



BUSINESS

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Greater Miami's high-skilled workforce is fueled largely by immigrant talent, too

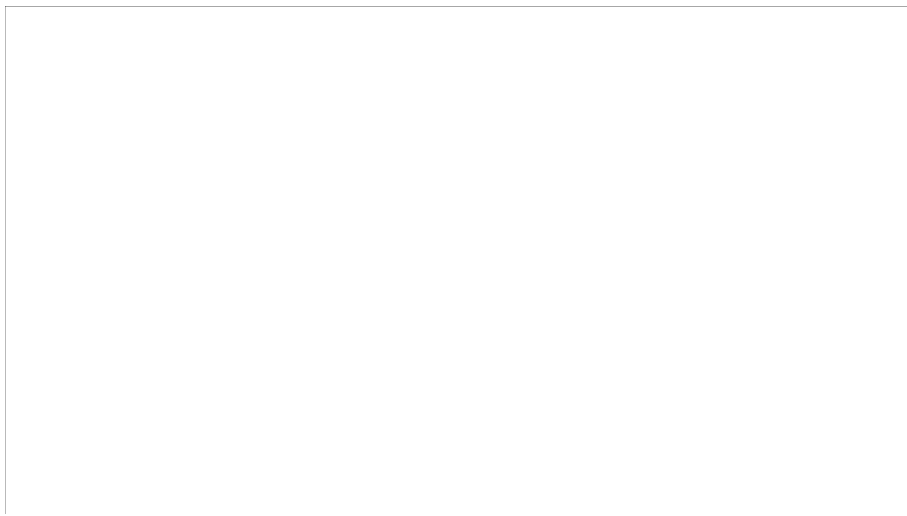
BY NANCY DAHLBERG
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Anton Diego, born in Moscow but raised in Havana and Spain, runs EveryMundo, a Miami-based marketing-technology company serving the travel and hospitality industry.

The EveryMundo team mirrors their leader's international roots and company name. Of the company's 57 full-time Miami employees, 37 were born outside the United States.

"We're truly about the American Dream," Diego said at a recent tech event. "We want to make a difference in this city. We need to be able to recruit outside the United states and look south. Some of our top developers come to the U.S., they bring their families ... and they teach junior developers their skills. ... They improve our world."

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South Florida's economy is more dependent on immigrant talent in companies like EveryMundo than many may think, particularly in the professional workforce, according to a new analysis by Florida International University and the Creative Class Group.

While immigrant labor most certainly powers the service economy in big numbers, the foreign-born comprise nearly four out of 10 of the professional workers in business, the sciences, tech, education, healthcare, media and the arts in the metropolitan area that spans Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties. This 38.9 percent share swamps Los Angeles (31.6 percent), San Francisco (29.8 percent) and New York (28.1 percent) and is second only to San Jose, Calif., at 47 percent. And if one just looked at Miami-Dade, the professionals — the region’s “Creative Class” — would be 51 percent foreign-born.

“Miami is entirely dependent on foreign-born talent for this economy to run,” said urban affairs expert Richard Florida, founder of the Creative Class Group and a part-time resident of South Florida. “Even for those of us who know Miami as an immigrant destination, it is still kind of amazing.”

The new study, *Miami Turns on Global Talent*, authored by Florida and Steven Pedigo, evaluates the Miami metro area’s immigrant talent base against the 53 largest U.S. metropolitan areas. The report looks at both high-skilled talent — professionals and entrepreneurs who are part of the creative class — and lower-skilled workers in retail, food service and tourism who fuel the region’s service economy.

This is the third report in a series as part of the FIU-Miami Creative City Initiative, a multi-year project. The last report, released in February, found that the size of the creative class in the Miami metro area is 682,000 workers. That makes South Florida’s creative class the 11th-biggest in the nation — but at just 26 percent of the overall South Florida economy, very low compared with the other large metros.

[READ MORE: Can Miami rise from being a service economy? There’s hope in the numbers]

“If we are building a knowledge economy, that 40 percent [immigrant talent] is more important to us than it is in other places,” said Florida, director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto and visiting fellow of the FIU-Miami Creative City Initiative.

You don’t have to tell that to some of Miami’s high-growth tech companies.

Health-tech company CareCloud employs 230 people, 181 of whom are based in South Florida. Of those living in South Florida, about 70 percent were born in other countries or are first generation U.S., of foreign background, said Ana Ribeiro, CareCloud’s VP of human resources. CareCloud provides practice management and electronic health records software for medical groups.

“We believe that having a richly diverse workforce is a competitive advantage for CareCloud. Our clients benefit because a diverse workforce brings more perspective and experiences that add value to our business,” Ribeiro said.

YellowPepper, a Miami financial technology company specializing in mobile payments, has 16 employees in Miami — 13 of them foreign-born, said Belgium-born CEO Serge Elkiner. Half of the South Florida workforce of Miami Beach technology company Admobilize is foreign born, said CEO Rodolfo Saccoman, who was born in Brazil. What’s more, almost a quarter of EveryMundo’s Miami workforce are working on professional visas, said Diego, the company’s CEO.

[READ MORE: Miami tech companies on immigration – ‘now is not the time to shut the door’]

“Miami often wants to be in the company of great technology and innovation places like Silicon Valley, and here it is,” Florida said. “I would say that is terribly at risk with the new administration. For instance, the attempt to cut back H-1B visas could have a dramatic blow. If this climate chills, it could do real damage to Miami’s economy.”

According to the new report, Miami ranked No. 1 or 2 in the nation for the percentage of foreign-born in its highly educated ranks — those with some college through Ph.D. holders, according to the new report.

Immigrants make up 41.4 percent of college graduates in the region, including those with a bachelor’s degree or higher level of education. Greater Miami is more dependent on immigrants for highly educated talent than Los Angeles (35.9 percent), San Francisco (32.4 percent) or New York (30.9 percent). Its share is more than double that of Boston, often thought of as an educational hub, Florida said.

Local universities play a critical role in educating immigrant talent, the report said. FIU, for example, leads the nation in awarding bachelor’s and master’s degrees to Hispanic students.

“We are very proud of that,” said FIU President Mark Rosenberg, in an interview on Monday. While only 7 percent of FIU’s students are international students on J-1 visas, nearly 70 percent of FIU’s student body is Hispanic, he said.

Immigrants make up 42 percent of adults with associate degrees in the region, ranking the Miami metro area No. 1 in the nation. And in Miami-Dade County alone, 57.5 percent with associate degrees are foreign-born.

Rosenberg believes Miami can become a more innovation-centric economy over the next decade, but there is still a way to go.

“Our ability to compete will be a function of our ability to attract creatives from other countries who see Miami as a globally competitive platform upon which to develop their companies,” Rosenberg said. “Our geography and our demography will be our destiny.”

Looking more broadly, Greater Miami’s share of total foreign-born residents (38.9 percent) is No. 1 in the nation, and three times the national average. That makes the share of foreign-born residents higher here than in San Jose, Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York, according to the FIU-Creative Class Group report. More than half of the population is foreign-born in Miami-Dade, Pedigo said.

That share is growing quickly, too. Another report published by FIU last week found that Miami-Dade logged the second fastest-growing rate of international migration in the United States — up 397 percent since 2010 — at a time when its domestic migration shrunk considerably. In Broward, the Metropolitan Center’s report found, the flow of internationals was 10 times higher than domestic migration in the same time period.

The FIU-Creative Class Group report also found:

- Immigrants make up more than five out of every 10 people in South Florida with a high school diploma. In Miami-Dade alone, that figure is nearly 70 percent, Pedigo said.
- Immigrants account for more than 60 percent of Greater Miami’s blue-collar workers, who work in factories, construction and transportation jobs. That is just behind Los Angeles (60.9 percent) but greater than in New York (50 percent). In Miami-Dade alone, immigrants make up 75.5 percent of blue collar workers.
- Immigrants comprise nearly half (47.2 percent) of Greater Miami’s service workers, including those working in hospitality, tourism, food preparation and service, retail and personal care industries. This is the highest share of any large metro in the country. In Miami-Dade alone, immigrants make up 61.4 percent of the service workers.

“This report is a wake-up call — wake up and realize how much this economy turns on foreign-born talent, much more so than the biggest metros in the United States, New York and Los Angeles,” Florida said. “If we want to maintain our economy and grow it, we better remain open. The numbers speak for themselves.”

[READ MORE: Traffic woes, income gap threaten Miami’s emergence as global city]

Nancy Dahlberg: @ndahlberg

SHARE OF FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS BY CATEGORY

The first figure shows the percentage share of foreign born in the Miami metropolitan area by category, followed by its national rank in parentheses. The tri-county metro area ranked No. 1 or 2 among the 54 largest metro areas in the nation. The second percentage figure is for Miami-Dade only for the same category.

- Overall population: 38.9% (1); 52.6%
- Among high school graduates: 51.6% (1); 69.7%
- Some college or associate’s degree: 41.9% (1); 57.5%
- Bachelor’s degree: 41.4% (2); 60.4%
- Graduate or professional degree: 39.4% (2); 53.0%
- Creative Class: 38.9% (2); 52.3%
- Service Class: 47.2% (1); 61.4%
- Working Class: 60.3% (2); 75.5%

Source: Creative Class Group



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Michael St John · Creative director at Self-Employed

I am a Creative Director in the fashion business, born in UK lived in Italy for many years and am now a US permanent resident. I have built brands for some of the most

I am a Creative Director in the fashion business, born in OK lived in Italy for many years and am now a US permanent resident. I have built brands for some of the most important companies in the world. I lecture and teach at schools in Tokyo, London and Milan and have offered my services (even pro bono) to Miami design colleges and universities without even receiving a reply. Therefore, I don't quite understand the sense of this article. MSJ

Like · Reply · 5 · Mar 28, 2017 8:04am



Hailey Caleb · Boston College
sdgsdgsd

Like · Reply · Mar 28, 2017 8:05am



Marcio Moerbeck

What is unfortunate is that all of this talent converging to a city with little to no other industry support beyond hospitality is creating a talent glut, therefore driving wages even further down. It would be great to see other companies come here and take advantage of such talent pool, but US companies don't see Miami as a viable market since there aren't customers here and the cost of setting up shop here is at par with other more viable cities like NY and LA. It's a lose/lose proposition for all involved.

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Jorge Ituarte

We are all immigrants. WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ILLEGAL ALLIENS??????? I'LL TELL YOU WHAT GANGS AND THE ILLEGAL DRUG INDUSTRY WORTH TRILLIONS!!!!!! We have got us a war on our hands. WAKE UP PEOPLE!!!! International Communists are funding their global revolutionary ambitions with the sale of illegal drugs with the help of a bunch of degenerates with no morals. The most profitable industry in the world right now.

Like · Reply · 4 · Mar 28, 2017 9:58am



Roro Kewule

The irony is that the Cuban politicians (Gimenez, Sosa, etc.) now declaring Miami NOT to be a sanctuary city would be illegals if they entered under today's laws. They care little about others except themselves.

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Dale Bano · Kabul, Afghanistan

I want to know how the heck am I classified as an immigrant?? and I was born here in Miami and that is the United States... I am a Native not an immigrant!!!! people advocating that we all are immigrants need to speak for themselves.. if you were born here you are not an immigrant.. smh this is nothing more than anti-gringo sentiment and they say Trump is racist?? I guess these people live in houses with no mirrors

Like · Reply · 2 · Mar 28, 2017 12:21pm · Edited



Jorge Ituarte

Roro Kewule No they would not. We who were EXILED from Communist totalitarian Cuba were mostly Spanish and English speaking highly educated doctors, engineers, architects, artists, lawyer professionals most of whom went to college here in the United States (like my dad who went to Princeton). We hit the ground running and built this town from the ground up. There was nothing really here before we arrived except Miami Beach maybe. Cuban Americans are 30% of Miami-Dade and we pay 58% of the taxes and most of us now are thinking of relocating.. Cuba is 90 miles away and the way it was before... See More

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Vic Hernandez · Hillsborough Community College

Just make sure they are legal and no problem. Illegals drive down salaries and take jobs away from Americans and suck up benefits entitled to Americans.

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Roro Kewule

and they harvest your food, clean your homes, cut your lawns..... things you won't do

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 28, 2017 11:28am



John Hoff · Social work at Social activist

Roro Kewule
Sounds like slavery to me.

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 28, 2017 2:10pm



David Rodriguez-Zamora

Roro Kewule We don't do them because we are not uneducated or illiterate. We are not in this country illegally. THAT, is why we don't do it. Now if you made these jobs for only those whom are documented and legal, you would find that these plantations, oops, farms and fields I mean, would increase their pay as they would legally have to, and this country's poor and unemployed, would begin their journey towards upward mobility far faster than they do now, having to rely on the taxpayers' hard earned dollars. This isn't a Democrat or Republican issue as both parties take advantage of the situation. This is the documented and hard working "PEOPLE's" issue, who are the ones being hurt and decimated by providing all types of benefits to illegals, while we see ourselves pushed to the back of the line.

Like · Reply · 2 · Mar 28, 2017 2:31pm · Edited



Dale Bano · Kabul, Afghanistan

yes, bilingual only jobs... bilingual job advertisements = hey gringos white or black don't apply for this job even if you happen to speak Spanish..and that rubs a lot of people the wrong way

Like · Reply · 2 · Mar 28, 2017 12:16pm



Ed Hummell · Works at Retired

So back in the 1970's the battle cry was: "Will the last American leaving Miami bring the American Flag."

Is that one or two generations ago? I am not sure the english speaking exodus was 'Voluntary'?

In the 1980's Lindsley Lumber was bought by Lonestar Cement an International Supplier. It had to meet 'Federal Equal Opportunity Laws' more so. The joke was (allegedly) with the purchase of Lindsley it brought on so many minorities by way of (Spanish) that they could even begin firing minorities and be well within the Federal Guidelines.

Now for Immigrants dominating SE Florida.....could have been an "On Line Course".

Like · Reply · Mar 29, 2017 7:50am



Mike Vidal · Chief Technology Officer/Senior Executive at ELS

The disingenuousness of this article and study is that many of these imigrant knowledge workers drive down wages which is good for the employer but is bad for the employee. That is the one item that many studies don't cite with the H1B visa loophole. Now you have a lay off of all these tech workers and you get the ploriferation of computer repair for \$10 signs stuck to light poles all over the city. Tlak about killing a business.

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 29, 2017 8:57am



Julio Mercy Stieffel · Miami High School

Please send this article to our President. Perhaps one of his aides can read it to him at bedtime.

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