New Americans in Contra Costa County
The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants' in the County

**POPULATION GROWTH**

292,211
Immigrant population in 2017

Population growth
2012-2017

**IMMIGRANT POPULATION - 13.5%**

**OVERALL POPULATION - 6.3%**

20 years
Median length of stay in the U.S.

**Concentration of immigrants in Contra Costa County:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region*</th>
<th>Share of total immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAR SOUTHWEST—Richmond (Southwest) &amp; San Pablo Cities</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR NORTHWEST—Richmond (North), Hercules, &amp; El Cerrito Cities</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH—San Ramon City &amp; Danville Town</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH CENTRAL—Pittsburg &amp; Concord (North &amp; East) Cities</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHWEST—Concord (West), Martinez, &amp; Pleasant Hill Cities</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL—Concord (South), Walnut Creek (East), &amp; Clayton Cities</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHEAST—Antioch City</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST—Walnut Creek (West), Lafayette, Orinda Cities, &amp; Moraga Town</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST—Brentwood &amp; Oakley Cities</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These regions are defined by Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), geographic units that contain at least 100,000 people in the U.S. Census.
New Americans in Contra Costa County

SPENDING POWER & TAX CONTRIBUTIONS

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

GDP contribution by immigrants:

$18.5B

Amount earned by foreign-born households in 2017:

$13.4B

$2.8B went to federal taxes.²

$1.1B went to state & local taxes.³

Leaving them with $9.5B in spending power.

This means that foreign-born households held 27% of all spending power in the county, more than their 25.5% share of the population.

Foreign-born residents in the county also supported federal social programs.

In 2017, they contributed $1.2B to Social Security and $354.4M to Medicare.

33.2% of immigrants in the county received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with 32.0% of U.S.-born residents in 2017.

About 65.7% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while 33.5% had public healthcare coverage.

LABOR FORCE

Although the foreign-born made up 25.5% of the county’s overall population, they represented 31.3% of its working-age³ population, 31.6% of its employed labor force, and 42.9% of its STEM⁶ workers in 2016.

Immigrant shares of the...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age population</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed labor force</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM workers</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**New Americans in Contra Costa County**

**LABOR FORCE CONT.**

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

1. **41.3%** of workers in the TRANSPORTATION industry were foreign-born in 2017.
2. **41.2%** — HOSPITALITY
3. **35.8%** — CONSTRUCTION
4. **35.7%** — MANUFACTURING
5. **35.5%** — PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
6. **33.9%** — HEALTHCARE
7. **31.6%** — WHOLESALE TRADE
8. **30.8%** — GENERAL SERVICES
9. **29.1%** — RETAIL TRADE
10. **26.5%** — FINANCE

Immigrants tended to work in these occupations in the county in 2017:

1. Software Developers ............ **4.3%**
2. Maids & Housekeepers .......... **4.0%**
3. Janitors ............................ **3.7%**
4. Miscellaneous Managers ........ **3.1%**
5. Registered Nurses ............... **2.7%**
6. Grounds Maintenance Workers .. **2.2%**
7. Construction Laborers ........... **2.2%**
8. Cashiers ............................ **2.2%**
9. Personal Care Aides ............. **2.1%**
10. Waiters & Waitresses .......... **1.8%**

Other occupations **71.7%**
Arturo Fernandez
Ph.D. Statistics Candidate, University of California, Berkeley

Arturo Fernandez’s parents brought him to America from Mexico when he was three months old. He grew up undocumented, but thanks to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was able to graduate college, earn a PhD in statistics, and become a data scientist for Uber. “DACA was completely life-changing,” he says. “It’s given me opportunities I would never otherwise have had, and allowed me to give so much back, too.”

Fernandez’s parents came to America in search of a better life. His mother worked as a housekeeper, and his father became a farm laborer and then a landscaper. They eventually saved enough money for Fernandez’s dad to buy a truck and start his own landscaping business. But they pushed Fernandez to put his studies first. “When I was a kid, my mom would say ‘Put your education first, and everything else will fall into place,’” he says.

Fernandez excelled in school and was accepted to UC Berkeley for his bachelor’s. It wasn’t easy to cover the tuition, but DACA allowed Fernandez to legally support himself. Later, as a PhD candidate in statistics, he led a Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory team that developed a more accurate method of predicting tropical storms. “I love using mathematics to help people, and make a difference in the real world,” he says.

Fernandez is also giving back as a community leader in Contra Costa. He founded East County For Immigrant Rights and Education (EC FIRE), which provides education and support for local immigrants, and runs free legal clinics attended by hundreds of people. He has provided his statistical expertise to companies like Target to Hewlett-Packard, and just accepted a job with Uber, where he’ll use his talents to fine-tune the Uber Eats platform. “I want to see what I can learn from them,” he says. “It’s my next big adventure.”

LABOR FORCE CONT.

Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the county helped create or preserve 13,442 local manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere.⁹
**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

That year, they generated $589.2M in business income.

In 2017, **33.5%**, or **19,764**, of entrepreneurs in the county were immigrants.

Compared to...

- **25.5%** Immigrant share of population

That year, they generated **$589.2M** in business income.

**11.2%**
Share of foreign-born residents who worked for their own businesses, compared with

**10.3%**

**Immigrant entrepreneurs tended to start businesses in these key industries:**

1. **30.6%** of immigrant entrepreneurs worked in the PROFESSIONAL SERVICES industry in 2017.
2. **14.8%** — GENERAL SERVICES
3. **10.5%** — HEALTHCARE

This made immigrants in the county **9%** more likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts.
Menbere “Menbe” Aklilu, who the East Bay Express named “Best Do Gooder Business Owner” in 2018, is the definition of resilience. In her native Gojjam Ethiopia, Aklilu saw her mother shot to death and became an orphan at 10. She later survived sexual assault and an abusive husband. And she gave birth to her son in an Italian homeless shelter. After all of this, Aklilu immigrated to Oakland in 1995 and became a hostess at the Italian restaurant Salute e Vita. She worked her way up to general manager, then bought the restaurant, hiring dozens of new employees.

Along the way, Aklilu won recognition for her charitable spirit. Over 15 years as owner of Salute e Vita, she donated 30,000 meals to needy community members and created the Menbe’s Way Fund to grant scholarships to underprivileged girls in the East Bay. She won the Contra Costa Business Woman of the Year Award in 2009, serves on the board of the Richmond Community Foundation, and regularly gives commencement speeches. She was also granted an honorary doctorate from Oakland’s Holy Names University.

After closing her business last summer, Aklilu started a memoir and turned to full-time philanthropy. Last year, her Thanksgiving celebration at the Richmond Memorial Auditorium served over 1,000 homeless people. She is also working with the Help A Life Foundation to open a school for 80 girls in her home village in Ethiopia, and has opened her home to an Ethiopian refugee blinded in an acid attack. Having experienced so much hardship, Aklilu says she’s determined to keep helping others. “I am absolutely blessed and fortunate,” she says. “In America, it doesn’t matter who you are or where you came from. It matters where you are going.”
HOUSING WEALTH

In 2017, 64.4% of immigrant households in the county owned their own homes, compared to 69.6% of U.S.-born households.

35.6% of immigrant households were renters.

The total property value of immigrant households: $50.9B
Their total annual rent paid: $733.4M

NATURALIZATION

Share of immigrants in the county who were naturalized U.S. citizens. This represents a total of 162,954 immigrants.

Nationally, 49.4% of all immigrants are naturalized.

Share of immigrants in the county who were likely eligible to naturalize. This represents a total of 45,042 immigrants.
In 2017, **19,298 people**, or **6.6%** of the immigrant population in the county, were likely refugees.\(^\text{12}\)

**Top countries of origin for refugees:**

- Vietnam: 38.4%
- Afghanistan: 22.4%
- Other countries of origin: 39.2%

**$90,000**

Median annual household income of refugees

**39.5%**

Share of refugees aged 25 or older that held a **bachelor’s degree or higher** in 2017

**13.6%**

Share of refugees aged 25 or older that held an **advanced degree** in 2017

**65.8%**

Share of refugees who were naturalized U.S. citizens. This represents a total of **12,700** refugees.

**UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

**55,499**

Undocumented immigrants in 2017

**19.0%**

Share of immigrants who were undocumented

**Top countries of origin for undocumented immigrants:**

1. Mexico: 35.6%
2. El Salvador: 14.5%
3. China: 6.9%
4. Philippines: 6.7%

**Other countries of origin**: 36.3%
Amount earned by undocumented immigrant households in 2017:

$1.6B

After taxes, this leaves them with $1.4B in spending power.

Undocumented immigrants tended to work in these key industries:

1. **19.4%** of workers in the HOSPITALITY industry were undocumented in 2017.
2. **19.0%** — PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
3. **14.2%** — CONSTRUCTION
4. **12.3%** — RETAIL TRADE
5. **9.7%** — HEALTHCARE

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1. We define an immigrant and foreign-born as anyone born outside the country to non-U.S. citizen parents who is a resident in the United States. This includes naturalized citizens, green card holders, temporary visa holders, refugees, asylees, and undocumented immigrants, among others.
2. Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2012 and 2017 and figures refer to Contra Costa County, California.
5. We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
7. 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.
8. General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
10. 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.
11. Economic data is derived from the International Student Economic Value Tool maintained by NAFSA, the association of international educators.

For more city, district, and state-level data, visit MapTheImpact.org and explore our interactive map.