



Immigrants' taxes play an outsized role in the U.S. government's fiscal health

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It's tax season, and foreign workers, refugees and undocumented immigrants are among those scrambling to file by the April 18 deadline.

Immigrants paid \$525 billion in local, state and federal taxes in 2021 according to the American Immigration Council. As it turns out, those contributions are key to the government's fiscal health.

Roughly a quarter of Houstonians are foreign-born, so tax preparation goes down in many languages, including “English, Spanish, Chinese, Burmese, Vietnamese,” said Raymond Nguyen with BakerRipley, a nonprofit that helps thousands of Houston's immigrant families file their taxes.

“It's a lot of explanation, hand-holding for them, especially for the folks that are filing for the first time,” Nguyen said.

Those contributions from immigrants punch above their weight, according to Steve Hubbard of the American Immigration Council.

“They're more likely to be working than just in the general population,” Hubbard said, which would mean immigrants pay a greater share of taxes than their overall population numbers would suggest.

They also have a positive fiscal impact because many come as young adults, ready to work and pay taxes — and the government didn't have to spend a dime on their education.

“Immigrants pay \$1.38 in taxes for every \$1 that they consume in government benefits,” said Alex Nowrasteh with the Cato Institute.

As for U.S.-born folks? They pay just 69 cents in taxes for every dollar Uncle Sam spends on them.

