



**M I N N E S O T A**  
STATE DEMOGRAPHIC CENTER



## POPULATION NOTES

# Estimates of Selected Immigrant Populations in Minnesota: 2004

*Barbara J. Ronningen*

In the late 1970s, Minnesota began to see a new wave of international immigration. Following the end of the war in Vietnam, large numbers of refugees from Southeast Asia began to arrive in Minnesota. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, an increased number of refugees came from Eastern Europe. The hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina brought more refugees from what was Yugoslavia. Famine and civil war bring large numbers of refugees from Africa. Minnesota's non-profit organizations are welcoming and provide needed services and support to these newcomers, and Minnesota has become a prime destination for refugees.

During this same period of time, immigrants came to Minnesota to work in high tech industries. Large numbers of people came from India, China, and Pakistan. These well-educated and well-trained immigrants were hired by the booming technological companies throughout the state.

In the 1990s, Minnesota created jobs at a rate twice that of its population growth, and workers were especially scarce in areas of the state with aging and declining populations, especially southwestern and western counties. Many workers came looking for jobs in the meat, poultry and food processing industries in Greater Minnesota. Most of these workers were Latinos; some from other states and some from Mexico and other Latin American countries. However, immigrants from other parts of the world also sought employment in these industries. Newcomers were welcomed by employers who needed to fill positions in their processing plants, and often these jobs did not require fluency in English or high skill levels. Latino workers also found employment in landscaping, roofing and in dairy.

The effects on Minnesota have been far reaching with visible changes in Minnesota's small towns and cities, schools and businesses. From the revitalization of St. Paul's University Avenue and

Minneapolis' Lake Street to ethnic markets in many small cities in greater Minnesota to a Buddhist temple in a farm house outside Worthington, immigrants have become a very visible presence in many parts of the state. Schools were asked to provide English language training to children and their parents, health care providers needed to establish protocols for patients who do not speak English and police and courts had to find ways to deal fairly with new residents unaccustomed to American judicial structures. Employers had new rules to follow especially when a potential employee was an immigrant. Hiring an undocumented worker is illegal, and Minnesota's companies suddenly had to negotiate the rules and regulations from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and known as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services - USCIS).

## Immigrant Populations

In the most recent data (federal fiscal year 2002) from the Office of Immigration Statistics, 13,522 immigrants came to Minnesota from 160 different countries and every continent except Antarctica. For most of those countries the number of immigrants was less than 50, and for 60 of them the number of immigrants was ten or fewer.

Data from Immigration Statistics give an indication of how the distribution of legal immigrants by country of birth changes over time. In 2002, the highest number of immigrants came from Somalia, but just ten years earlier (1992), only six Somalis immigrated to Minnesota. The number of immigrants from Mexico was less than 200 per year prior to 1990,

but in the mid-1990s, the numbers began to increase dramatically. Immigrants from the four Southeast Asian countries made up two-thirds of all immigrants in 1982. And while the number of people coming from that part of the world has remained significant, in 2002, they made up less than 8 percent of all legal immigrants (1,042).

In addition to the immigrants who come directly from their home country to Minnesota, many immigrants come here from other states – secondary migration. Also, many immigrants (non-refugees) return to their home countries. The Census Bureau estimates that about 30 percent of all legal immigrants decide to leave the U.S. Movement of immigrants makes estimating their numbers more difficult.

Most immigrant groups in Minnesota are comprised of both foreign-born and native-born persons. For populations such as the Latinos who have been in Minnesota for long periods of time, the population is a mix of native-born Minnesotans — many third or even fourth generation Americans — recent arrivals and people who have moved here from another state. The Hmong began coming to Minnesota in the late 1970s. Now the population includes second and third generation members born in the U.S. as well as Hmong who moved to Minnesota from other states, especially California. However, in this report estimates of immigrant populations include all members of each group whether native- or foreign-born, except for Russians. The Russian

estimate focuses on recent immigrants (arriving in the last fifteen years) and their U.S.-born children. Because Russian is an ancestry in the Census, many of those answering with Russian ancestry have been in the U.S. for decades. The primary focus in estimating the Russian population is those people who arrived in the last twenty years and their children.

## Estimates

Estimates of major immigrant populations in Minnesota were made in 1999 using age-based multipliers and enrollment data for language spoken at home. With relatively recent Census data, the hope was that better age-based multipliers could be calculated and estimating these populations would be less problematic. However,

### Immigrant Numbers from Published Data

	1990 Census Population	2000 Census Population	2000 Census Foreign-Born Population	2003-2004 School Enrollment (language data)
<b>Latinos</b>	53,884	143,382	57,573	26,035
<b>Hmong</b>	16,833	45,443	26,234	21,613
<b>Somalis</b>	Not available <sup>1</sup>	11,164	9,338	5,734
<b>Vietnamese</b>	9,387	20,570	15,193	2,910
<b>Russians</b>	31,900	35,513	6,061	2,346
<b>Laotians</b>	6,381	11,516	6,751	2,258
<b>Cambodians</b>	3,858	6,533	4,100	1,718
<b>Ethiopians<sup>2</sup></b>	Not available <sup>1</sup>	5,413	4,487	1,329

<sup>1</sup>The 1990 Census reported only Sub-Saharan African ancestry with a total of 5,415 reporting. No information is available for specific African ancestries. Immigration Statistics data show no Somalis prior to 1990; in 1990 there were 126 Ethiopian immigrants compared with 3 Somalis.

<sup>2</sup>In the Department of Education Language file, there are three separate languages spoken in Ethiopia: Amharic (520 speakers), Oromo (612) and Tigrinya (197). There are many more languages spoken in Ethiopia, and some speakers of those languages may be counted in the unspecified "African" language.

Source: US Census, Minnesota Department of Education

these populations are becoming more diverse with many more U.S.-born and native English speakers.

Age-based multipliers are derived using age data from the U.S. Census and other sources. The calculations involve determining what proportion of the population is school-aged (generally 5-18) and multiplying to get an estimate of the total population. Using age-based multipliers assumes that both the school enrollment figures and the age data in the Census are comparable and very accurate. Unfortunately, these assumptions are not always true. Problems specific to individual populations are detailed below, and adjustments have been made based on other sources of information to get more accurate population estimates.

Using the data from the 2000 Census, the Minnesota Department of Education, the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration Statistics, and the Minnesota Department of Health, estimates can be made of Minnesota's major immigrant populations: Latinos, Hmong, Somalis, Vietnamese, Russians, Laotians, Cambodians and Ethiopians. These eight national origin, ethnic or language groups each represent more than 1,000 children in Minnesota's schools in the 2003-2004 school year.

Children who speak Chinese, Asian Indian languages and Arabic also number over 1,000. For a number of reasons, estimates will not be made for these populations. An examination of the school figures indicates that many of these children do not appear in the language file. While the 2000 Census indicates that about three-quarters of Asian Indians and two-thirds of Chinese are foreign-born, 60 percent of Chinese and 82 percent of Asian Indians speak only English or English very well. For Arabs, the proportion who are foreign-born is much lower (32 percent), and the proportion who speak only English or speak English very well is 84 percent. All of these populations grew rapidly in the 1990s with the Chinese population doubling, Asian Indian population 150 percent larger in 2000 and Arab population increasing 90 percent.

Immigration Statistics reported 2,812 immigrants from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh between 2000 and 2002; 2,014 came from China and Taiwan; and 1,180 from Arabic-speaking nations. These populations are not refugees, and many of the Chinese and Asian Indians came as employee preference immigrants. Age distribution is skewed especially in the Asian Indian population where 44 percent of the population is between age 25 and 39. For the Chinese population, 31 percent are in this

age range. Age-based multipliers give estimates that are much lower than the 2000 Census counts. All of these factors reduce the reliability of estimates of these populations in Minnesota.

### **Latinos**

Latinos are perhaps the most difficult population to estimate. Latinos include native-born citizens, naturalized citizens, legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. In Minnesota according to the 2000 Census, nearly 60 percent of all Latinos were native-born (84,213), and 8 percent were naturalized citizens (11,471), leaving less than a third who were not citizens (46,102). Many Minnesota Latinos speak English and have lived in the state for decades. According to the 2000 Census, about one-third of all Latinos in Minnesota speak English only. This long-established Latino population may not appear in the Department of Education data.

The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration Statistics estimates 60,000 illegal immigrants in Minnesota. However, this number seems very high given the preponderance of Latinos in illegal populations in the U.S. and the small number of non-citizens in Minnesota's Latino population. Nonetheless, the task of estimating any population with a significant number of

illegal immigrants becomes more difficult. Latinos in Minnesota include natives, legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. Their numbers are characterized by a high proportion of males, very high mobility and very rapid growth.

Estimating Latino population based on school data is more problematic than for other populations. The 1999 estimate of Latino population in Minnesota was 125,000 with a margin of error of 15,000. Census 2000 reported 143,382, with 27.3 percent of the population age 5 to 18. This gives a multiplier of 3.66. Using this multiplier with the Hispanic enrollment for 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years, gives an estimate of the population between 82,700 and 92,000, substantially less than the Census Bureau count.

Several problems complicate estimating the Latino population using school data. Enrollment figures appear to be underreported and may be much lower than actual student-age population. Enrollment by race and ethnicity is not necessarily self-reported; sometimes school officials enter this data. Enrollment figures show an increase of 3,200 to 3,400 Hispanic students per year over the last 5 school years, or an annual average increase greater than 10 percent. The number of children who speak Spanish at home continues to grow,

increasing by 2,515 students over last year and 5,359 over 2001-2002.

Another problem with estimating Latinos is that fewer Latinos of school age are enrolled in school than children of other racial and ethnic groups. According to the 2000 Census, only 87.3 percent of Latinos 15 to 17 years old were enrolled in school, or 10 percent less than for all Minnesotans of this age and significantly lower than any other racial or ethnic group. Latinos also have much higher drop-out rates than other ethnic and racial groups. Assuming that school enrollment serves as a good proxy for the school-aged population only works if nearly all children are enrolled. This is not the case for Latinos. The 2000 Census reports that 94.5 percent (34,336) of all Latino children aged 5 to 17 were enrolled in school. Consequently, the multiplier produces an estimate that is too low.

According to the 2000 Census, there were 118 Latino men for every 100 Latino women, and men ages 20 to 39 make up nearly one quarter of the population. For foreign-born, non-citizen Latinos, the gender ratio is 150. While the Latino gender ratio in Minnesota is lower than in many other states, the high proportion of males – especially for foreign-born non-citizens - makes it more difficult to estimate this population. Single male workers can

be much more mobile than men with families. Since the 2000 Census was taken, the economy has been in recession. Some Latino workers may have lost their jobs and moved to other states or returned to their home countries.

All of these factors contribute to problems with estimating this population. Using the age-based multiplier results in an estimate less than the 2000 Census count. Latinos in Minnesota are estimated to number 175,000. This estimate assumes a slower rate of growth in the first four years of this decade than in the 1990s.

### **Hmong**

The Hmong came as refugees beginning in the late 1970s. Because they have been in Minnesota for a generation, the population includes U.S.-born children and grandchildren. Since very few Hmong have entered Minnesota as refugees in recent years, age data from the Department of Health's Office of Refugee Services is unavailable for this population. Also many younger Hmong may speak English and as a result not be counted in the language data from the Department of Education. However, the Hmong population is large and is included in the Census' detailed race tables.

The 1999 estimate of Hmong population derived from language data and a multiplier based on the age distribution of this

population in the 1990 Census was 48,000. However, the 1999 estimate was adjusted upward to 60,000 with a suggestion that this number should be considered the "upper limit." The Census counted 45,443 (this number represents Hmong alone or in combination with another race). The 1999 estimate was based on an incorrect assumption that Hmong fertility rates would decline as second generation Hmong began to form families. Nonetheless, births to women born in Laos (most Hmong were born in Laos, although not all Laotian-born people are Hmong) range from 1,286 in 1995 to 1,008 in 2002, and showed only a slight decline from the mid-1990s. These numbers do not include births to Hmong mothers born in the U.S. Hmong family size, according to the 2000 Census remains very large, averaging 6.4 persons per family.

The 1999 estimate assumed that the proportion of Hmong who are school-aged children, as enumerated by the Minnesota Department of Education, would become smaller as Hmong fertility began to approach that of the white native-born population. However, this assumption proved incorrect. According to the 2000 Census, 56.4 percent of Hmong are under age 18, and nearly 46 percent are school age (5 through 18 - of course, not all 5-year-olds nor all 18-year-olds

are enrolled in school). In the 1999-2000 school year, there were 20,371 Hmong-speaking children in Minnesota schools. In the following year, 21,579 Hmong-speaking children. Using a multiplier derived from the 2000 Census, the Hmong population estimate ranges from 44,486 (1999-2000 school year) to 47,125. The count from the 2000 Census falls within this range, and is not very different than the estimate derived using the 1990 multiplier. There is no independent age distribution data for this population, and the assumption here is that the actual age distribution of the Hmong population is not significantly different from the distribution reported in the 2000 Census.

The rate of increase of the Hmong population in the 1990s was slightly higher than for the Latino population in Minnesota. Part of this growth was fueled by movement of Hmong from California, but most was due to natural increase and some international immigration. International immigration from Southeast Asia continued at a fairly high rate in the 1990s, but unfortunately, it is impossible to know how many of those immigrants were Hmong. This population continues to grow in Minnesota, but like the Hispanic population, many Hmong children now speak only English, and as a result, are not counted in

the school language data. The number of children speaking Hmong at home declined between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 from 22,117 to 21,613. The rate of population increase in the Hmong population is probably somewhat slower than in the 1990s, but assuming smaller families and lower fertility rates proved incorrect. This population numbers 60,000, but will grow to 65,000 by the end of 2004 as the refugees from Thailand (Wat Tham Krabok) arrive in Minnesota.

### Somalis

Somalis are very recent immigrants, arriving after 1990. Most Somalis arrived as refugees, and most Somali children speak only Somali when they arrive. Consequently, the data from the Departments of Health and Education is very useful in estimating this population. One difficulty in estimating Somali numbers is the rapid growth of this population — both through natural increase and immigration. Because Somalis come as refugees, the numbers published by Immigration Statistics do not reflect the entire population. Refugees who entered seeking refugee status may not be counted until their status has been adjusted to legal immigrant. However, since most Somali children speak Somali at home, the enrollment data is quite useful. Finally, while Somali is an ancestry in the 2000 Census, the numbers nationwide (36,313) do not

justify aggregating them in Summary File 4.

Data on Somalis is limited and have been supplemented using the Advanced Query tool from the U.S. Census. In the 2000 Census, 11,164 people reported Somali ancestry. The 1999 estimate of Somali population in Minnesota was 6,000 with a range of 4,500 to 7,500. The multiplier (3.8) used in the estimates was derived from a small sample of Somali families in a Minneapolis school. According to Census 2000, about 28 percent of Somalis are between the ages of 6 and 17 (unfortunately, single year of age is unavailable). Interestingly, the Census counted 2,675 Somalis ages 6 through 17, a difference of 66 from the school enrollment figures for 1999-2000. Using this age group as a proxy for school age population gives a multiplier of 3.6. Using the multiplier and the number of Somali-speaking children enrolled in Minnesota's schools (2,609 in 1999-2000 and 4,196 in 2000-2001) gives a range for 2000 of 9,300 to 15,000, again a range that includes the count in Census 2000. The range is wider than is desired, but given the dearth of data, the estimate and the Census count seem reasonable.

The Somali population is growing very rapidly. The number of births to Somali-born women increased each year since 1990 when there was only one, to

78 births in 1995, 573 in 1999, 808 in 2000, 994 in 2001 and 1,038 in 2002. Was the estimate in 1999 too low? Using the new multiplier and school data from the 1998-1999 school year gives a population estimate of 6,800. Given the rapid rate of growth, the estimate made in 1999 was surprisingly accurate, and the count in Census 2000 also looks good.

The multiplier based on refugee age distribution is lower than that based on the 2000 Census. For refugees who arrived in Minnesota in 1999, about 43 percent were children age 6 to 17, giving a multiplier of 2.34. For refugees who arrived in 2000, about 41 percent were children age 6 to 17, or a multiplier of 2.41. These multipliers are lower than that derived from 2000 Census data. Using these multipliers gives a range of population from 6,096 to 10,129. While the lower number from 1999 is close to the 1999 estimate, the higher number based on refugee arrivals in 2000 and the number of children speaking Somali in the 2000-2001 school year is slightly lower than the Census count. Looking at the most recent data (2000 through May 2004) gives a multiplier of 2.57, higher than the earlier years, but still much lower than the Census multiplier.

A number of factors could contribute to the differences. The Census count is a sample data item

(ancestry) meaning that this question was asked of approximately 1 in 6 households; consequently, there could be some sampling error. There may be Somalis who entered Minnesota in recent years under the family preference provisions of the immigration law or who came here after initially settling in another state. In both cases, these Somali immigrants would not be included in the refugee numbers and may explain the differences in the age distribution. Nonetheless, this comparison of the 1999 estimate and the Census 2000 count supports the Census count.

Growth in the number of Somali children in schools slowed in this year, only 94 more than in 2002-2003. Unlike many other immigrant populations, most Somalis speak Somali at home, making the estimate using the age-based multiplier fairly accurate. The number of legal immigrants coming to the U.S. from East Africa and the Middle East has slowed, and there is no evidence of large numbers entering illegally. The increase seen in the numbers from Immigration Statistics for federal fiscal year 2002 reflects adjustment of status for refugees — meaning that many of the Somalis counted in 2002 had been in the U.S. for years waiting to be granted permanent residence status. This population is young and has a very high fertility rate

with 1,000 births each year to Somali-born mothers. Natural increase contributes to strong growth in the population. Data on refugee arrivals showed a slowing in 2002 and 2003, but a substantial uptick for the first 4 months of the current year. The Somali population is estimated at 25,000.

### Vietnamese

The Vietnamese population in Minnesota is not as visible as some of the other immigrant groups from Southeast Asia. According to the 2000 Census, 11 percent of the Vietnamese population speaks only English and another 28 percent speak English well. The 2000 Census reported 20,209 Vietnamese, more than double the 9,387 in the 1990 Census. Immigration from Vietnam totaled 1,774 for 2000, 2001 and 2002, and births to Vietnamese-born mothers numbered in the 400s for the last three years. The

Vietnamese population is estimated at 25,000.

### Russians

The population of recent Russian immigrants is estimated at 12,500, very close to the estimate derived using the age-based multiplier. The 2000 Census gives a foreign-born population of 6,061; Immigration Statistics show a total of 1,411 immigrants for 2000, 2001 and 2002. Births to mothers born in Russia have increased each year and were at 252 in 2002. Refugee arrivals continue from Russia with 407 arriving between 2000 and May 2004.

### Laotians

Minnesota's Laotian population did not increase as rapidly as the other Southeast Asian populations, growing 68 percent between 1990 and 2000. Almost 40 percent of the Laotian population

was born in the U.S., and nearly half of the population speaks only English or speaks English "very well." Immigration from Laos has been less than from Vietnam but slightly higher than from Cambodia and Thailand. However, both Laotians and Hmong people come from Laos. According to the 2000 Census (5% Public Use Microdata Sample data), approximately 71 percent of Laotian-born persons were Hmong and 18 percent Laotian. Births to mothers born in Laos present the same problem. The estimate for this population based on immigration, language and birth data is 13,000.

### Cambodians

Many of the same reasons given for adjusting the estimate of the Laotian population upward also apply to the Cambodian population. The Cambodian population is somewhat

smaller, with fewer immigrants and fewer births to Cambodian mothers. This population is estimated at 7,500, an increase of 2,000 since the 2000 Census.

### Ethiopians

Estimating the Ethiopian population is fraught with difficulties. The language data is divided between Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya, birth data for mothers born in Ethiopia includes mothers born in Eritrea, and finally, ethnic differences within the immigrant population from Ethiopia make estimating an Ethiopian population somewhat sensitive. Immigration Statistics reported a large number of Ethiopian immigrants (918) in 2002, although if these immigrants came as refugees, they may have been here prior to 2002. Refugee arrivals from Ethiopia totaled 1,596 between 2000 and May

## Estimates of Immigrant Populations - 2004

Immigrant Group	School Enrollment 2003-2004	Age-based Multiplier	State Demographic Center Estimate of Population
Latinos <sup>4</sup>	38,643	3.63	175,000
Hmong	21,613	2.22	60,000
Somalis	5,734	3.80	25,000
Vietnamese	2,910	4.57	25,000
Russians	2,346	5.15	12,500
Laotians	2,258	3.15	13,000
Cambodians	1,718	2.82	7,500
Ethiopians	1,329	4.13	7,500

<sup>4</sup>Because many Hispanic children speak English at home, Hispanic enrollment numbers from the Gender and Ethnicity file from the Department of Education have been used for estimating Latino population.

Sources: Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota State Demographic Center

2004. The language data (sum of Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya speakers) has increased by 339 speakers since 2001-2002. More than half of the Ethiopians in the 2000 Census reported that they speak only English or speak English "very well." The estimate of this population is 7,500.

### **What Can We Expect in the Next Few Years?**

The biggest factor affecting the number of immigrants to Minnesota in the near future is the resettlement of Hmong from the Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand beginning in summer of 2004. This group may number as many as 5,000 persons, and all are expected to arrive in Minnesota by the end of 2004. In addition to the Hmong from Thailand, refugee arrivals in Minnesota are on a pace to exceed 3,000 in 2004. Refugees continue to seek new lives in Minnesota, and the numbers remain high despite 9/11 and the war in Iraq.

Those who work with refugee health and refugee resettlement expect to see increased numbers of Burmese refugees coming to Minnesota. Currently, Burmese are a small population, but resettlement efforts could swell their numbers. Large numbers of African refugees continue to arrive each year.

While the recession may have temporarily depressed the number

of immigrants seeking work in Minnesota's food processing industries, aging and population loss in rural areas continued in the 1990s. These demographic trends are expected to continue with resultant tight labor markets in areas where food, especially meat and poultry, processing is concentrated. Other industries that rely heavily on immigrant labor will continue to import workers, unless there is some radical change in national policy towards that type of hiring.

Changes in the immigration laws could have marked effects on the number of people moving to Minnesota from other countries. Whether the U.S. Congress chooses to enact a temporary worker law or to restrict immigration, the results will affect the numbers of international immigrants in Minnesota. Policy changes and developments throughout the world will affect international immigration to Minnesota. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to predict what exactly those effects will be.

Upon request, Population Notes will be made available in alternative format, such as Braille, large print or audio tape. For TTY, contact Minnesota Relay Service at 800-627-3529 and ask for the State Demographic Center. For more information or additional copies of Population Notes, contact:



**MINNESOTA**  
STATE DEMOGRAPHIC CENTER

658 Cedar St., Room 300  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-2557 Fax: 651-296-1754

[www.demography.state.mn.us](http://www.demography.state.mn.us)  
[demography.help@state.mn.us](mailto:demography.help@state.mn.us)