

Chinese and Mandarin-Speaking Population and Employment in Northern New England

Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont

Overview

Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are among the least densely populated states in the United States and have historically had relatively small Asian populations. However, residents and visitors may notice greater numbers of Asian, Chinese, Taiwanese, or Mandarin-speaking people in certain communities, particularly in southern Maine and areas connected to the larger New England economy.

A visible increase in a particular community does not necessarily represent the same rate of change statewide. Tourism, universities, employment centers, seasonal populations, and regional migration can all affect what people observe locally.

The U.S. Census Bureau provides data that can be used to distinguish the overall foreign-born population from specific places of birth. Its detailed tables separately identify China excluding Taiwan and Taiwan, allowing the populations to be examined separately rather than treating all Mandarin speakers as Chinese nationals.

1. Maine

Maine had an estimated population of approximately **1.405 million in 2024**. The 2024 American Community Survey estimated that approximately **4.2% of Maine residents were foreign-born**.

Maine's Asian population remains relatively small compared with many metropolitan areas of the United States. Nevertheless, a small statewide population can become much more visible in individual communities.

Areas where the population may be more noticeable

Southern Maine has several characteristics that can increase the visibility of immigrant and international populations:

- Portland and the surrounding metropolitan area
- Southern Maine's connection to New Hampshire and Massachusetts

- Universities and colleges
- Healthcare and professional employment
- Hospitality and tourism
- International businesses
- Transportation and logistics

Tourist communities such as Wells, Ogunquit, Kennebunk, and Portland can also have a substantially different population mix during the tourism season than their permanent resident populations suggest.

2. New Hampshire

New Hampshire has a larger overall population than Maine and Vermont and is more closely connected to the Boston metropolitan economy.

The state's proximity to Massachusetts creates additional opportunities for people to live in New Hampshire while working, studying, or maintaining economic connections elsewhere in New England.

The same factors that can increase visibility in Maine can therefore occur in New Hampshire:

- Universities
- Technology and professional employment
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Hospitality
- International students
- Regional commuting
- Family and immigrant networks

New Hampshire should therefore be evaluated separately from Maine rather than assuming that changes in one state represent the entire region.

3. Vermont

Vermont has the smallest population of the three states.

Because the state's population is relatively small, even modest changes in the number of international residents can be noticeable in particular communities.

Vermont also has colleges and universities that attract international students and professional workers. Burlington and the surrounding area have a greater concentration of international residents and businesses than many rural parts of the state.

As with Maine and New Hampshire, the presence of Mandarin-speaking residents does not establish whether they are from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, or another country.

4. Chinese, Taiwanese, and Mandarin-Speaking Populations

These categories should be kept separate.

Chinese

"Chinese" can refer to:

- Chinese ancestry
- Chinese ethnicity
- People born in China
- Chinese-American citizens
- People from Taiwan or Hong Kong
- People who speak a Chinese language

These are not interchangeable categories.

Taiwanese

Taiwan is separately identified in Census place-of-birth data.

A person born in Taiwan may speak Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, or another language. A Taiwanese-American may also have been born in the United States.

Mandarin

Mandarin is widely spoken in both mainland China and Taiwan.

Therefore:

Mandarin speaker ≠ Chinese national

and

Chinese ancestry ≠ foreign-born

and

foreign-born ≠ undocumented

The Census Bureau's detailed place-of-birth data specifically distinguish China excluding Taiwan from Taiwan.

5. Why the Population May Be Increasing or More Visible

Several factors can contribute to an increase in the number of Chinese or Mandarin-speaking people observed in Northern New England.

Education

Universities and colleges attract international students. Some international students eventually remain in the United States through employment, family relationships, adjustment of immigration status, or other lawful immigration pathways.

Employment

International workers can be found in healthcare, technology, education, hospitality, research, manufacturing, and professional occupations.

Regional Migration

Northern New England is not economically isolated by state boundaries.

Someone may live in Maine and work in New Hampshire or Massachusetts. Someone may attend school in Vermont and later move to New Hampshire or Maine.

Family and Community Networks

Immigration often follows existing family and community connections.

Once a community becomes established, new residents may be more likely to locate near relatives, friends, employers, cultural organizations, restaurants, religious organizations, or other community resources.

Tourism

Tourism can significantly change the visible population in coastal Maine and other popular destinations.

A person observed in Wells, Ogunquit, Portland, or another tourist community may be a visitor rather than a permanent resident.

6. Amazon and Mandarin-Speaking Employment

Amazon employs workers in the United States who speak Mandarin.

Some Amazon corporate and technical positions specifically require Mandarin because the employee works with Mandarin-speaking customers, sellers, suppliers, or business partners.

This is different from saying that Amazon is specifically hiring Chinese nationals.

A language requirement generally means that the employer has a business reason for needing that language.

Amazon Delivery Drivers

Amazon's delivery system is particularly important to distinguish from Amazon's corporate workforce.

Amazon states that its delivery drivers generally work for **independent Delivery Service Partners (DSPs)**. The drivers are employees of those individual DSP businesses rather than direct Amazon employees. Each DSP is responsible for hiring, managing, and terminating its employees.

Amazon's public delivery information does not provide a demographic breakdown of drivers by:

- Nationality
- Country of birth
- Ethnicity
- Race
- Mandarin proficiency
- Chinese ancestry

Therefore, there is currently **no reliable public number for how many Mandarin-speaking Amazon delivery drivers operate in Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont.**

7. Why Would a Delivery Company Need Mandarin?

There are several ordinary business reasons a delivery company might employ Mandarin-speaking workers.

A driver or employee might:

- Serve Mandarin-speaking customers
- Communicate with Mandarin-speaking coworkers
- Work in a community with a Chinese-speaking population
- Have Mandarin-speaking family or community connections
- Speak Mandarin as a second language
- Have been educated in a Mandarin-speaking country
- Be a U.S.-born Mandarin speaker

None of these circumstances establishes foreign-government involvement.

Amazon publicly describes its driver program as a local delivery network operated through independent DSP businesses.

8. Immigration Status and Employment

An immigrant can legally work in the United States under several different circumstances.

Examples include:

- Lawful permanent residence
- Employment-authorized immigration status
- Employment Authorization Document
- Certain humanitarian immigration categories
- Certain employment visas
- U.S. citizenship obtained after immigration

An undocumented person without employment authorization is different from a lawful immigrant.

Consequently, the terms:

immigrant

foreign-born

Chinese

Mandarin-speaking

and

undocumented

should not be treated as synonymous.

9. Foreign Intelligence and China-Related Security Concerns

There are legitimate national-security concerns involving the People's Republic of China.

The United States has documented concerns involving Chinese government efforts to obtain:

- Intellectual property
- Advanced technology
- Research
- Trade secrets
- Sensitive government information
- Military information
- Business information

Those concerns are particularly relevant in industries involving defense, advanced technology, telecommunications, government systems, semiconductor manufacturing, research, and other sensitive areas.

However, **speaking Mandarin, being Chinese, or being from Taiwan is not evidence of espionage.**

A counterintelligence investigation requires evidence concerning an individual's activities or relationships rather than demographic characteristics.

10. Delivery Drivers and Security

Delivery drivers can have access to certain types of information that ordinary members of the public do not have.

Depending on the delivery system, this can include:

- Customer names
- Delivery addresses
- Delivery routes
- Package information
- Delivery instructions
- Apartment or building access information
- Business locations
- Certain information within delivery applications

That makes data security and employee screening legitimate considerations for delivery companies.

However, these concerns apply to **all delivery drivers**, regardless of nationality or language.

There is currently no evidence establishing that Mandarin-speaking Amazon delivery drivers in Northern New England constitute a Chinese espionage operation.

11. What the Census Can Tell Us

The Census Bureau can provide information about:

- Total population
- Foreign-born population
- Asian population
- Country of birth
- Chinese place of birth
- Taiwanese place of birth
- Reported ancestry
- Language spoken at home
- Population changes over time

The Census cannot determine:

- Whether someone supports the Chinese government
- Whether someone has intelligence connections
- Whether someone is an agent of a foreign government
- Whether a particular worker is engaged in espionage
- Whether an individual is undocumented based solely on appearance or language

Those questions require evidence beyond demographic statistics.

12. A Better Way to Examine the Change

To determine whether the increase being observed in Northern New England is substantial, the three states should be compared using the same Census measures.

The most useful comparison is:

Measure	Maine	New Hampshire	Vermont
Total population	Compare 2024 ACS	Compare 2024 ACS	Compare 2024 ACS
Foreign-born population	Compare	Compare	Compare
Asian population	Compare	Compare	Compare
China-born population	Compare	Compare	Compare
Taiwan-born population	Compare	Compare	Compare
Chinese ancestry	Compare	Compare	Compare
Language spoken at home	Compare	Compare	Compare
Change since 2000	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate
Change since 2010	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate
Change since 2020	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate

The Census provides detailed place-of-birth categories that specifically distinguish China and Taiwan, making this type of comparison possible.

13. Northern New England Regional Picture

When Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are considered together, the region has several characteristics that can explain increased visibility of Chinese and Mandarin-speaking populations:

Education → Employment → Regional migration → Family/community networks → Population concentration

At the same time:

Tourism → Temporary visitors → Increased visibility without permanent population growth

These factors can operate simultaneously.

Therefore, an increase in people observed speaking Mandarin in a particular community does not necessarily mean that the area's permanent Chinese population has increased by the same amount.

14. Conclusion

There is a legitimate basis for examining demographic change in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The three states have relatively small Asian and foreign-born populations compared with many major U.S. metropolitan areas, but certain communities can experience much greater concentrations.

Chinese, Taiwanese, Mandarin-speaking, foreign-born, and undocumented populations should be measured separately.

Amazon also has legitimate business reasons for employing Mandarin-speaking workers, particularly in positions involving Mandarin-speaking customers, sellers, suppliers, and international commerce. Amazon's delivery network is primarily operated through independent Delivery Service Partners rather than Amazon directly employing every delivery driver.

There are also genuine U.S. national-security concerns involving Chinese government intelligence and technology-acquisition activities. Those concerns warrant examination based on evidence of specific activities, access, relationships, or conduct rather than ethnicity, nationality, or language.

The strongest way to investigate the changes being observed in Northern New England is therefore to compare **actual Census data over time**, followed by examination of individual communities and employment sectors.

Primary Sources

U.S. Census Bureau — American Community Survey

2024 ACS data provide state-level information about native and foreign-born populations. Maine's 2024 ACS estimate, for example, reports approximately 1.405 million residents and approximately 65,815 foreign-born residents.

U.S. Census Bureau — Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population

The Census's C05006 table identifies China and Taiwan separately within the foreign-born population.

U.S. Census Bureau — Detailed Place of Birth

The B05006 table distinguishes China excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan from Taiwan, allowing the populations to be examined separately.

Amazon — Delivery Driver Jobs

Amazon states that DSP drivers are employed by independent Delivery Service Partners, which are responsible for their own hiring and employee management.

Amazon — U.S. Hourly and Driver Employment

Amazon identifies delivery-driver opportunities in the United States and describes its delivery workforce separately from its warehouse and corporate employment categories.