

# PopBites

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## Trends in International Migration to Minnesota Continue

The number of international immigrants to Minnesota was higher in 1996 than in any previous year in the 1990s, with 8,977 new residents coming from foreign lands directly to the state. Recently, new and more detailed information — including data on number of immigrants by country of origin — was obtained from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, making it possible to give a better picture of international immigration to Minnesota since 1990. This data indicates that trends in international migration outlined in the May 1996 PopBite have continued: Minnesota has a high proportion of refugees, Southeast Asians continue to make up the largest numbers of immigrants to Minnesota, and European and African immigration has continued to grow.

More immigrants came to Minnesota from Asia than from any other continent — 4,163 in 1996. More than half of that number (2,445) came from countries in Southeast Asia — Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Minnesota was the destination of nearly 5 percent of Southeast Asian immigrants to the United States. Mainland China, India and the Philippines (classified as an Asian country by the INS) continued to send large numbers of immigrants.

The second largest number of immigrants in 1996 came from Africa. In the 1990s, the number of immigrants from Africa has risen steadily from 518 in 1990 to 1,735 in 1996. Nearly 8 percent of Africans from the Horn of Africa chose Minnesota as their U.S. destination.

Immigrants from Europe began to increase after 1989 with the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and in 1996, European immigrants were third in total numbers, with 1,683. Immigrants from the former Soviet republics made up more than half of the total (888). Mexican and Canadian immigrants account for three-fourths of immigrants from other North American countries, which include nations in the Caribbean and Central America. Mexican immigrants have increased in numbers in recent years, and the number of illegal Mexican aliens detained by the INS also seems to have risen.

Political events throughout the world have a strong effect on immigration to Minnesota, more so than on national immigration. As described in the previous report on international immigration, a large proportion of immigrants to Minnesota come seeking refuge or asylum. In 1996, refugees made up 42.2 percent of all Minnesota immigrants, with large numbers coming from the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cameroon and Southeast Asia countries.

## MINNESOTA PLANNING

