



IMMIGRATION

Cities were ranked based on opportunities for immigrants. The best weren't in South Florida

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Greater metropolitan Miami wound up in 29th place among 100 large U.S. cities in a study of the opportunities they offer to immigrants to integrate into society.

But it was not the top-ranked Florida city in the study by the bipartisan New American Economy. That distinction went to St. Petersburg, which wound up in 13th place on the national list.

The report, titled National Integration Index, was published Monday on National Citizenship Day. By continuing to use this site, you give your consent to our use of cookies for analytics, personalization and ads. [Read more](#) ✕

The only other South Florida city evaluated was Hialeah, which ended up in 79th place.

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The researchers used 12 indicators to quantify the impact that immigrants have in big cities as well as the support they receive to help them be successful.

Among the indicators were support for immigrant entrepreneurs, the socio-economic possibilities of foreign-born residents, the education levels and civic participation.

The scores run from 1 to 5, and greater Miami obtained a 3.3. The region did well in four areas: scoring 5 for facilitating the economic empowerment of immigrants; 5 for the civic participation of immigrants, who tend to register to vote and become public servants; 4 for equal access to information, services and opportunities; and 4 for the municipal governments' involvement with and support for immigrants.

But greater Miami barely scored a 1 for the immigrants' economic ability to provide for themselves and their families, and 2 for the way in which law enforcement officials treat immigrants.

The region earned a 3 for job opportunities and quality of life, based on factors such as access to housing and health and education services

Hialeah received a 2.6 rating, with a 1 for government leadership and law enforcement's treatment of immigrants. It received a 4 for housing conditions, 3 for integration, job opportunities and civic participation, and 2 for economic prosperity.

Orlando was ranked in 42nd place and Jacksonville in 46th place.

The top ranking among the 100 cities across the United States went to Newark in New Jersey.

The researchers used data from the U.S. census, polls and analysis of municipal policies.

The report notes that the greater Miami metropolitan region has 2,324,431 immigrant residents, or 39 percent of its population. About 220,400 are business owners. The immigrants paid \$13 billion in taxes in 2014, and their purchasing power was estimated at \$42 billion.

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The report came at a time when the Trump Administration has been tightening immigration policies and increasing the number of detentions of undocumented immigrants while proposing changes to the regulations for obtaining work, study and business visas.

Miami-Dade County also has adopted policies criticized by activists as attacks on the immigrant community. Days after President Donald Trump was sworn into office in 2017, county Mayor Carlos Giménez ordered a change under which undocumented immigrants in local jails can be held additional time until they are handed over to federal immigration officials.

Giménez ordered the change after Trump threatened to withhold federal funds for state and local governments that don't cooperate with federal immigration officials.

“While Washington remains unable to fix the country's broken immigration system, local governments increasingly recognize the value of immigrants for the success of cities, and they are working to ensure that all residents reach their maximum potential,” the report's authors wrote on www.newamericaneconomy.org.

The report was unveiled Monday during a news conference at Miami Dade College by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, State Rep. Javier Fernández, Miami-Dade Commissioner Daniella Levine Cava, City of Miami Mayor Francis Suárez and Doral Mayor Juan Carlos Bermúdez.

“Together, we are focusing on helping all the people who want to achieve U.S. citizenship and make the American Dream a reality,” said Suárez.

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