

New Americans in Santa Fe County

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants¹ in the County²



Population

16,600

the number of immigrants living in Santa Fe County, New Mexico, in 2019.³

Between 2014 and 2019, the total population of the county increased by



Immigrants made up



of the total population of the county in 2019.

The immigrant population decreased by



during the same period.

Demographics



of households in Santa Fe County in 2019 had at least one immigrant resident.



of immigrants in Santa Fe County were recent arrivals, with five years of residency in the United States or less, meaning

In the county, immigrants were

42.9%

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.⁴



of immigrants in the county had resided in the United States for more than five years.

72,500

people worked in Santa Fe County in 2019.

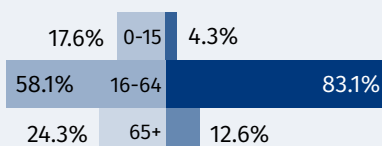
Of these,



or **11,200** workers, were immigrants.

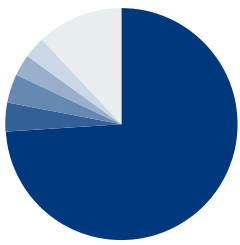
Shares of population by age:⁵

← U.S.-born | Immigrant →

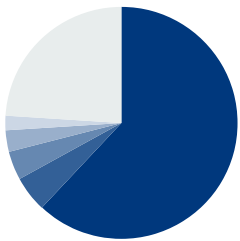
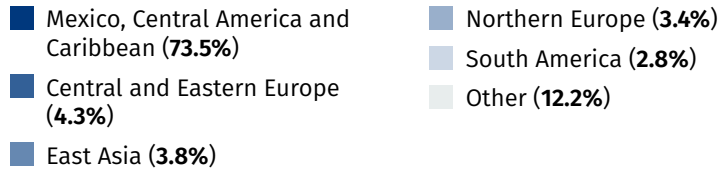


1. Estimates provided in this report may slightly undercount the immigrant population. The American Community Survey (ACS) historically undersamples the immigrant population, especially among lower income, more recently arrived, and less English-fluent immigrant populations.
2. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Santa Fe County, New Mexico.
3. We define "immigrant" as any non-citizen or any naturalized U.S. citizen. They include naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.
4. We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
5. Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

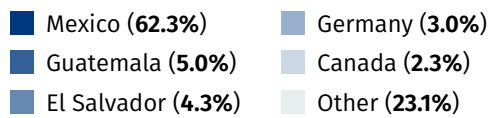
Demographics *(continued)*



The top regions of origin for immigrants living in the county:



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



The top languages spoken at home other than English among immigrants:



Immigrants with Limited English Language Proficiency

4,400

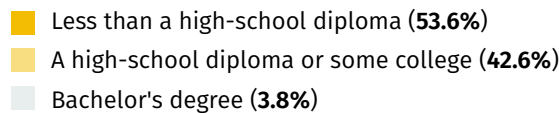
immigrants living in the county had limited English language proficiency, making up



of the immigrant population.⁶



Among those with limited English language proficiency, educational attainment was as follows:

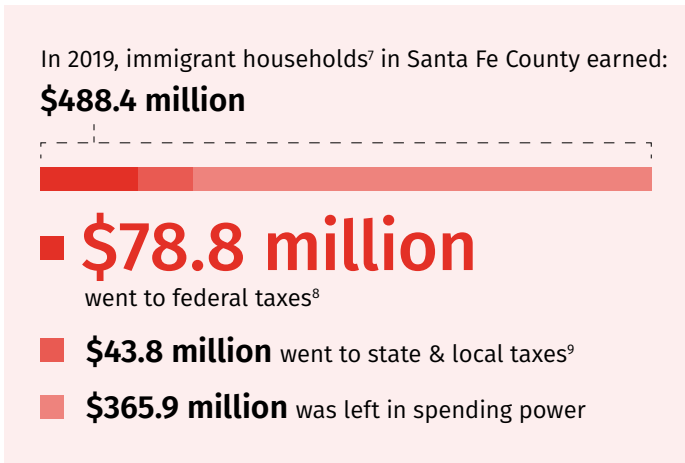


of immigrants with limited English language proficiency spoke **Spanish**.

6. For the purpose of this report, we define people with limited English language proficiency as those who do not speak English at all or do not speak English well.

Spending Power and Tax Contributions

Immigrants paid a significant amount in federal, state, and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state and local governments.



This means that immigrant households held



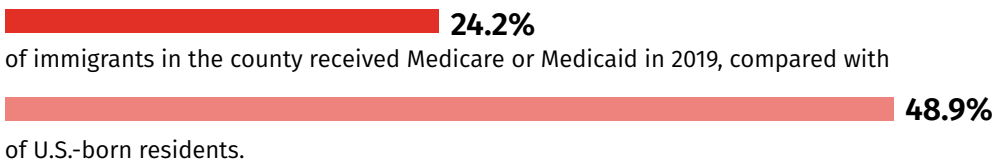
of all spending power in the county.

In 2019, immigrants in the county contributed

\$1.1 billion

to the county's gross domestic product (GDP), or **12.3%** of total GDP for that year.¹⁰

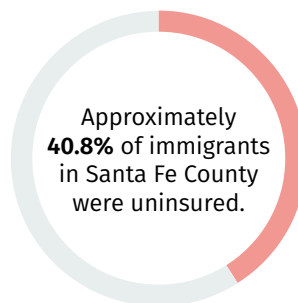
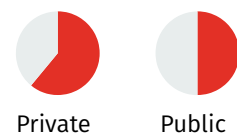
Immigrants in the county also supported federal social programs. In 2019, they contributed



About **39.7%** of immigrants had private health care coverage, while **24.2%** had public health care coverage.



About **60.9%** of U.S.-born residents had private health care coverage, while **49.7%** had public health care coverage.¹¹

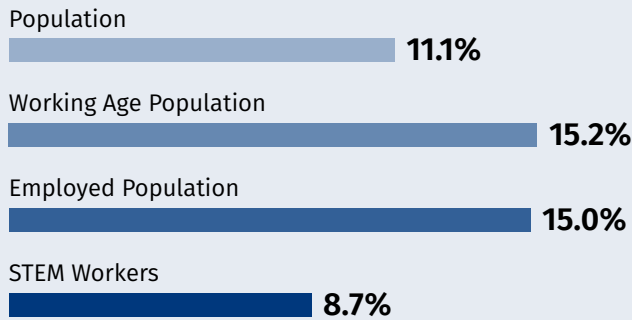


7. Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.
8. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019* (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
9. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, *Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States* (Washington, DC: 2018), <https://itep.org/whopays>.
10. 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.
11. Including people who have both public and private health care coverage.

Workforce

Although immigrants made up **11.1%** of the county's total population, they represented **15.2%** of its working age population, **15.0%** of its employed labor force, and **8.7%** of its workers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in 2019.¹²

Immigrant shares of the...



The immigrant working-age population was **48.7%** female and **51.3%** male.



The immigrant employed population was **41.9%** female and **58.1%** male.

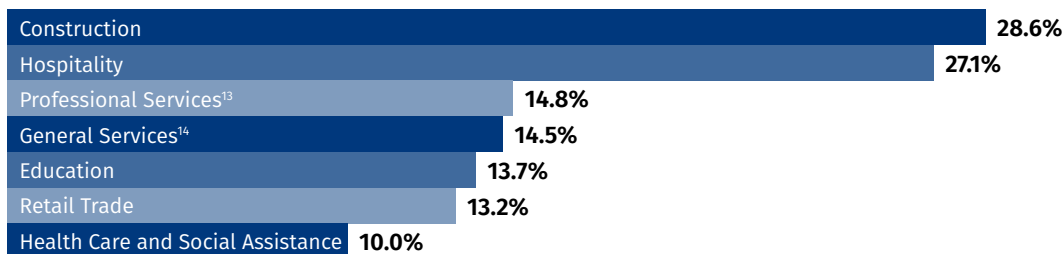


Immigrants in the county were

42.9%

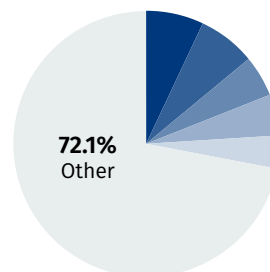
more likely to be of working age than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Immigrants played a critical role in several key industries in the county. The industries with the highest share of immigrant workers were:



The occupations with the largest number of immigrant workers were:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (7.3%)
- Cooks (6.8%)
- Waiters and Waitresses (4.9%)
- Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (4.7%)
- Janitors and Building Cleaners (4.2%)



12. *STEM refers to occupations that require background or expertise in science, technology, engineering, and/or math.*
13. *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.*
14. *General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.*

Workforce (continued)

The occupation with the largest number of female immigrant workers was:

Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners17.3%

The occupations with the largest number of male immigrant workers was:

Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers8.1%

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

800 manufacturing jobs

that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹⁵

SPOTLIGHT Job Demand In Santa Fe In 2022

Not only were immigrants more likely to be of working age than the U.S.-born, but they were also a crucial part of the county’s economy and helped meet the needs of its fastest growing and most in-demand fields.¹⁶

Immigrants help fill many high-demand roles, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent public service and healthcare workers increases.

The top five industries with the highest demand for bilingual workers:¹⁷

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------|
| 1. Health Care and Social Assistance | 2. Educational Services | 3. Manufacturing |
| 4. Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services | 5. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | |

15. Jacob Vigdor, *Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market* (New York, NY: Americas Society/Council of the Americas and New American Economy, 2013), <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/revival-of-american-cities.pdf>.

16. Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

17. Data is obtained from Lightcast Technologies for the time period between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

SPOTLIGHT

Iris Madely Alay

Member of Somos Un Pueblo Unido

Iris Madely Alay was born to a single mother in rural Escuintla, Guatemala, and dropped out of school at age ten to help raise her siblings. “I liked school, but I had to leave,” she said. “I had a sad childhood because I didn’t have my father around, and my mother had to dedicate herself to work to support us.”

By 14, Madely Alay was married, and by 17, she had two children. In 2001, she and her husband left their kids with family and moved to Santa Fe. They hoped to make enough money to return to Guatemala with enough savings to have their own home and provide for their children. “We dreamed of having our own home,” Madely Alay said. “We dreamed for our children to be OK.”

After arriving in Santa Fe without legal status and not speaking English, the couple struggled, and Madely Alay’s husband began using drugs. Eventually, she left him. To support her children—two in Guatemala and a new son in Santa Fe—she dedicated herself to working. She began cleaning hotel rooms alongside other undocumented women. But the conditions were terrible. “They weren’t giving us cleaning supplies or gloves, and they knew they could take advantage of us since we didn’t have papers,” Madely Alay said. “We weren’t being paid anywhere near enough for the hours we worked.”

By 2005, Madely Alay and most of the women she worked with had quit. They approached [Somos Un Pueblo Unido \(Somos\)](#), a community organization that helped them file a formal labor relations complaint against the hotel and the group won back pay for the hours the hotel hadn’t compensated them for.

“Somos helped us understand our rights, and what was possible for us to do,” Madely Alay said. “We couldn’t find any resources. We were stronger together.”

Shortly after the victory, Madely Alay met her future husband, who also lives in Santa Fe, and in 2017, she became a Lawful Permanent Resident in the U.S.

Madely Alay is still active with Somos and after many years of working in the hotel industry as a maid, she now works at a retail thrift store. Madely Alay recently became a U.S. citizen, and now has three American-born children and has finally been able to visit her two adult children in Guatemala.

“This country has given me so much,” she said. But she does wish the city could provide more assistance to service employees. “Santa Fe could be more welcoming for workers if there was more support for families,” she said. She’d like to see better childcare options and youth activities to help kids stay out of trouble.

SPOTLIGHT

Verónica Velázquez

Member of Somos Un Pueblo Unido

In 2005, Verónica Velázquez and her husband moved to the United States from the rural state of Michoacán, México, for better opportunities. They landed in California but had trouble finding work. “I wanted to be able to send money back to my family in Mexico,” she said. But “no one wanted to hire someone who didn’t have a social security number or a work permit.”

When a friend told Velázquez about a restaurant that was hiring in Santa Fe, she and her husband moved. “They paid me \$500 every two weeks,” Velázquez said. “And that was for a period of around 132 hours.” The hourly breakdown came out to \$3.78. Then, friends told Velázquez about the workers’ rights organization [Somos Un Pueblo Unido \(Somos\)](#). There, she learned about the state and federal minimum wage and her rights despite not having legal immigration status. “I realized that I was a victim of wage theft in the workplace,” Velázquez said.

This truly hit home after the restaurant closed, due to workers’ rights violations. With help from Somos, Velázquez and other workers filed a formal complaint. They were successful and won back pay for several workers.

“As time went on, I grew more involved in the organization,” Velázquez said. “I learned so much, and I participated in campaigns about workers’ rights, the struggle to obtain a driver’s license in New Mexico, and Santa Fe becoming a sanctuary city.”

One of the most satisfying victories came in 2022, when Velázquez helped Somos win the right to sick days for all workers in the state, regardless of their immigration status. “We all felt a little more protected,” she recalled. After 18 years in Santa Fe, Velázquez feels proud of the changes she’s helped to make. But she said that the city has opportunities to take more proactive roles in holding bad actors accountable. “There are still certain bosses who don’t comply with the law, and in the future, we want to have workplace trainings to improve working conditions,” she said.

Entrepreneurship

1,800

immigrant entrepreneurs generated

\$35.6 million

in business income in Santa Fe County.

Immigrants were

1.6%

more likely to be an entrepreneur than their U.S.-born counterparts.

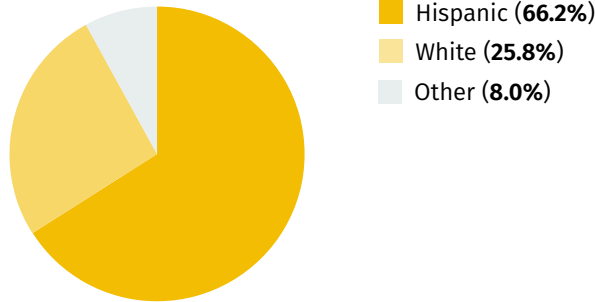
Immigrant entrepreneurs self-identified as **43.8%** female and **56.3%** male.



51.6%

of immigrant entrepreneurs were from **Mexico**. This was the top country of origin for immigrant entrepreneurs in the county.

Immigrant entrepreneurs by race and ethnicity:

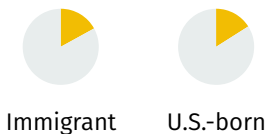


Immigrants represented

15.2%

of the business owners in the county in 2019 despite making up **11.1%** of the population.

17.2% of immigrants worked for their own businesses, while **16.9%** of the U.S.-born population were entrepreneurs.¹⁸



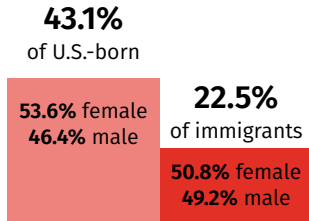
25.9%

of immigrant entrepreneurs worked in the **General Services** industry. This was the top industry for immigrant entrepreneurs in Santa Fe County.

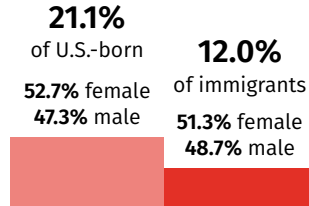
18. Data obtained from the ACS may not capture those who work in informal jobs and businesses, and as a result may not capture immigrants' full entrepreneurial contributions within the County.

Education

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

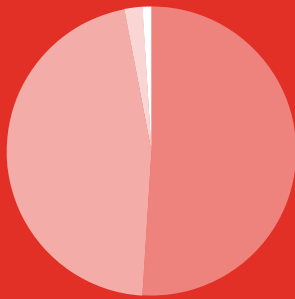


of K-12 students in the county were the children of immigrants in 2019.¹⁹

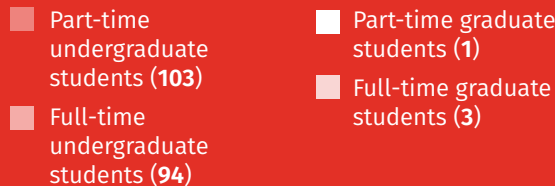
SPOTLIGHT

University Population

The universities with the largest international student populations were:



The breakdown of international students is as follows:



In the 2020-21 academic year,

three

international students graduated with STEM degrees from colleges and universities.

International students supported

11

jobs in the county and these students contributed

\$2.6 million

to the economy in the 2021-22 academic year.²⁰

19. Children of immigrants includes both U.S.-born and immigrants who are under the age of 18 with at least one immigrant parent.

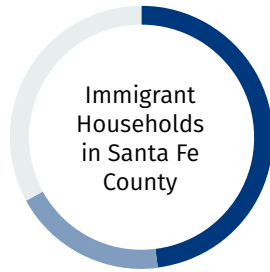
20. Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Housing

In 2019, **65.4%** of immigrant households in Santa Fe County owned their own homes, compared with **71.4%** of U.S.-born households.



Immigrant U.S.-born



- Lived in houses (3,300, or 48.2%)
- Lived in apartments (1,300, or 18.8%)
- Other types of housing²¹ (2,300, or 33.0%)

Total property value of immigrant households:

\$1.5 billion



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

\$26.0 million

71.4% of immigrant households in the county had access to broadband connection in their place of residence compared with **78.2%** of U.S.-born households that did.²²



Immigrant U.S.-born

The average household size for immigrants in Santa Fe County was **2.9** compared with **2.0** for U.S.-born residents.

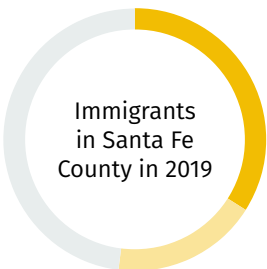


Immigrant households



U.S.-born households

Naturalization



- **33.5%** Naturalized²³ citizens (5,600)
- **18.3%** Likely eligible to naturalize (3,000)
- **48.2%** Not eligible to naturalize (8,000)



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

When eligible immigrants naturalize, their income increased by

+8.9%

on average.²⁴

Top countries of origin for naturalized citizens in Santa Fe County were:



21. "Other" housing includes mobile homes, trailers, boats, tents, vans, and housing that is not considered a single-family home or multi-family building.
22. This data point reports whether the respondent or any member of their household subscribed to the internet using broadband (high speed) internet service such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL.
23. Naturalization is the process through which one can become a U.S. citizen, dependent on certain eligibility requirements. Learn more here: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works>.
24. Maria E. Enchautegui and Linda Giannarelli, *The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities*, Urban Institute, 2015, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/economic-impact-naturalization-immigrants-and-cities>.

DACA-Eligible Population

1,300

immigrants, approximately, or **7.9%** of the immigrant population in Santa Fe County, were eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)²⁵ in 2019.²⁶

In 2019, DACA-eligible households in the county earned: **\$22.2 million**

■ **\$1.8 million**

went to federal taxes²⁷

■ **\$2.3 million** went to state & local taxes²⁸

■ **\$18.1 million** was left in spending power

Undocumented Immigrants

6,900

undocumented immigrants²⁹ lived in Santa Fe County in 2019. They made up about

41.4%

of the county's immigrant population.

In 2019, undocumented immigrant households³⁰ earned: **\$128.8 million**

■ **\$7.5 million**

went to federal taxes³¹

■ **\$6.2 million** went to state & local taxes³²

■ **\$115.1 million** was left in spending power

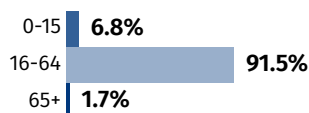
82.5%

of undocumented immigrants in Santa Fe County were from **Mexico**.

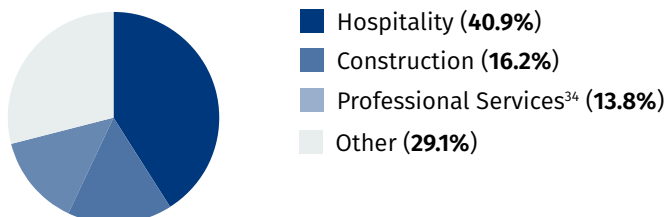
91.5%

of undocumented immigrants were of working age in the county.

Share of immigrants that are undocumented by age:³³



Undocumented immigrants were highly active in the labor force. The industries with the largest number of undocumented immigrant workers were:



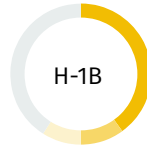
25. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program established in 2012 which permits certain individuals who were brought to the United States while under the age of 16 and who have resided continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007, to remain in the U.S. and work lawfully for at least two years, so long as they meet certain eligibility requirements. Learn more here: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/how-united-states-immigration-system-works>.
26. Due to ongoing legal challenges to the DACA program, any first-time DACA applications not granted as of July 16, 2021 are unable to be processed, though the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can still accept these applications. The current court ruling alongside the ongoing uncertainty about the future of the DACA program has resulted in a lack of afforded protections for those who are DACA-eligible but are unable to apply.
27. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019 (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
28. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2018), <https://itep.org/whopays/>.
29. Undocumented immigrants are identified by applying the methodological approach outlined by Harvard University economist George Borjas in his work: George Borjas, The Labor Supply of Undocumented Immigrants (Harvard University, Labour Economics, volume 46, pages 1-3, 2017), <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gborjas/files/le2017.pdf>. Immigrants who do not meet a set of criteria for legal status are identified as being undocumented. More on our methodology here: <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/methodology/>.
30. Undocumented immigrant households refer to people living in a housing unit with an undocumented immigrant being the head of their unit.
31. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019 (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
32. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States (Washington, DC: 2018), <https://itep.org/whopays/>.
33. We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
34. 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.

H-1B and H-2B Visas

87

H-1B visas were certified³⁵ in Santa Fe County during Fiscal Year 2022.

The top occupations among certified H-1B visa applications were:



- Software Developers, Applications (35)
- Bioinformatics Scientists (9)
- Software Developers (8)

One

H-2B visa was certified³⁶ in Santa Fe County during Fiscal Year 2022. The occupation of this certified H-2B visa application was **First-line Supervisor of Production and Operating Workers**.

35. Before an employer can file a petition with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to hire an employee using an H-1B visa, the employer must take steps to ensure that hiring the foreign worker will not adversely affect U.S. workers. To do this, employers file a labor condition application (LCA) to be certified by the Department of Labor (DOL), which ensures that employment of the H-1B worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. The number of certified H-1B visas is therefore a good indication of the demand for immigrant workers of a given occupation in a given region. More information on the H-1B process can be found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/h-1b-specialtyoccupations>.
36. Similar to the H-1B process, in order for an employer to obtain an H-2B certification, the DOL must determine that there are not enough U.S. workers available to do the temporary job being petitioned for, and that employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similar workers. Additionally, the need for the worker must be temporary. Certified jobs are not necessarily the jobs filled, though they do indicate a level of demand for temporary immigrant workers in a particular occupation. More information on the H-2B process can be found here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/programs/h-2b>.