

New Americans in Los Angeles County

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County¹

DECEMBER 2021



New American Economy | State & Local



Population

3,395,500

immigrants lived in Los Angeles County, California, in 2019.

Immigrants made up



of the total population in the county in 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population in the county decreased by



The immigrant population decreased by



during the same time period.

Demographics



of immigrants in Los Angeles County have resided in the United States for longer than 5 years, meaning

In the county, immigrants are

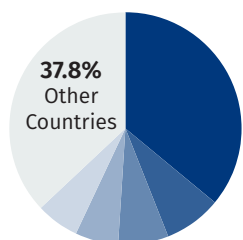
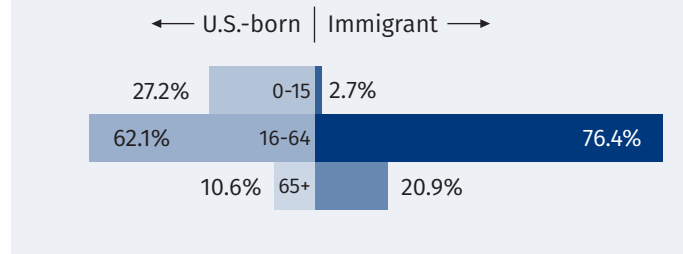


more likely to be of working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts, allowing them to actively participate in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.²



of immigrants in the county are recent arrivals, with no more than 5 years of residency in the United States.

Shares of population by age groups:³



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

- Mexico (35.7%)
- Philippines (7.2%)
- Guatemala (5.6%)
- El Salvador (8%)
- China (5.7%)

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*

1,182,200

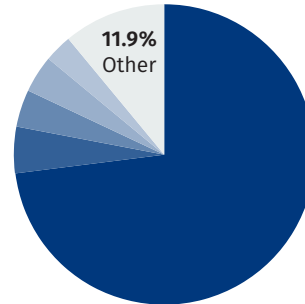
immigrants living in the county had limited English language proficiency, making up



of the immigrant population.

The top languages spoken at home other than English were:

- Spanish (72.5%)
- Chinese, Other⁴ (4.6%)
- Korean (4.1%)
- Mandarin (3.5%)
- Armenian (3.4%)



5,079,200

commuters worked in the county in 2019.

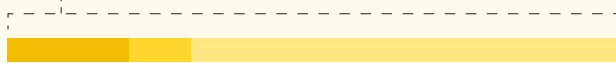


or **2,026,000** commuters, were foreign-born.

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 county earned **\$126.8 billion**



■ **\$23.1 billion**

went to federal taxes⁵

■ **\$11.9 billion** went to state & local taxes⁶

■ **\$91.8 billion** was left in spending power

This means that foreign-born households held



of all spending power in the county.

⁴ This includes the diverse group of Chinese dialects that are not Mandarin or Cantonese.

⁵ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

⁶ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

Spending Power & Tax Contributions *continued*

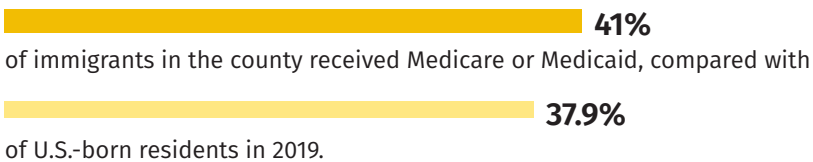
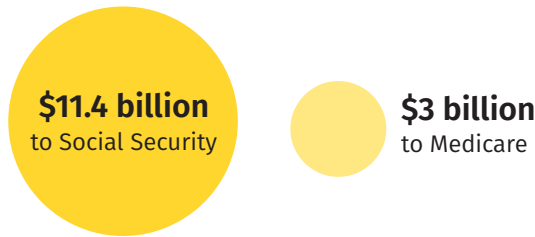
Immigrant Households	Total Household Income	Federal Taxes	State and Local Taxes	Spending Power	Median Household Income
White	\$27.8 billion	\$6.2 billion	\$2.7 billion	\$18.9 billion	\$100,000
Black or African American	\$3.1 billion	\$580 million	\$286 million	\$2.2 billion	\$84,950
Asian or Pacific Islander	\$41.8 billion	\$8.4 billion	\$3.9 billion	\$29.5 billion	\$101,070
Mixed or Other Race	\$2.3 billion	\$492 million	\$217 million	\$1.6 billion	\$90,000
Hispanic	\$51.8 billion	\$7.5 billion	\$4.8 billion	\$39.6 billion	\$69,000

In 2019, foreign-born residents in the county contributed

\$292.2 billion

to the county's GDP, or **35.7%** of the total.⁷

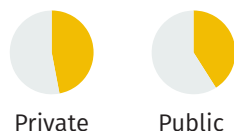
Immigrants in the county also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed



About **62.8%** of U.S.-born had private healthcare coverage, while **38.4%** had public healthcare coverage.⁸



About **47.4%** of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while **41.2%** had public healthcare coverage.



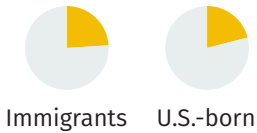
⁷ These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 5-year ACS sample from 2019 and the statistics of GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

⁸ Including people who have both public and private healthcare coverage.

⁹ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

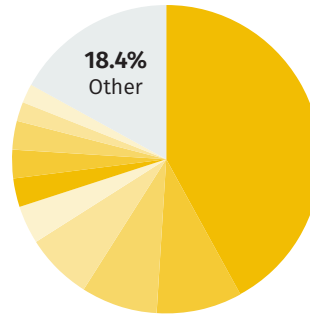
Spending Power & Tax Contributions *continued*

Given their household incomes, **848,400** — or **25.2%** — of immigrants live at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold compared to **21.4%** of U.S.-born residents.



The top 10 countries of origin for immigrants living at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold in the county:

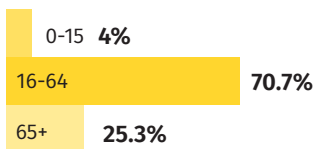
- Mexico (**354,000** or **41.7%**)
- El Salvador (**75,300** or **8.9%**)
- Guatemala (**67,100** or **7.9%**)
- China (**54,700** or **6.5%**)
- Korea (**36,200** or **4.3%**)
- Philippines (**27,400** or **3.2%**)
- Vietnam (**23,600** or **2.8%**)
- Iran (**21,300** or **2.5%**)
- Armenia (**18,000** or **2.1%**)
- Honduras (**14,800** or **1.7%**)



70.7%

of immigrants living at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold in the county are of working-age.

Age group breakdown:



In 2019, immigrant households living at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold earned:

\$9.5 billion

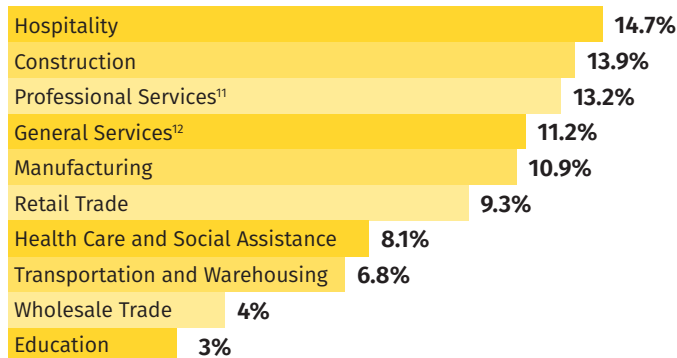
\$438 million

went to federal taxes⁹

\$936 million went to state & local taxes¹⁰

\$8.1 billion was left in spending power

Immigrants living at or below 150% of the federal poverty threshold in the county tended to work in these industries:



¹⁰ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

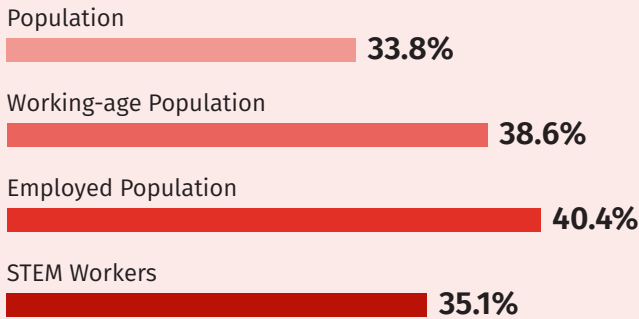
¹¹ Professional services: Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.

¹² General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.

Workforce

Although the foreign-born made up **33.8%** of the county's overall population, they represented **38.6%** of its working-age population, **40.4%** of its employed labor force, and **35.1%** of its STEM workers in 2019.¹³

Immigrant shares of the...



Immigrants in the county are

23%

more likely to be working age than their U.S.-born counterparts.

In 2019, there were

14.5

open STEM job postings for every available unemployed STEM worker in the county.¹⁴

The immigrant working-age population was **51.8%** female and **48.2%** male.



The employed immigrant population was **44.7%** female and **55.3%** male.



Top Occupations for Female Workers:

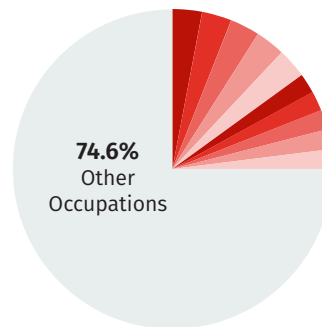
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	6.9%
Personal Care Aides	5.5%
Registered Nurses	3.7%

Top Occupations for Male Workers:

Construction Laborers	5.7%
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	5.3%
Cooks	2.9%

Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the county in 2019:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (3.3%)
- Construction Laborers (3.2%)
- Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers (3%)
- Personal Care Aides (2.9%)
- Cooks (2.8%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (2.3%)
- Other Managers (2.3%)
- Registered Nurses (2%)
- Cashiers (1.9%)
- First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (1.7%)

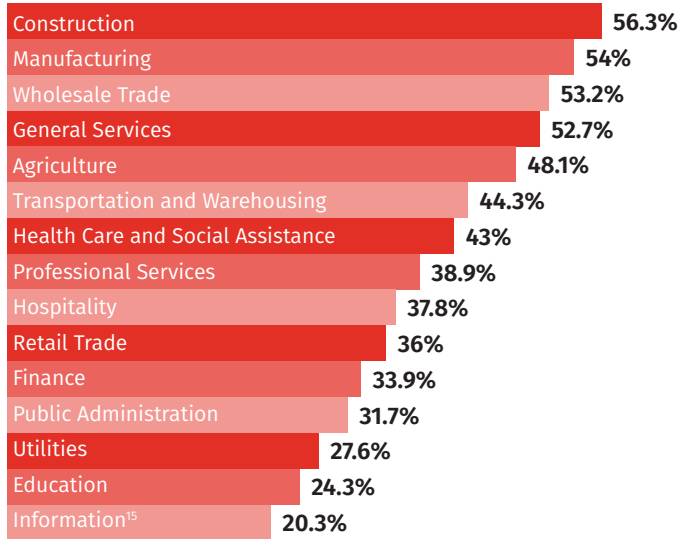


¹³ STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math.

¹⁴ Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies for the time period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

Workforce *continued*

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

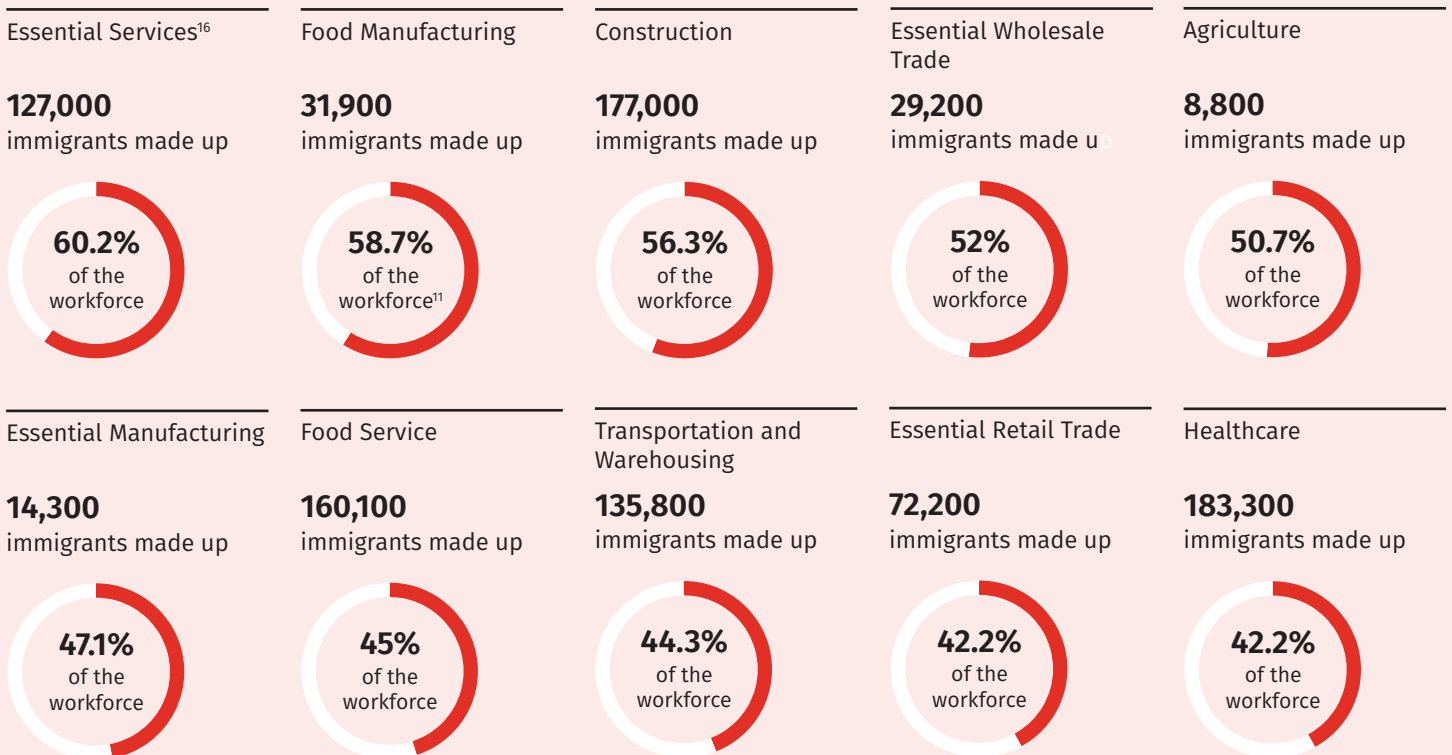


¹⁵ Information refers to the technology, media, and telecommunications sector, including industries such as digital and web services, media publishing, and telecommunications.

¹⁶ These include services essential for daily living, such as building cleaning, waste management, auto repair, and veterinary services.

SPOTLIGHT ON 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 county continue working in these frontline and essential industries:



Workforce *continued*

Due to the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the county had helped create or preserve

156,200 manufacturing jobs

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹⁷

SPOTLIGHT ON Job Demand In Los Angeles County In 2021

Not only are immigrants more likely to be of working age in the county, but they are also a crucial part of the county'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:¹⁸

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

Entrepreneurship

Despite making up **33.8%** of the population, immigrants made up



of the business owners in the county in 2019.

334,000

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

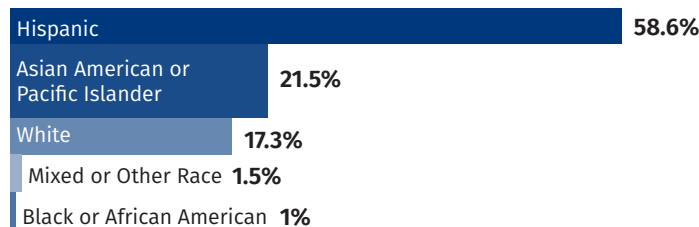
\$8.7 billion

in business income for Los Angeles County.

Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **37.9%** female and **62.1%** male.



Immigrant entrepreneurs by race and ethnicity:



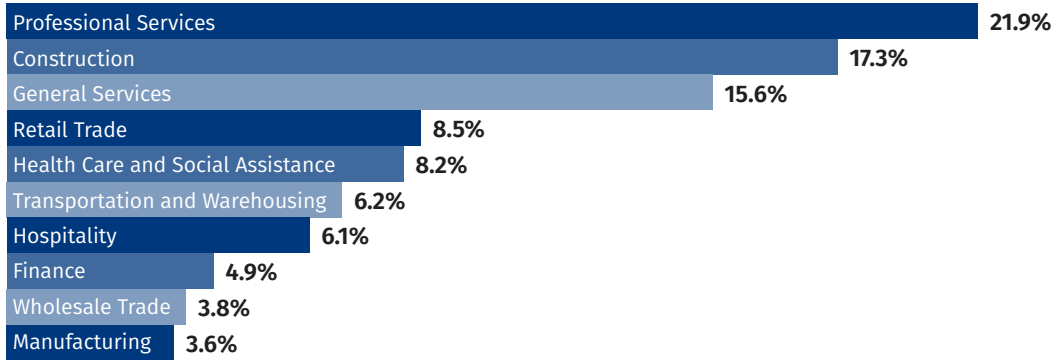
While **11.1%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs, **16.4%** of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses.

¹⁷ Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." *New American Economy*.

¹⁸ Data is obtained from Burning Glass Technologies for the time period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

Entrepreneurship (continued)

Immigrant entrepreneurs tended to work in these key industries:



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 county face severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Construction

Of the **88,800** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



Hospitality

Of the **21,500** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



General Services

Of the **83,400** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



Manufacturing

Of the **20,100** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



Retail Trade

Of the **49,300** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



Professional and Business Services

Of the **151,400** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up



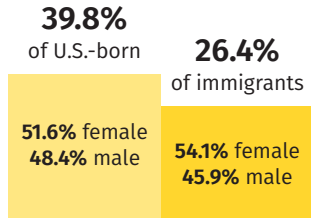
Healthcare

Of the **35,300** entrepreneurs, immigrants made up

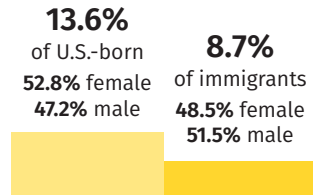


Education

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



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



of K-12 students in the county were foreign-born in 2019.



of K-12 students in the county were children of immigrants in 2019.

SPOTLIGHT ON University Population

48,200 students enrolled in colleges and universities in Los Angeles County in fall 2019 were temporary residents.¹⁹

5,100 international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities in the county in the 2018-19 academic year.

International students supported

23,100

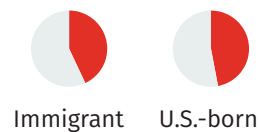
jobs and contributed

\$2.2 billion

million in the 2019-20 academic year.²⁰

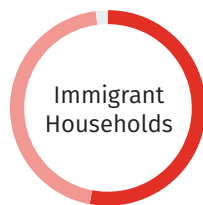
Housing

In 2019, **43.1%** of immigrant households in Los Angeles County owned their own homes, compared to **47.3%** of U.S.-born households.



The total property value of immigrant households was

\$454.1 billion



- Lived in Houses **756,800** or **53.3%**
- Lived in Apartments **637,100** or **44.8%**
- Lived in Other Types of Housing **26,900** or **1.9%**



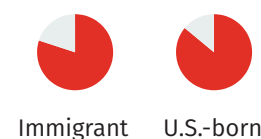
of immigrant households were renters. Their total annual rent paid was

\$13.4 billion



of immigrant households had internet access in 2019.

79.9% of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their homes as compared to **86.1%** of U.S.-born households.



¹⁹ Data on total student enrollment in the region 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 county.

²⁰ Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

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. “You need guidance and a support system.”

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

Emanuel Noreza

Legal Assistant

Emanuel 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



- **52.4%** Naturalized Citizens (1,780,000)
- **17.7%** Likely Eligible to Naturalize²¹ (600,200)
- **29.9%** Not Eligible to Naturalize (1,015,100)



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



of households in Los Angeles County had at least one foreign-born resident.

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

+8.9%²²

Refugees

147,400

residents, or **4.3%** of the foreign-born population in Los Angeles County, were likely refugees.^{23, 24}



of refugees in the area were **naturalized U.S. citizens.**



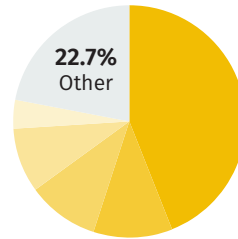
of refugees held at least a **bachelor's degree.**



of refugees held an **advanced degree.**

The top countries of origin for the refugee population living in the county:

- Vietnam (**44.1%**)
- Armenia (**10.5%**)
- Iran (**10%**)
- Cambodia (Kampuchea) (**8.7%**)
- Afghanistan (**4%**)



In 2019, refugee households in the county earned **\$7.6 billion**

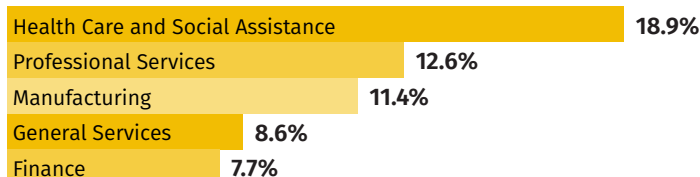
■ **\$1.5 billion**

went to federal taxes²⁵

■ **\$722 million** went to state & local taxes²⁶

■ **\$5.3 billion** was left in spending power

Refugees tended to work in these industries:



²¹ An immigrant is eligible to naturalize if they are documented, have resided in the United States for five years or more, and speak English well or fluently, as well as immigrants in military service who meet certain requirements such as speaking English well. Those who do not fit these criteria are deemed to be not eligible or currently ineligible to naturalize.

²² Enchautegui, Maria E. and Linda Giannarelli. 2015. "The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities." Urban Institute.

²³ Refugees are identified through an imputation method, similar to the work of Kallick and Mathema, "Refugee Integration in the United States," and Capps, R. and Newland K., et al. "The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees." More on our methodology here: <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/methodology/>

²⁴ New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."

²⁵ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

²⁶ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

DACA-Eligible Population

81,900

DACA-eligible²⁷ people lived in Los Angeles County in 2019.

They made up



of the immigrant population.

In 2019, DACA-eligible households earned

\$2.3 billion



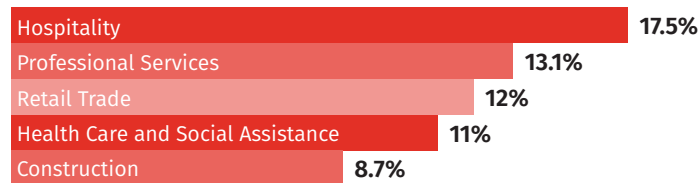
■ **\$297.2 million**

went to federal taxes²⁸

■ **\$217.6 million** went to state & local taxes²⁹

■ **\$1.7 billion** was left in spending power

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



Undocumented Immigrants

692,600

undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles County in 2019.

They made up



of the immigrant population.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households earned

\$16.8 billion



■ **\$1.3 billion**

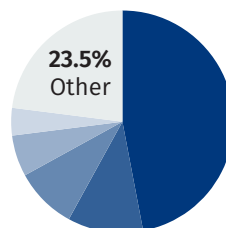
went to federal taxes³⁰

■ **\$779 million** went to state & local taxes³¹

■ **\$14.8 billion** was left in spending power

Top countries of origin for the undocumented in the county:

- Mexico (47.1%)
- El Salvador (10.9%)
- Guatemala (9.3%)
- China (5.5%)
- Korea (3.7%)



²⁷ 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/>

²⁸ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

²⁹ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2018. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."

³⁰ U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2020. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2017."

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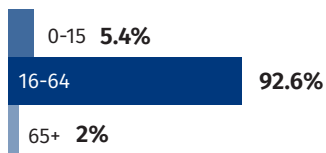
Undocumented Immigrants *(continued)*

Undocumented immigrants are highly active in the labor force.



are of working-age in the county.

Undocumented immigrants by age groups:



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

