

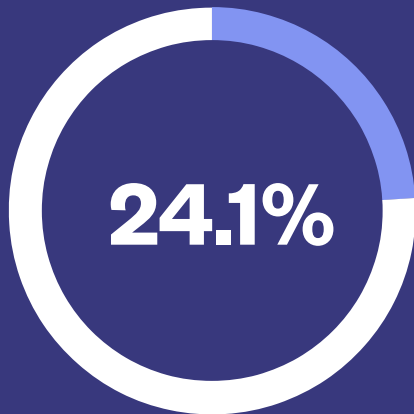
# New Americans in San Diego

A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County<sup>1</sup>



State & Local

## POPULATION GROWTH



Immigrant share of the population, 2016

Between 2011 and 2016, the population in the county grew 5.7%.

The immigrant population increased 8.5%.

**Total population**  
3,139,06 → 3,316,462



**Immigrant population**  
736,951 → 799,357



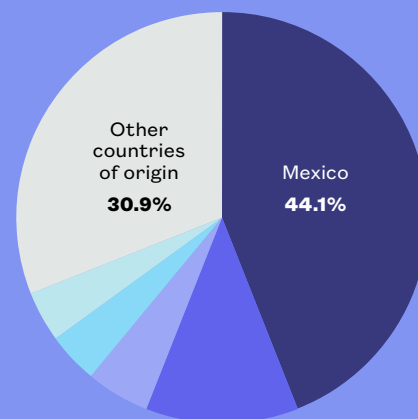
Share of overall population growth attributed to immigrants

Number of immigrants living in San Diego County in 2016:

**799,357**

Top five countries of origin for immigrants living in the county:

- 1 Mexico ..... 44.1%
- 2 Philippines ..... 11.9%
- 3 Vietnam ..... 5.4%
- 4 China ..... 4.1%
- 5 Iraq ..... 3.6%



## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2016, foreign-born residents in San Diego contributed **\$54.3B** to the county's GDP—**25.2%** of all GDP contributions.<sup>2</sup>

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

Amount earned by immigrant households in 2016:

**\$25.9B**

**\$7.5B** went to federal taxes.<sup>3</sup>

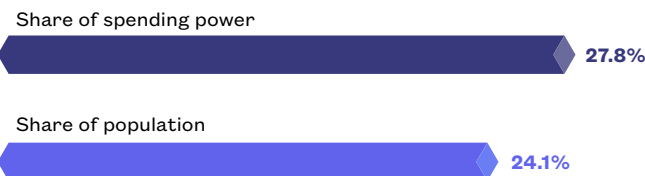
**\$2.1B** went to state and local taxes.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving them with

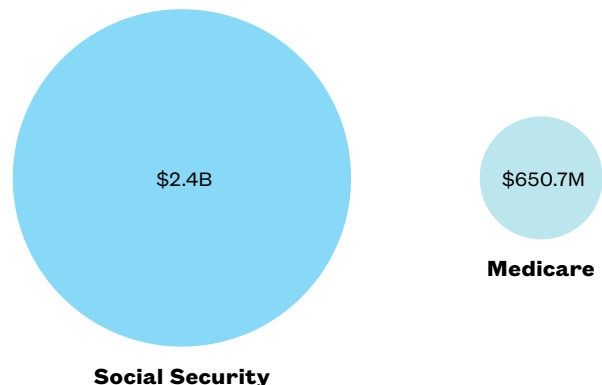
**\$16.3B**

in spending power.<sup>5</sup>

This means that foreign-born households held **27.8%** of all spending power in San Diego county, slightly more than their share of the overall population.



Immigrants in San Diego County also support federal social programs. In 2016, they contributed **\$2.4B** to Social Security and **\$650.7M** to Medicare.

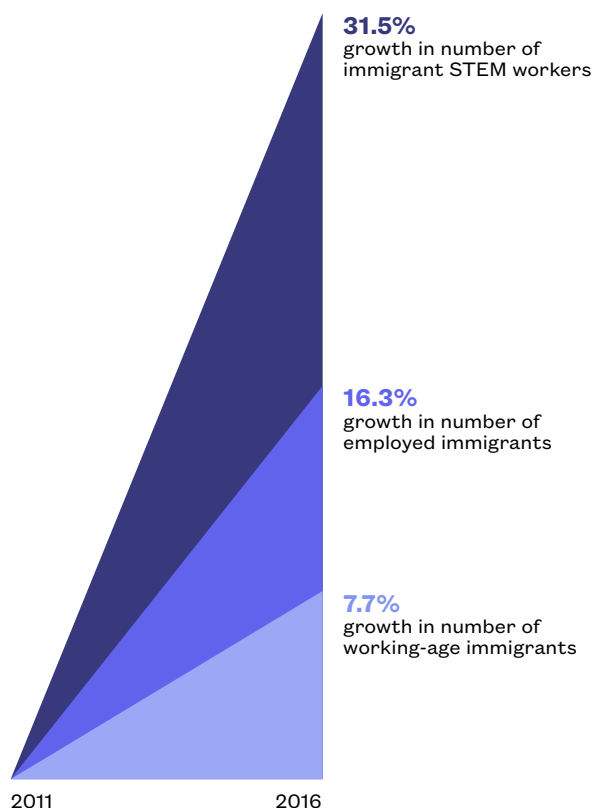


## LABOR FORCE GROWTH

Although the foreign-born made up **24.1%** of the county's overall population, they represented **28.8%** of its working-age\* population, **28.4%** of its employed labor force, and **30.5%** of its STEM workers in 2016.

Share of population	24.1%
Share of working-age population	28.8%
Share of employed labor force	28.4%
Share of STEM workers	30.5%

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of working-age\* immigrants increased by **7.7%** and the number of employed immigrants grew **16.3%**, while the number of foreign-born STEM workers rose by **31.5%** in the county.



\* Working-age refers to people ages 16-64 years old.

## SPOTLIGHT ON

# Juan Pablo Sanchez

## Restaurant Owner

In 1979, when Juan Pablo Sanchez was seven years old, his family escaped a looming economic crisis in Mexico by moving to San Diego. At first, his parents worked for his uncle, who owned three Mexican restaurants in the city. Eventually, his father opened his own business, a Mexican restaurant called Super Cocina, in the gritty neighborhood of City Heights.

Growing up, Sanchez helped his parents on the weekends. After receiving his BA in city planning from UC San Diego, he worked at Super Cocina while he studied for the LSAT. He'd always planned to go to law school, but he realized that entrepreneurship was in his blood. In 1988, when his father retired, he took over Super Cocina. "It's true what they say about immigrants making the best entrepreneurs," says Sanchez. "When you come to a foreign country, you're trying so hard to carve out a life that you give all you've got to succeed."

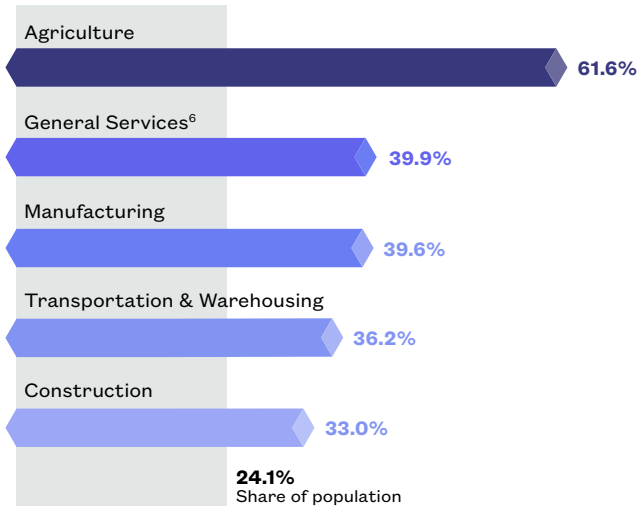
Super Cocina specializes in traditional Mexican comfort food, including eight different mole sauces. "The idea was to cater to Hispanic workers by hiring mamas from the old country to make the dishes you'd only find in someone's home," says Sanchez.

Over time, Sanchez turned the business into a destination for foodies of all stripes. San Diego Magazine included his *caldo de res* beef stew on its 2017 list of "Dishes to Eat Before You Die." And Zagat named his *pozole* pork and hominy stew one of the "10 Hottest Dishes of San Diego." Sanchez employs 10 people, including three U.S.-born Americans, and runs a robust catering business.

Sanchez also champions economic development in City Heights, where he serves on the planning board and is active with four nonprofits. "I want to show that this place can be a successful immigrant hub," says Sanchez, who became a citizen in 2001. To demonstrate his confidence in the community, he took the small but daring step of drawing up plans to build outdoor, café-style seating at Super Cocina. "That's big for City Heights," he says. "We wanted to evoke the feeling that this is a neighborhood where you can sit outside, eat and feel safe."

**LABOR FORCE GROWTH CONT.**

Immigrants are punching above their weight in several key industries in the metro area, making up significant shares of the workforce.



Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs local, we estimate that by 2016, immigrants living in the county had helped create or preserve

**36,770**

**local manufacturing jobs**

that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Despite making up **24.1%** of the overall population, immigrants represented **32.7%** of the entrepreneurs in San Diego in 2016.

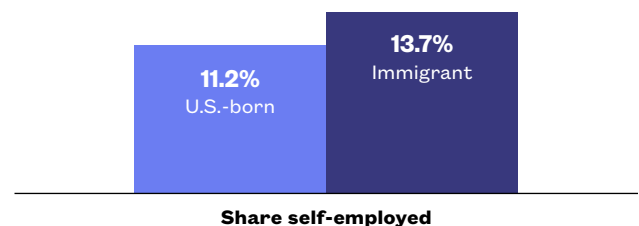


This makes the foreign-born **22.7%** more likely than the U.S.-born to be entrepreneurs.

**62,299** immigrant entrepreneurs generated

**\$1.4B**

in business income for the county.



San Diego Businesses, 2012	Sales Revenue, 2012	Number of Paid Employees, 2012 <sup>8</sup>
Hispanic-owned	<b>\$11.1B</b>	44,950
Asian-owned	<b>\$10.4B</b>	65,010
African American-owned	<b>\$740.7M</b>	5,749

SPOTLIGHT ON

# Rahmo Abdi

## Founder of Nonprofit

In 1995, when 15-year-old Somali refugee Rahmo Abdi arrived in San Diego with her grandmother and three younger siblings, she had survived a civil war and five years in Ethiopian and Kenyan refugee camps. But her new life in America proved difficult. “There were no organizations to help young refugee girls,” says Abdi, who spoke no English and felt out of place in her hijab. “We didn’t assimilate.”

Over time, Abdi adjusted. She co-founded the Pan-African Club at her City Heights high school and gained enough fluency in English to apply to college. She earned an associates degree in sociology from San Diego Mesa College in 2001, married a Somali-American, and gave birth to the first of six children.

Abdi soon found a new way to champion Muslim girls. In 2002, after a leadership training program sponsored by the Refugee Women’s Network, Abdi founded the International Refugee Girls Association (IRGA), a nonprofit that teaches first-generation teenagers from East Africa, the Middle East and Asia about their culture and encourages them to attend college. “It’s important to know where you came from,” says Abdi, now 38. “And it’s also important for girls to know their potential and have confidence in their future.” In 2010, she received Bank of America’s Local Hero Award for her work.

IRGA also teaches reproductive health, financial literacy and self-esteem. “So many refugees think, ‘I don’t know the language. I don’t know the culture. I’ll never be someone,’” says Abdi. “That’s why I introduce them to young African college graduates.” She is especially enthusiastic about promoting science and math-based careers. “I tell the girls they will gain status and contribute to this country,” Abdi says. “They can assimilate while keeping their own culture. That’s the American Dream.”

In the meantime, Abdi is pursuing her own dreams. She’d like to start a humanitarian organization to help refugees in Kenya, and she is dedicated to expanding IRGA at home. “The refugee community is very important in San Diego,” she says. “Our diversity makes us unique, and we make the city a richer place with our contributions.”

## EDUCATION

**6,965** students who were enrolled in San Diego colleges and universities during the fall of 2015 were temporary residents.<sup>9</sup>

They supported...

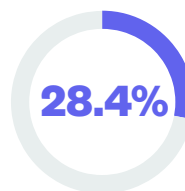
**8,816**

local jobs...

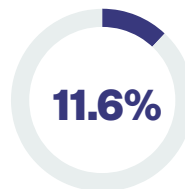
And spent

**\$637.6M**

in the 2016-17 academic year.<sup>10</sup>



Share of immigrants over age 25 with at least a bachelor’s degree, 2016



Share of immigrants over age 25 with an advanced degree, 2016

Immigrants make up

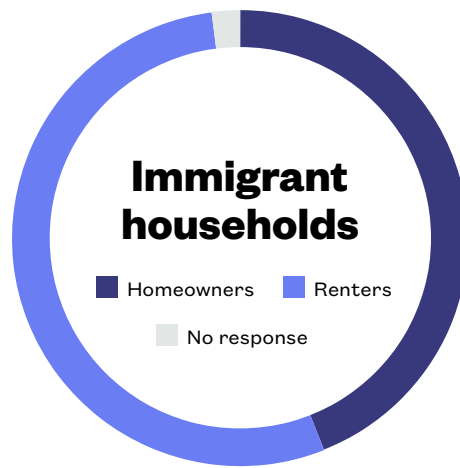
**6.9%**

**of students under age 18**

who attended public schools in the county in 2016.

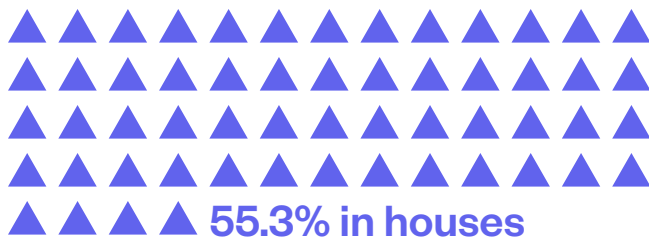
## HOUSING WEALTH

In 2016,  
**43.9%** of immigrants in the county owned their own homes, compared to **54.1%** who rented.

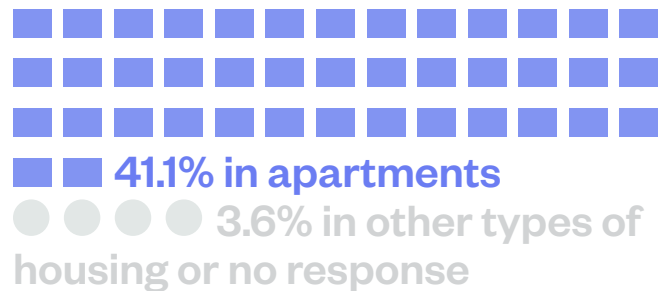


The total property value of immigrant households was **\$79.1B.**  
Their total annual rent was **\$2.7B.**

In 2016, **55.3%** of immigrant households lived in houses...



And **41.1%** lived in apartments.



## NATURALIZATION

**52.1%**  
Naturalized

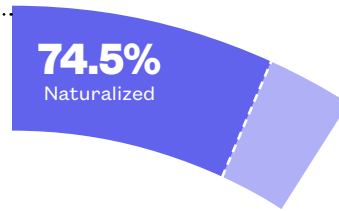
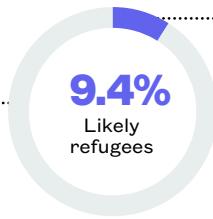
Share of immigrants who were naturalized citizens in 2016. This constituted **416,679** immigrants.

**36.7%**  
Potentially eligible

Share among the 382,678 who were not citizens but potentially eligible for naturalization. This constitutes **140,487** immigrants.

**REFUGEES**

In 2016, **74,797** immigrants, or **9.4%** of the foreign-born population, were likely refugees.<sup>11</sup>



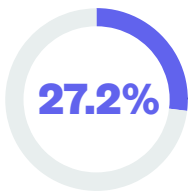
About **74.5%** of these refugees were naturalized citizens.

Median income of refugees in the county, 2016:

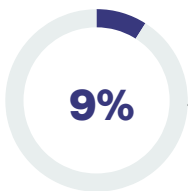
**\$53,700**

In 2016, the following shares of the refugee population worked in these key industries:

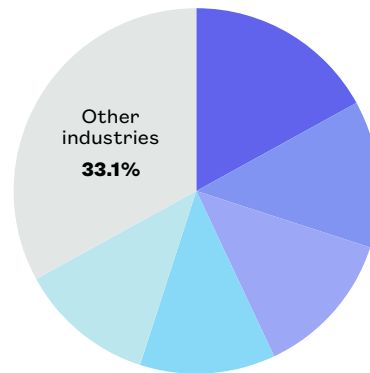
- 1 Manufacturing . . . . . 17.3%
- 2 Retail Trade . . . . . 13.1%
- 3 Transportation . . . . . 12.5%
- 4 General Services . . . . . 12.0%
- 5 Healthcare . . . . . 12.0%



Share of refugees with at least a bachelor's degree, 2016



Share of refugees with an advanced degree, 2016



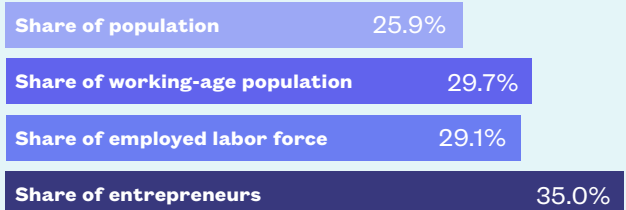
**CITY OF SAN DIEGO**

Number of immigrants living in the City of San Diego in 2016:

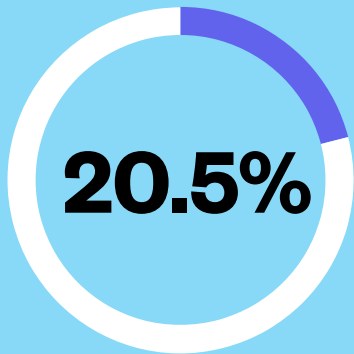
**363,093**

Immigrant share of the city's population in 2016:

**25.9%**



## UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



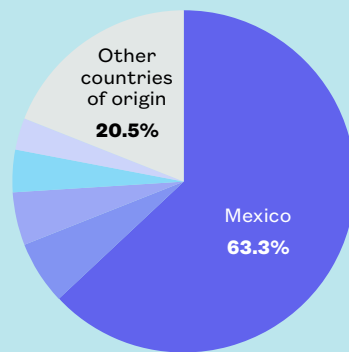
Undocumented share of the immigrant population, 2016

Number of undocumented immigrants living in San Diego County in 2016:

**163,509**

Top five countries of origin for undocumented immigrants living in the county:

- 1 Mexico . . . . . 63.3%
- 2 China . . . . . 5.5%
- 3 Philippines . . . . . 4.7%
- 4 India . . . . . 3.5%
- 5 Saudi Arabia . . . . . 2.5%



Undocumented immigrants tend to concentrate in these key industries:

**19.9%** of undocumented immigrants worked in recreation & accommodation in 2016.

**16.0%** worked in professional services.<sup>12</sup>

**13.0%** worked in retail trade.

**11.4%** worked in manufacturing.

**10.6%** worked in construction.

...and **29.1%** worked in other industries.

Undocumented immigrants contributed to state and local taxes, including property, sales, and excise taxes levied by state or municipal governments.

Given their income, we estimate that in 2016...

Amount earned by undocumented immigrant households in 2016:

**\$2.6B**

**\$503.8M** went to federal taxes.<sup>13</sup>

**\$109.0M** went to state and local taxes.<sup>14</sup>

Leaving them with

**\$2.0B**

in spending power.<sup>15</sup>



For more city, district, and state-level data, visit [MapTheImpact.org](http://MapTheImpact.org) and explore our interactive map.



- 1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2011 and 2016 for San Diego County, which is the same geographic area as the San Diego metro area.
- 2 These figures derive from our calculations based on immigrants' share of wage income and self-employment income in the 1-year ACS sample from 2016 and the statistics of GDP from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- 3 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates are from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- 4 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 5 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 6 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
- 7 Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." New American Economy.
- 8 2012 Survey of Business Owners, U.S. Census Bureau
- 9 Data on total student enrollment in the county 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.
- 10 Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.
- 11 New American Economy. 2017. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America."
- 12 Estimates are based on federal tax rates from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and state and local tax rates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- 13 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
- 14 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
- 15 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.