



Immigrants in Brownsville

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Metro Area¹

POPULATION

98,600

immigrants² lived in the Brownsville metro area in 2019. Immigrants made up



of the total population of the metro area in 2019.

153,000

people worked in the Brownsville metro area in 2019. Of these,



or 46,000 workers in the metro area were immigrants.

Top countries of origin for immigrants living in the metro area:

- 1 Mexico 91.9%
- 2 Philippines 1.2%
- 3 Guatemala 1.2%
- 4 Honduras 0.8%
- 5 El Salvador 0.5%

Between 2014 and 2019, the overall population in the metro area grew from **415,000** to **421,600**, or **1.6%**. During the same period, the immigrant population in the metro area decreased from **104,200** to **98,600**, or **-5.4%**.

SPENDING POWER AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

Immigrants in the metro area hold considerable **economic power**. In 2019, immigrant residents in the Brownsville metro area contributed **\$3.2B** to the metro area's GDP.³

In 2019, immigrant households⁴ in the Brownsville metro area earned:

\$2.0B

\$223.1M went to federal taxes.⁵

\$182.8M went to state & local taxes.⁶

Leaving them with **\$1.6B** in spending power, or **29.4%** of all spending power in the Brownsville metro area.

SPENDING POWER AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS (CONTINUED)

In 2019, immigrants in the metro area contributed:

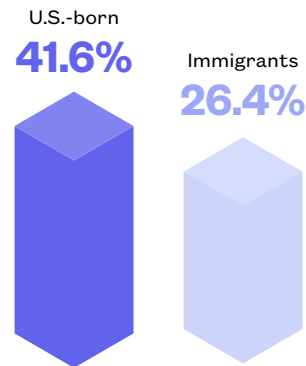
\$181.5M

to Social Security and

\$46.1M

to Medicare.

Share of residents receiving Medicare or Medicaid in 2019:



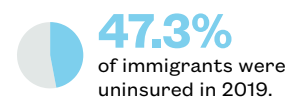
Share of immigrant residents in the Brownsville metro area with...

Only private healthcare coverage: **26.0%**

Only public healthcare coverage: **23.8%**

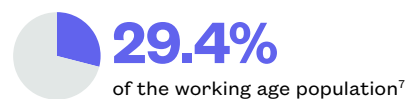
Both private and public healthcare coverage: **3.0%**

...in 2019.

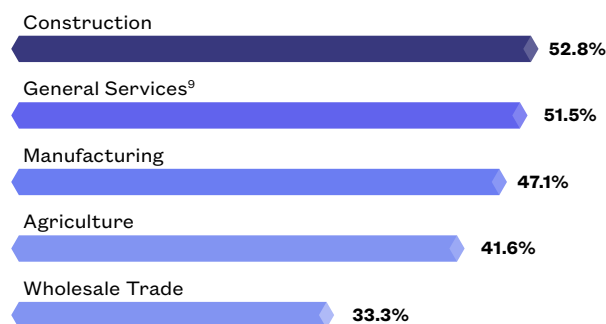


WORKFORCE

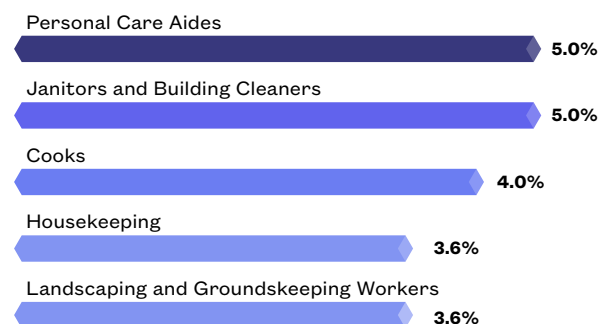
In 2019, immigrants in the Brownsville metro area comprised...



The industries with the highest share of workers that are immigrants were:⁸



The occupations with the largest number of immigrant workers were:¹⁰



Immigrants play a critical role in our workforce by helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil. Our research shows that immigrants living in the metro area helped create or preserve **4,500 local manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise been eliminated or moved elsewhere by 2019.¹¹

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

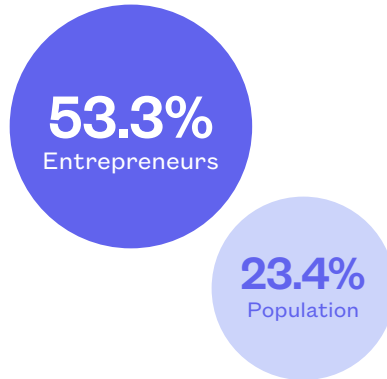
9,900

immigrant entrepreneurs in the Brownsville metro area generated

\$210.8M

in business income in the metro area.¹²

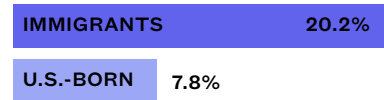
Immigrants represented **53.3%** of the business owners in the metro area despite making up **23.4%** of the population.



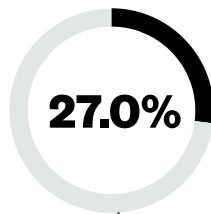
In the metro area, immigrants were

160.4%

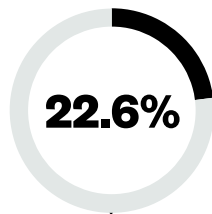
more likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts. **20.2%** of immigrants were entrepreneurs, while **7.8%** of the U.S.-born were entrepreneurs.



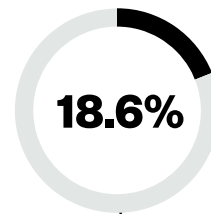
In 2019, the industries with the highest share of immigrant entrepreneurs were:



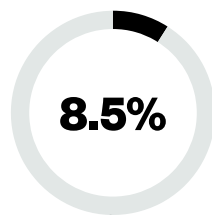
Construction



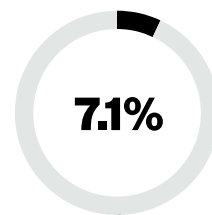
Professional Services¹³



General Services



Retail Trade



Health Care and Social Assistance

EDUCATION AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

In 2020,

20

students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Brownsville metro area were temporary U.S. residents.¹⁴



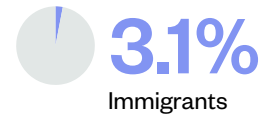
of K-12 students in the metro area were immigrants in 2019.

Share of the metro area's population aged 25 or older that held a:

BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

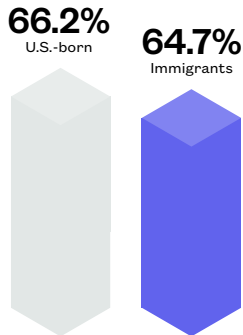


ADVANCED DEGREE



HOUSING WEALTH

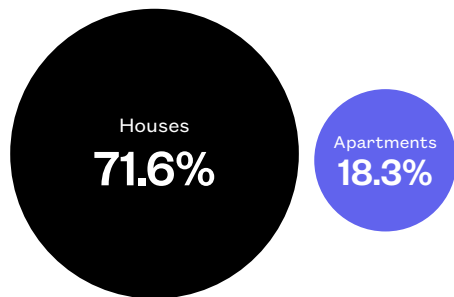
Share of residents in the Brownsville metro area who owned their homes in 2019:



The total property value of immigrant households in 2019 was

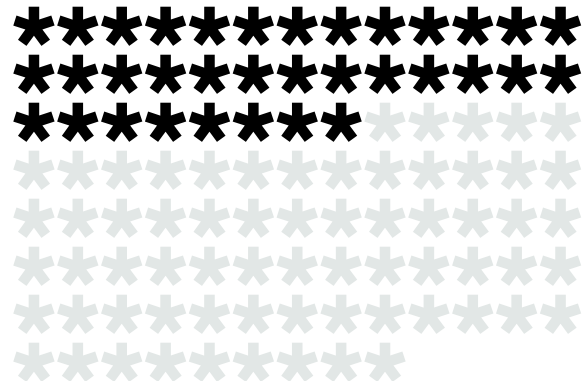
\$2.7B

Share of immigrants living in:



Share of immigrant residents in the Brownsville metro area who were renters in 2019:

35.3%



The total annual rent paid by immigrant households in 2019¹⁵ was

\$83.7M

NATURALIZATION

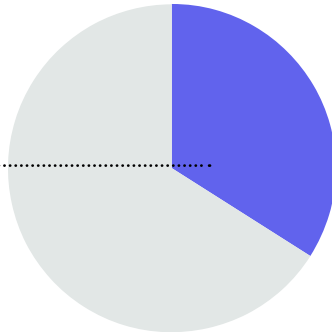
In 2019,

33,100

immigrants, or

33.6%

of the immigrant population in the Brownsville metro area, were naturalized¹⁶ citizens.



18,200

immigrants, or

18.5%

of immigrants in the Brownsville metro area were likely eligible for naturalization in 2019.¹⁷



UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

In 2019, approximately

32,700

undocumented immigrants¹⁸ lived in the Brownsville metro area, making up

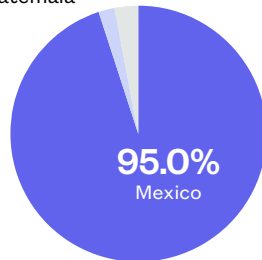
33.1%

of the immigrant population.

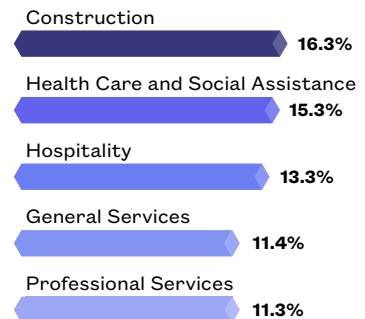


Top countries of origin for undocumented immigrants in the metro area:

1.7%
Guatemala



In 2019, the industries with the largest number of undocumented immigrant workers were:¹⁹



In 2019, undocumented immigrant households²⁰ in the Brownsville metro area earned:

\$475.3M

\$20.5M went to federal taxes.²¹

\$23.8M went to state & local taxes.²²

\$431.1M left in spending power.

ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey (ACS) from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to the Brownsville, TX, metropolitan statistical area.
2. Except where otherwise noted (e.g., "undocumented immigrant" or "DACA-eligible"), we define an immigrant as anyone born outside the country to non-U.S. citizen parents who resides in the United States. This includes naturalized citizens, green card holders, individuals with temporary immigration status, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.
3. 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 on GDP from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.
4. Immigrant households refer to those with an immigrant as head of the unit.
5. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019* (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
6. 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/>.
7. We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
8. The following are numerical estimates derived from the 5-year sample of the American Communities Survey from 2014 to 2019 and refer to the Brownsville, TX, metropolitan statistical area. Immigrant workers in industries: Construction: 6,500 of 12,300; General services: 3,900 of 7,500; Manufacturing: 4,400 of 9,300.
9. General services include personal services (e.g., laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
10. The following are numerical estimates derived from the 5-year sample of the American Communities Survey from 2014 to 2019 and refer to the Brownsville, TX, metropolitan statistical area. Immigrant workers in occupations: Personal care aides: 2,500; Janitors and building cleaners: 2,400; Cooks: 2,000; Maids and housekeeping cleaners: 1,800; Landscaping and groundskeeping workers: 1,800.
11. 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), <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/revival-of-american-cities.pdf>.
12. The total business income for immigrant entrepreneurs is calculated as the sum of the net pre-income-tax non-farm business and/or professional practice income for the previous calendar year (at the time of the survey) of self-employed immigrants age 16 or older.
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. Data on total student enrollment in the metro area 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.
15. The total rent paid by immigrant households is calculated as the sum of the total monthly rent (incl. utilities, fuels, etc., only if they were included in the rent contract), times 12, for immigrant households (we limit the data to one person per household to avoid double-counting rent where multiple respondents per household report the same rent).
16. 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-unitedstates-immigration-systemworks>.
17. 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.
18. 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/>.
19. The following are numerical estimates derived from the 5-year sample of the American Communities Survey from 2014 to 2019 and refer to the Brownsville, TX, metropolitan statistical area. Undocumented immigrant workers in industries: Construction: 3,100; Health Care and Social Assistance: 2,900; Hospitality: 2,500; General Services: 2,200; Professional Services: 2,100.
20. Undocumented immigrant households refer to people living in a housing unit with an undocumented immigrant being the head of their unit.
21. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2019* (Washington, DC: 2022), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/58353>.
22. 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/>.