New Americans in the City of Los Angeles
The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the City

Population

1,446,700 immigrants lived in Los Angeles, California, in 2019.

Immigrants made up 36.3% of the total population in the city in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the city increased by 1.2%.

The immigrant population decreased by -2.8% during the same time period.

Demographics

88.6% of immigrants in the city of Los Angeles have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years, meaning they are recent arrivals, with no more than 5 years of residency in the United States.

23.5% of immigrants in the city are more likely to be of working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.

In the city, immigrants are more likely to be of working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.

Shares of population by age groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>U.S.-born</th>
<th>Immigrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-15</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-64</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top five countries of origin for immigrants living in the city:

- Mexico (31.7%)
- Guatemala (8.8%)
- Korea (5.2%)
- El Salvador (12%)
- Philippines (6.4%)

1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Los Angeles, California.

2 We define working age as 16-64 years of age.

3 Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Demographics continued

538,800 immigrants living in the city had limited English language proficiency, making up 37.4% of the immigrant population.

The top languages spoken at home other than English were:
- Spanish (79.7%)
- Korean (5.9%)
- Armenian (3.5%)
- Chinese (1.9%)
- Persian, Iranian, Farsi (1.6%)
- Other Languages (7.4%)

Spending Power & Tax Contributions

Given their income, immigrants contributed significantly to taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments.

In 2019, immigrant households in the city of Los Angeles earned $52.9 billion:
- $9.6 billion went to federal taxes
- $5 billion went to state & local taxes
- $38.3 billion was left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held 39% of all spending power in the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant Households</th>
<th>Total Household Income</th>
<th>Federal Taxes</th>
<th>State and Local Taxes</th>
<th>Spending Power</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$15.6 billion</td>
<td>$3.5 billion</td>
<td>$1.5 billion</td>
<td>$10.5 billion</td>
<td>$103,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>$1.5 billion</td>
<td>$289 million</td>
<td>$140 million</td>
<td>$1.1 billion</td>
<td>$64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>$13 billion</td>
<td>$2.6 billion</td>
<td>$1.2 billion</td>
<td>$9.2 billion</td>
<td>$98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed or Other Race</td>
<td>$1.1 billion</td>
<td>$242 million</td>
<td>$106 million</td>
<td>$763 million</td>
<td>$81,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$21.8 billion</td>
<td>$3 billion</td>
<td>$2 billion</td>
<td>$16.8 billion</td>
<td>$63,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spending Power & Tax Contributions continued

Immigrants in the city also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed

$4.8 billion to Social Security

$1.3 billion to Medicare

41.9% of immigrants in the city received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with 40.1% of U.S.-born residents in 2019.

About 59.6% of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage, while 40.5% had public healthcare coverage.6

About 43.7% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while 42.1% had public healthcare coverage.

Given their incomes, 28.6% of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold compared to 24.4% of U.S.-born households.

Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up 36.3% of the city’s overall population, they represented 41.3% of its working-age population, 43.1% of its employed labor force, and 36% of its STEM workers in 2019.7

Immigrant shares of the...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Working-age Population</th>
<th>Employed Population</th>
<th>STEM Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigrants in the city are 23.5% more likely to be working age than their U.S.-born counterparts.

The immigrant working-age population was 50.9% female and 49.1% male.

The employed immigrant population was 44% female and 56% male.

6 Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

7 STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.
**Workforce continued**

Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the city. This included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Services</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Immigrant Essential Workers**

Immigrants have also been playing vital roles in critical industries that have kept the country functioning throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Immigrants in the city continue working in these frontline and essential industries:

**Essential Services**
- **68,300** immigrants made up 71.7% of the workforce
- **75,700** immigrants made up 47.7% of the workforce

**Construction**
- **95,500** immigrants made up 68.3% of the workforce

**Essential Wholesale Trade**
- **11,200** immigrants made up 57.5% of the workforce

**Food Manufacturing**
- **9,900** immigrants made up 55.9% of the workforce

**Essential Manufacturing**
- **5,900** immigrants made up 52.5% of the workforce

**Transportation and Warehousing**
- **47,300** immigrants made up 46.7% of the workforce

**Healthcare**
- **75,700** immigrants made up 44.7% of the workforce

**Essential Retail Trade**
- **30,500** immigrants made up 40.6% of the workforce

**Public Safety**
- **4,400** immigrants made up 27.4% of the workforce

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8 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.

9 Professional services: Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.

10 Information refers to the technology, media, and telecommunications sector, including industries such as digital and web services, media publishing, and telecommunications.

11 These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.
Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the city in 2019:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (5%)
- Construction Laborers (3.9%)
- Cooks (3%)
- Personal Care Aides (2.8%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (2.8%)
- Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers (2.7%)
- Other Managers (2.1%)
- Cashiers (2%)
- Registered Nurses (1.7%)
- Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (1.7%)

Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the city had helped create or preserve 66,500 manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹²

Top Occupations for Female Workers:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners ............................................ 10.6%
- Personal Care Aides ................................................................. 5.3%
- Registered Nurses ................................................................. 3.1%

Top Occupations for Male Workers:

- Construction Laborers ............................................................ 6.9%
- Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers ................................. 4.7%
- Cooks ..................................................................................... 3.2%

Job Demand In the City In 2021

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the city, but they are also a crucial part of the city’s economy, and could help us meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public services and healthcare increases.

The top 5 industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers:¹³

1. Health Care & Social Assistance
2. Finance & Insurance
3. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
4. Educational Services
5. Retail Trade


¹³ Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies for the time period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.
Entrepreneurship

168,400 immigrant entrepreneurs generated $4.3 billion in business income for the city of Los Angeles.

Despite making up 36.3% of the population, immigrants made up 51.4% of the business owners in the city in 2019.

Immigrant entrepreneurs by race and ethnicity:
- Hispanic (63.3%)
- White (20.9%)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (12.9%)
- Other Groups (2.9%)

Female Male

U.S.-Born Foreign-Born

Immigrant entrepreneurs tended to work in these key industries:
- Professional Services: 23.4%
- Construction: 20.8%
- General Services: 17%
- Health Care and Social Assistance: 7.2%
- Retail Trade: 7.2%
- Hospitality: 6.1%
- Transportation and Warehousing: 5%
- Finance: 4%
- Manufacturing: 3.7%
- Wholesale Trade: 2.5%

14 Because of limitations with small sample size, we are unable to provide estimates for other racial and ethnic groups, including Black or African American, mixed race, and other races and ethnicities.
Entrepreneurship (continued)

**SPOTLIGHT ON**

**Small Business Recovery from the Pandemic**

While all Americans are struggling to adapt to their new reality in a time of economic shutdown, entrepreneurs within particularly vulnerable industries in the city face severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Of the Total Entrepreneurs, Immigrants Made up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Of the 48,900 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Services</td>
<td>Of the 42,600 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Of the 16,300 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Of the 8,900 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Of the 8,900 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>Of the 21,600 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
<td>Of the 75,500 entrepreneurs, immigrants made up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Education

**Share of the city’s population aged 25 or above that held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2019:**

- **45.7% of U.S.-born**
  - 50.9% female
  - 49.1% male

- **25% of immigrants**
  - 53.8% female
  - 46.2% male

**Share of the city’s population aged 25 or above that held an advanced degree in 2019:**

- **15% of U.S.-born**
  - 51.8% female
  - 48.2% male

- **8.8% of immigrants**
  - 49% female
  - 51% male

**8% of K-12 students in the city were foreign-born in 2019.**

**59.3% of K-12 students in the city were children of immigrants in 2019.**

### SPOTLIGHT ON University Population

- **24,400** students enrolled in colleges and universities in the city of Los Angeles in fall 2019 were temporary residents.\(^{15}\)

- **3,800** international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities in the city in the 2018-19 academic year.

- **17,921** international students supported 17,921 jobs and contributed \(\$1.46\) billion million in the 2019-20 academic year.\(^{16}\)

### Housing

In 2019, **34.2%** of immigrant households in the city of Los Angeles owned their own homes, compared to **38.3%** of U.S.-born households.

- **65.8%** of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was **\$6.6 billion**.

- **87.6%** of immigrant households had internet access in 2019. 78.6% of immigrant households in the city had access to broadband connection in their homes as compared to 86.4% of U.S.-born households.

The total property value of immigrant households was **\$178.1 billion**.

15 Data on total student enrollment in the city is derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics. Temporary residents refer to people who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Colleges and universities refer to public and private universities, as well as community colleges in the city.

16 Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.
New Americans in the City of Los Angeles

**SPOTLIGHT ON**

**Lizbeth Garcia**
*Teacher, Academia Avance High School*

When Lizbeth Garcia was 8 years old, her older sister was diagnosed with a serious autoimmune disease. Unable to find treatment in Guerrero, Mexico, her parents decided to move the family to Los Angeles to get the medical help they needed.

Garcia's parents and sister entered the country first, and she was spirited across the border by family friends who dressed her up in American clothes — “like a mini MC Hammer outfit,” Garcia recalls — and made her pretend to sleep in the back of their car while they drove through the checkpoint.

To make ends meet, her mom worked long hours in sweatshops, and her dad worked in construction to keep food on the table. But her sister received medical care through Healthy Kids programs and later Medi-Cal. “That was the most important thing,” Garcia says. “Thankfully, she's still doing well.”

At first, Garcia learned English by watching SpongeBob, but her acculturation improved significantly when the public school assigned her an English tutor. The family also benefited from free school meals, summer programs at the public library, and other community resources. “The American Dream is real, but things are hard when you’re undocumented,” Garcia says. “Thankfully, she’s still doing well.”

Her status also impacted her education. At first, Garcia struggled to find funding for college. But after getting DACA — which allowed her to work and access some scholarships — she transferred from Glendale Community College to Cal State LA. She graduated in 2017 with a bachelor’s degree in English.

Today, Garcia teaches English at Academia Avance High School, a charter school serving a largely Latino community. She knows she benefited from city-run services including summer programs and English tutoring, and she wants to make sure the next generation of immigrants get help accessing the same kind of support. “I’ve come full circle,” Garcia says. “I didn’t know English when I came, but I learned, and developed my skills, and went to college — and now I’m helping students who’re in the same position I was in.”

Garcia invites community groups into her classroom to ensure immigrant families get the support they need, and she loves sharing her story with her students. “If they see someone with DACA being successful, it shows they can do it too,” she says.

**SPOTLIGHT ON**

**Emanel Noreza**
*Legal Assistant*

Emanel Noreza was little more than a baby when his parents left him with his grandmother in Honduras and came to the United States. “We lived in a run-down apartment with no running water and a rodent infestation,” Noreza recalls. “They worked really hard, but there wasn’t enough money to survive — so they came to the U.S. to build a better life for me.”

Noreza’s parents worked many different jobs — including construction, cleaning, and restaurants — before gaining lawful status in 1986 through the Reagan amnesty. That let them bring Noreza, then aged 12, to join them in Los Angeles. “This country saved my life,” Noreza recalls. “As I was getting older in Honduras, I was looking around and seeing gangs, and violence, and illness, and malnutrition. By coming here, I escaped all that.”

Gaining lawful status also allowed Noreza’s parents to start their own business selling religious products such as candles, rosaries, and herbs. Their store thrived, and over the years they opened several other locations. “My parents paid their taxes, created jobs, and helped the economy,” Noreza says. “I’m so grateful for all they did for me.”

Noreza spoke no English when he first arrived, and as an Afro-Latino he encountered some racism. “Mostly, though, everyone was very accepting, and things were very positive — especially compared with what I’d left behind,” he says. Public education in LA was far better than his school in Honduras, too: Thanks to high school ESL classes, he quickly learned the language.

After high school, Noreza took premed courses at San Diego State, hoping to fulfill his parents’ dream that he’d become a doctor. He didn’t enjoy science, though, and wound up driving school buses before becoming a ticket clerk for Delta Airlines. In 2000, he gained U.S. citizenship, and spent a decade traveling to Australia, Italy, Thailand, and Brazil, and many other places, to support the airline’s operations.

Since then, Noreza has completed his education at Glendale Community College, gaining three associate’s degrees — in theater, communications, and foreign languages. He now works as a legal clerk helping other immigrants on their journey toward lawful status and citizenship. “My parents lived in the shadows when they came, and there was nobody to guide them,” he says. “That motivates me to help other immigrants.”
Naturalization

- **48.3%** Naturalized Citizens (698,500)
- **18.7%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize (270,300)
- **33%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (477,900)

Nationally, **48.7%** of immigrants are naturalized citizens, **15.9%** are likely eligible to naturalize, and **35.4%** are not yet eligible.

If all immigrants who are eligible to naturalize became U.S. citizens, their earning potential would increase by **+8.9%**

Refugees

- **51,300** residents, or **3.5%** of the foreign-born population in the city of Los Angeles, were likely refugees.
- **92.1%** of refugees in the area were naturalized U.S. citizens.
- **36.2%** of refugees held at least a bachelor’s degree.
- **16.2%** of refugees held an advanced degree.

The top countries of origin for the refugee population living in the city:
- Vietnam (23.2%)
- Iran (18.6%)
- Armenia (17.7%)
- Afghanistan (7.9%)
- Ukraine (5.2%)

In 2019, refugee households in the city earned

- **$3.2 billion**
- **$706.7 million** went to federal taxes
- **$308.1 million** went to state & local taxes
- **$2.2 billion** was left in spending power

Refugees tended to work in these industries:

- Health Care and Social Assistance: 18.1%
- Professional Services: 13.9%
- Manufacturing: 10.1%
- Retail Trade: 8.6%
- Finance: 8.2%
DACA-Eligible Population

38,000

DACA-eligible people lived in the city of Los Angeles in 2019. They made up 2.6% of the immigrant population.

In 2019, DACA-eligible households earned $1.1 billion, of which $136.3 million went to federal taxes. $101 million went to state & local taxes and $813.8 million was left in spending power.

DACA-eligible people tended to work in these key industries:

- **Hospitality**: 18.5%
- **Construction**: 13.9%
- **Professional Services**: 13.9%
- **Health Care and Social Assistance**: 12.7%
- **Retail Trade**: 11.1%

Undocumented Immigrants

329,900

Undocumented immigrants in the city of Los Angeles, 2019. They made up 22.8% of the immigrant population.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households earned $8.4 billion, of which $643.6 million went to federal taxes. $387.9 million went to state & local taxes and $7.4 billion was left in spending power.

Top countries of origin for the undocumented in the city:

- **Mexico**: 42.3%
- **El Salvador**: 15.2%
- **Guatemala**: 14.9%
- **Korea**: 4.1%
- **Philippines**: 3.3%

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23 DACA-eligible population are identified as a subset of the total undocumented population, we apply the guidelines for DACA from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to determine the immigrants in Los Angeles who are eligible for DACA. More on our methodology here: [https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/](https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/)


26 Undocumented immigrants are identified through a methodological approach outlined by Harvard University economist George Borjas. More on our methodology here: [https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/](https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/)


Undocumented Immigrants (continued)

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force. **93.6%** are of working-age in the city.

Undocumented immigrants by age groups:

- 0-15: 4.9%
- 16-64: 93.6%
- 65+: 1.5%

Undocumented immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the city.

- **Hospitality**: 17.4%
- **Construction**: 17.2%
- **Professional Services**: 14.1%
- **Manufacturing**: 12.8%
- **Retail Trade**: 8.6%