

# IMMIGRANTS IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

## (San Diego County):

According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, nearly one quarter (23%) of residents in San Diego County are immigrants. This amounts to more than 675,000 immigrant residents in the County.<sup>1</sup>

45% of immigrants in San Diego County are citizens.

As immigrants remain in San Diego, poverty rates decrease and homeownership rises. The poverty rate for immigrants drops to 8% when we consider only those who arrived before 1980 compared to 20% for those who arrived after 1990. Similarly, the homeownership rate for pre-1980 immigrant households (70%) is more than twice as high as the rate for post-1990 immigrant households (30%).

Immigrants and their children make up 35% of the population in San Diego County. Of all children in region, 43% have at least one immigrant parent.<sup>4</sup>

More than two-thirds of non-citizens (71%) live in households that also have citizens. About 75% of non-citizen Latinos live in households with citizens and about 64% of Asian non-citizens live in mixed-status households.

Immigrants comprise nearly one-third of the labor force in San Diego County (27%). They figure prominently in the agriculture, repair and personal services, and manufacturing industries.

In terms of occupations, immigrants make up the majority of those involved in farming, fishing, and forestry (67%) and in grounds cleaning and maintenance (67%). They also almost make up nearly half of those involved in production jobs (44%) and food preparation and serving (40%). Within these jobs sectors, several positions are held primarily by immigrants<sup>5</sup>:

Farming, fishing, and forestry:	Agricultural workers and animal breeders (79%)
Grounds cleaning and maintenance:	Maids and housekeeping cleaners (86%) Grounds maintenance workers (67%) Janitors and building cleaners (55%) Managers of housekeeping and janitorial workers (55%)
Production:	Sewing machine operators (79%) Electrical and electromechanical assemblers (77%) Laundry and dry-cleaning workers (76%) Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators (72%)
Food Preparation and Serving:	Dishwashers (74%) Cooks (67%) Chefs and head cooks (48%) Managers of food preparation and serving workers (47%)

Immigrants participate in the labor force at slightly lower rates than non-immigrants, with 61% of immigrants and 63% of non-immigrants over the age of 16 employed in San Diego County. However, for Latino and Asian immigrant men, the opposite is true. About 84% of all Latino and Asian immigrant men of working age (25-64) are employed, compared with 81% of U.S. born Latino and Asian men.





In San Diego County, Latino immigrants are entrepreneurial and are more likely to create their own jobs (or be self-employed) than native born workers. For the working age population (age 25 to 64) Latino immigrants have a self-employment rate of 13%, which is a significantly higher rate than for non-immigrant Latinos, while Asian immigrants are slightly less likely to be self-employed than non-immigrant Asians.

Immigrant workers are important to the San Diego County economy. They contribute about 25% of the region's GDP.

Immigrant households make up 22% of the total household income in San Diego County, and thus represent a substantial share of all spending power.

**Regions of Origin for San Diego County's Immigrants (2005-2007):**

- 2.1% Africa
- 32.9% Asia
- 8.2% Europe
- 54.0% Latin America
- 0.5% Oceania
- 2.2% Northern America

There were more than 170,000 immigrants eligible to naturalize in San Diego County over the 2005-2007 period and about 60,000 more that would be able to naturalize within the following 5 years. This will add to the base of voting-age population who are naturalized immigrants (16%).

In San Diego County, a full 15% of the voting-age population is non-citizen.

36% of San Diego County's residents speak a language other than English at home. Throughout the region, immigrants speak more than 86 languages.

**(Endnotes)**

- 1 Unless noted otherwise, all figures reported in this document are based on tabulations made by the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), at the University of Southern California, of 2005-2007 pooled American Communities Survey data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2009.
- 2 These figures are based on immigrants and children of immigrants who live in the same household, thus they likely understate the share of the overall state population that is made up of first and second generation immigrants.
- 3 Only detailed occupations with a large enough sample size for reasonable statistical reliability are reported. Thus, there may be other detailed occupations in each sector in which immigrants are equally or, in some cases, more highly represented than those listed, but that were not reported on due to a small sample.
- 4 Information on contributions to the San Diego regional GDP was determined using averaged industry-specific GDP information over 2005 and 2006 for the region from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. These figures were applied to the percentages of immigrant workforce in each industry as found using ACS data. After the immigrant contributions per sector were found, the figures were aggregated to the regional level. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2009). *Gross Domestic Product by State*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bea.gov/regional/gsp/>.
- 5 Eligibility requirements used here are that a person has lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years and speaks English "well" or better. Those not meeting the language requirement were also coded as eligible if they had lived in the U.S. for at least 15 years and were least 55 years old at the time of the survey, or if they had lived in the U.S. for at least 20 years were at least 50 years old. These eligibility requirements are a simplified version of those under the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services guidelines. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2009). *A Guide to Naturalization*. Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/M-476.pdf>.