refugee arrivals has also been decreasing, dropping from 738 in 1998 to just below 600 in 2001. Furthermore, the percentage of Massachusetts refugee arrivals who are settled in western Massachusetts has dropped from 29 percent in 1998 to 25 percent in 2001. Among the refugee population, sizable Vietnamese refugee populations arriving over the past 30 years reside in Springfield. Also, several Somalian refugee families that arrived throughout the 1990s reside in communities located within the greater Hampden County geographic area.

This document is made possible by funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.



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