Economic Implications of Pennsylvania’s Foreign-Born Population

Fact Sheet 3: Earnings and Income Among Rural Pennsylvania’s Foreign-Born Workforce

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Research findings

- On average, foreign-born members of the workforce in rural Pennsylvania earned $34,784 per year in wage and salary income across the 2012-2016 period, which was more than $10,000 greater than the average among native-born members of the rural workforce ($24,348). However, the poverty rate among the rural foreign-born workforce was 21.1 percent, nearly 9 percentage points higher than the 12.6 percent rate among the native-born rural workforce. These results suggest the rural foreign-born workforce is characterized by high levels of inequality.

- Both native- and foreign-born members of the rural workforce earn less, on average, in wage and salary income than their urban counterparts. However, the foreign-born advantage in wage and salary income is unique to rural Pennsylvania. In urban areas, native-born workers ($35,326) have a slightly higher average wage and salary income than foreign-born workers ($35,132).

- Among the rural workforce in Pennsylvania, native-born adults are much more likely to own businesses and receive business income than foreign-born adults. On average, native-born rural adults earned $27,818 and $22,144 in non-farm and farm business income per year, respectively, and foreign-born adults earned $24,000 and $0, respectively.

- On average, rural foreign-born adults received slightly more income from welfare ($1,800) than native-born adults ($1,349); but native-born rural adults received more income from social security ($11,948), SSI ($7,225), unemployment benefits ($6,032) and disability benefits ($11,772) than rural foreign-born adults ($10,449, $5,075, $4,032, and $0, respectively).

Data and methods

This profile is from the study, Economic Implications of Pennsylvania’s Foreign-Born Population, which analyzed individual-level data from the 2013-2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey. The survey collects data on income during the prior year, which corresponds to the 2012-2016 period. The sample was limited to individuals aged 16-64 years. Individuals were classified as rural residents if they lived in a non-metropolitan county, as defined by the U.S. Office for Management and Budget. For the poverty analysis, individual-level data from the 2016 American Community Survey 1-year sample were analyzed. The sample was limited to members of the workforce, defined as individuals aged 16-64 years. The research classified individuals as rural residents if they lived in a PUMA with a population density below the Pennsylvania-wide average.

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