

A grayscale background image of the San Antonio skyline, featuring several high-rise buildings and the prominent Tower of the Americas on the right side. The scene is viewed from an elevated perspective, showing a highway interchange and some greenery in the foreground.

SAN ANTONIO

WELCOMING PLAN

Developed by the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and the City of San Antonio Office of Immigration in partnership with business and community leaders.

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Neighbors,

In San Antonio, we know that our diversity is an asset that helps drive a more collaborative, united and resilient community. Understanding the economic and financial contributions immigrants and refugees have made in our community, it is our responsibility to enact solutions that help bring their personal gifts and unique voices to light.

Through community-wide listening sessions and online surveys, we received feedback from immigrants and refugees and business and community leaders who understand the existing barriers they face. Those barriers are identified within this report, along with recommendations on how San Antonio can be a place where newcomers are welcomed and have the opportunity to fully participate and contribute to our city.

By making changes to the way that we offer services and outreach, we can increase access to critical programs that will help our new neighbors fully integrate into our city. By decreasing barriers, we empower immigrants and refugees to fully participate in the educational and workforce programs that our city and our local businesses have to offer. Tapping into the strengths of our immigrant and refugee community will also help encourage the kind of collaboration that celebrates diversity and sparks innovation.

We thank the hundreds of community members, and business and nonprofit leaders, who offered their time and valuable insight to make this report possible. Stronger together, our efforts will help create a city that is prepared to cultivate the unique talents of all of our community members as we usher in a new era in economic and social prosperity.

Thank you,



Mayor Ron Nirenberg



Adam Hamilton
2020 Chair of the Board, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
President and CEO, Southwest Research Institute

OUR NEIGHBORS

OUR CITY

With a rich immigration history, San Antonio is a city that deeply understands the value and contributions of newcomers. Our city is committed to increasing access to the resources San Antonio's immigrant community needs to succeed, including a Welcoming Plan that outlines a course of action to decrease barriers so our neighbors can fully integrate and pursue education and workforce opportunities. Recognizing that diversity is a strength that positively impacts the economic and social fabric of our community, we pledge to create a city that lifts up our immigrant and refugee neighbors. Stronger together, we commit to finding a path forward that allows all our community members to thrive.



Stronger Together

Last year, the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce joined forces with the City of San Antonio Immigration Liaison to host listening sessions and solicit feedback through an online survey. Hundreds of San Antonio residents participated, including members of our immigrant and refugee communities, social service nonprofits, local businesses, government stakeholders and others. Participants outlined barriers and made recommendations across seven focus areas: education, health services, legal services, city services and programs, civic engagement, workforce development, and entrepreneurship. An eighth category of Emergency Management was added in 2020 after the listening sessions and is addressed in this plan. This report lays out those findings and presents recommendations in each focus area, highlighting immigrant and refugee voices and creating alignment on community goals.

In 2018, we were selected by Welcoming America and New America Economy (NAE) to participate in the Gateways for Growth Challenge. As an organization focused on advocating for smart immigration policies that help grow the economy and create jobs for all Americans, NAE was instrumental in documenting the economic and entrepreneurial impact of New Americans in our city.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The economic contributions and demographics of immigrants in our city

Immigrants make up a significant portion of our community. According to the Census, there are approximately 200,000 immigrants living in San Antonio which amounts to about 13.5% of the total population.

San Antonio grew by 8.2% from 2012 to 2017, with immigrants contributing 5.2% of that growth.

Top 5 countries of origin:

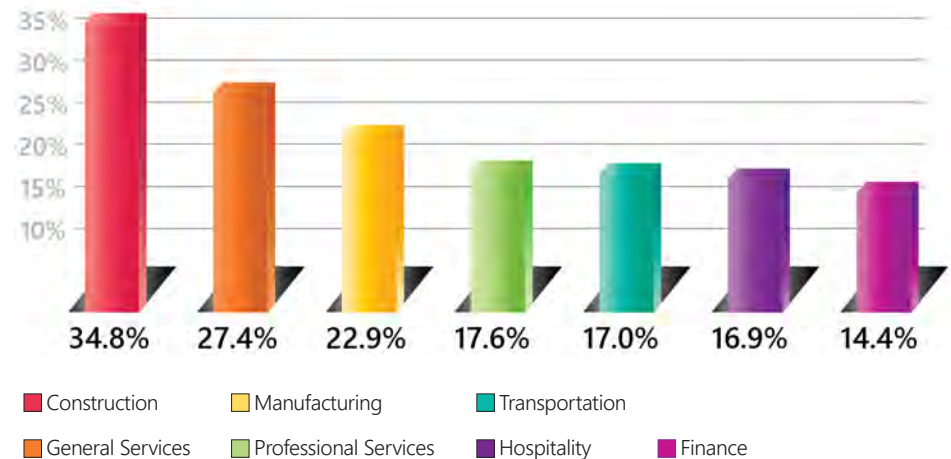
64.8% Mexico 4.4% India 2.4% Philippines
1.6% Afghanistan 1.6% El Salvador



Contributing To Our Local Economy

The spending power and economic contributions of immigrants are perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of their presence in our communities. The data show that immigrants make significant contributions to San Antonio's economy, in contrast to narratives that they are a significant drain on local resources.

Foreign-born households held **14.1% of all spending power** in the city and contributed more than \$666 million toward Medicare and Social Security programs. Most compelling, they played pivotal roles in supporting key industries in our city.



"Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that immigrants living in the city had helped create or preserve **9,204 local manufacturing jobs** that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2017." -**New American Economy report**

OUR WORK

DRAWING ON COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

Kicking off in May 2019 and spanning six months, our various community input sessions sought to engender trust and develop a deeper understanding of the needs of the immigrant and refugee community in San Antonio. The City of San Antonio Immigration Liaison and the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce hosted multiple charrettes, moderated listening sessions, and provided online surveys. Our goal: to create a strategic Welcoming Plan that empowers Newcomers.

We joined forces with business, government, education, nonprofit, consular, community, and legal and advocacy groups to seek input and build support for a plan developed with and for our neighbors. Drawing over 200 participants, including members of the immigrant and refugee community, we outline the distinct barriers and challenges our new neighbors face.

Our Welcoming Plan distills these conversations and offers proposed solutions, reveals relevant statistics, and incorporates quotes that help illuminate the story of immigrants and refugees in our community. Given these input sessions were held in 2019 and the plan written in 2020, the implementation will be ongoing and updated in addendums to this document. The feedback is available in appendices which are categorized and condensed for this portion of the plan.

“We wanted to hear from our community and have them tell us their experiences, have them tell us what we’re doing well or not doing well,” — **Tino Gallegos, City of San Antonio Immigration Liaison**



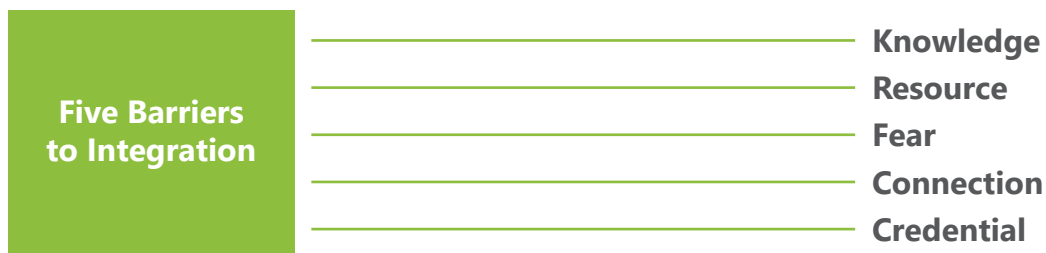
COMMON BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

Working Group Issue Areas

The Working Groups divided their work by areas of expertise and identified barriers faced by immigrant and refugee San Antonians. They offered recommendations for making San Antonio a more welcoming community in the following eight issue areas:

1. Education
2. Health Services
3. Legal Services
4. Local Government Services and Programs
5. Civic Engagement
6. Workforce Development
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Emergency Management

The working group participants, survey, and listening session participants identified several barriers and challenges to full integration into the native born community. Many of the respondents identified common barriers that immigrants and refugees face in many different parts of their lives in San Antonio. **The barriers can be grouped into five different themes:**



Emergency Management was not one of the issue areas that the working groups addressed in their 2019 meetings. Two emergency events that occurred in San Antonio—the influx of migrants from the border from April through December of 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 - produced collaborations and recommendations from Immigration Subcommittee of the City/County working group process that took place in April and May 2020 (<http://sacovidaction.com/>). The recommendations generated through that process are included as relevant and timely for our Welcoming Plan and are included because they address a crucial concern that must be addressed for the safety and well-being of our immigrant and refugee neighbors.

FIVE BARRIERS

These themes are not an exhaustive list of the challenges facing our immigrant and refugee residents, but they help to organize the issues identified into general areas where the community can target solutions. It is also important to recognize that many of these barriers intersect across themes and can be addressed with broader and more comprehensive intersectional strategies.

Knowledge

barriers are obstacles that prevent immigrants, refugees, service providers, community leaders, and native residents from understanding one another and the existing systems and resources that can provide immigrant and refugee residents with opportunities for integration.

Resource

barriers arise when there is insufficient funding for needed programs and services, or the need to create a new program necessary for community integration.

Fear

barriers arise in a number of ways including fear of accessing existing programs, differences in cultural norms, and intimidation. Immigrants and refugees also face racism, xenophobia, and bias rooted in native residents' fear of foreigners.

Connection

barriers include insufficient assistance in identifying and accessing resources, including lack of connections to formal and informal networks and digital platforms.

Credential

barriers for immigrants and refugees arise when they lack sufficient ID, proof of immigration status, social security numbers, or proof of residency to qualify for programs. The inability to have foreign obtained educational credentials recognized in the U.S. also is a barrier to immigrants and refugees seeking to enter the workforce in their trained field and fully contribute in their new home.

FRAMEWORK FOR AN INTERSECTIONAL RESPONSE

The recommendations produced by the working groups through the strategic planning process had significant overlaps between issue areas which address the five main types of barriers facing immigrants and refugees in San Antonio. Because of the intersectionality of the data, it has been condensed into several general recommendations that include notations indicating the associated barriers and issue areas.

Timeframe for Implementation

To track the progress made on implementation of the plan, the following symbols have been incorporated into the general recommendations.



Little to no progress







Some progress/
effort initiated





Progress made
toward implementation







Implementation has
substantially progressed



PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
	Increase language access to services and information through comprehensive language access policies.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Emergency Management
	Provide greater educational or orientation opportunities for immigrants and refugees to meet their needs and provide them information on life in San Antonio.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Workforce • Entrepreneurship
	Provide better training for native born residents and service providers on the unique needs of immigrant and refugee communities, as well as best practices for providing services.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Local Government • Workforce • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management
	Build the funding capacity of non-profits, advocacy groups, and other community organizations that provide services to immigrants and refugees.	✓	✓		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management




		BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advocate for welcoming policies and celebrate the achievements and contributions of San Antonio's immigrant and refugee communities.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Engagement • Workforce
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increase funding to existing service providers so that they can support immigrant and refugee residents, especially during emergencies and disasters.		✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Legal Services • Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create information hubs, referral networks, hotlines, and other spaces where immigrants and refugees can find vital information and be connected to community resources.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Workforce • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create endowments or funds that can raise money to provide grants or otherwise fund immigration legal services and immigration related fees.		✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services

PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
	Create or expand programs that prepare immigrants for their transitions to life in the U.S.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government • Civic Engagement
	Create programs to assist with housing or income support, with a focus on promoting resiliency during emergencies or disasters.		✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management
	Provide more know-your-rights trainings.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Emergency Management
	Provide greater education or orientation to overcome fears based on cultural beliefs.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management

PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
	Provide services or conduct outreach in places and with trusted community members to alleviate immigrant fears of accessing services or attending meetings.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Local Government • Emergency Management
	Policy makers and service providers should make decisions that build rather than erode trust with immigrant and refugee communities.			✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Emergency Management
	Create public information campaigns to dispel immigrant fears to access services.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Emergency Management
	Create programs, campaigns, partnerships, and initiatives that connect immigrants and refugees with the resources that meet their needs, goals, and desires.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Workforce • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management

PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop the capacity of immigrant and refugee community members to serve as connectors to resources, as well as serving their communities.	✓		✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide support and extend case management services for immigrant and refugee residents.	✓	✓		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Legal Services • Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create public information campaigns to dispel immigrant fears to access services.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Emergency Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create programs, campaigns, partnerships, and initiatives that connect immigrants and refugees with the resources that meet their needs, goals, and desires.	✓		✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Workforce • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management

PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
	Increase access to affordable transportation.		✓		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health
	Increase outreach efforts to immigrant and refugee communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health • Legal Services • Local Government • Civic Engagement • Workforce • Entrepreneurship • Emergency Management
	Support efforts to bridge the digital divide, but also engage with immigrant and refugees using strategies that are not dependent on technology.		✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government • Emergency Management
	Support efforts to validate foreign earned credentials in education, skills or professional certifications, and work experience. Connect immigrants and refugees with education, training, employment, and business opportunities that build on their existing skills and education.	✓			✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Local Government • Workforce • Entrepreneurship

PROGRESS TO GOAL	Recommendation	BARRIERS					ISSUE AREAS
		Knowledge	Resource	Fear	Connection	Credential	
	Support efforts to provide acceptable forms of identification to immigrants and refugees.			✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government • Emergency Management
	Promote policies that expand the list of acceptable identification or proof of residency for services, or encourage the creation of other forms of acceptable photo identification by local institutions.			✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services • Local Government • Emergency Management
	Limit unnecessary requests for Texas state-issued identification and Social Security Numbers to access services.			✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Emergency Management

More detailed descriptions of the barriers and recommendations produced through the working group process can be found in the following sections.

APPENDIX

EDUCATION

Immigrants and refugees living in San Antonio understand the transformative power behind pursuing K-12 and higher education opportunities but identified several barriers in accessing services and implicit biases that they felt limited their options. Their proposed solutions center on an outreach campaign that would better educate K-12 and higher education teachers, faculty, and staff on the unique needs of immigrants and refugees, streamline and align resources and better incorporate their feedback and voices in the services they need.

Barriers

Limited access to English language services for parents and families

Implicit bias towards immigrant and refugee students and their families limits opportunities in K-12 and higher education

School integration continues to be a challenge, with immigrants and refugees having difficulty understanding fees, and navigating the enrollment, student placement, educational testing, and career pathways process

A lack of understanding among educational providers of the rights of students and a lack of knowledge about the local, state and federal policies that give immigrants and refugees the right to access higher education and federal funding.

Recognizing and validating foreign credentials continues to be a hurdle for immigrants and refugees, who struggle to find employment in their established fields of study

Limited knowledge of cross-cultural norms and fear among undocumented parents that becoming involved in their child's education could lead to retaliation

Recommendations

Establish parent liaisons for K-12 schools who can serve as translators and help bridge communication and cultural gaps

Education and outreach campaigns to help educators understand the unique needs and assets of immigrants and refugees

Engage local immigrant youth who can act as mentors and assist immigrant and refugee families navigate the college application process

Conduct a 'Know Your Rights' training for immigrants and refugees; conduct implicit bias training across school districts, colleges and universities; and ensure educators understand the local, state and federal policies that dictate the right of immigrants and refugees to access higher education and federal funding

Work with institutions of higher education to validate foreign credentials and institute policies that better support and protect immigrant and refugee students

Develop a campaign to help immigrant and refugee students access services and resources pertinent to their education and workforce goals



MORE THAN

74%

of respondents said they agree or strongly agree that San Antonio is a welcoming city.

MORE THAN

55%

of survey respondents said education institutions were among the organizations they most trusted.

“For me, personally, something that I struggled with a lot ... is discriminatory teachers and students and finding a way to combat that. Being Middle Eastern, I got a lot of, “You’re a terrorist. You’re hiding a bomb in your backpack,” — **Refugee and City of San Antonio Office of Immigration Intern**

HEALTH SERVICES

Having often faced healthcare access challenges in their home countries or trauma in their journeys as refugees, new Americans often have layered medical needs. In our meetings, they expressed a deep need for accessing basic healthcare options in addition to mental health providers and clinics that work on a sliding scale effort.

Barriers

Immigrants and refugees can sometimes lack the proper identification documents needed to access services

There can exist a lack of empathy among healthcare providers in treating immigrants and refugees

Lack of awareness about existing healthcare options throughout the city

Language, transportation and financial barriers can exacerbate access challenges

Cultural stigmas can exist around pursuing healthcare or mental health resources

Immigrants and refugees identified a lack of trust in healthcare institutions

Recommendations

Provide guidance and support for immigrants and refugees applying for identification and provide assistance in helping them navigate health insurance applications

Increase awareness of the health needs and concerns of immigrants to providers and medical students

Create a media campaign highlighting the Migrant Resource Center as the center of information for immigrants and refugees, partner organizations and services

Provide information sessions in multiple languages to increase knowledge of available health services; work with partners to identify potential funding sources to defray financial costs of healthcare, and work with VIA Metropolitan Transit to get immigrants and refugees free or reduced-cost bus passes

Address immigrants' cultural beliefs and practices that may impact health care, such as fears related to vaccinations and STD testing

Work with mobile health units to provide access to basic health services in high-need areas where refugees and immigrants live, working to bridge a gap in trust and care

In a City of San Antonio survey, only **34 percent** of respondents said they trusted healthcare institutions

More than **63 percent** of respondents said healthcare, housing or childcare was too expensive in San Antonio

"I just feel like the language is the primary key to not only survive [but] also to feel a sense of belonging," — **Congolese Refugee**

LEGAL SERVICES

Legal services are needed by immigrants and refugees for myriad reasons, including consultations for navigating U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or battling unfair housing or workforce discrimination issues.

Barriers

A lack of access to legal representation and associated resources

A lack of clarity around what kinds of services immigrants and refugees will need as laws change from state to state and their final destinations may be unknown

Fear or anxiety among immigrants and refugees in communicating their needs or asking questions considering a current political environment that is punitive

Language is a significant barrier and translated documents may be limited to predominant immigrant and refugee groups, discounting the needs of those who speak less common languages such as Portuguese, Farsi, etc

Attorneys offering pro bono legal services may have limited capacity in serving immigrant and refugee clients

Costs may be a barrier to accessing other forms of legal services and representation

Recommendations

Provide information about legal assistance clinics and create legal referral partners who can help immigrants and refugees

Create an information hotline that can help connect people with service partners, assessment, and funding

Promote changes to local and municipal government that decriminalize misdemeanor crimes and create better community policing structures that engender trust between immigrants and refugees and local law enforcement

Distribute information in multiple languages, and ensure hotlines offer translation services

Create an endowment-type program that may be used to raise dollars focused on immigrant and attorney fees and USCIS processing fees

Work within the Department of Justice guidelines to train non-attorney accredited representatives who can act as advocates during legal proceedings

In a City of San Antonio survey, only **40 percent** of respondents said they trusted lawyers or legal services

We've put together an immigration loan to help finance the fees for those of you who are interested in becoming citizens but don't have the money right off the bat to pay the necessary costs associated with that. We can help with that. You don't have to be a citizen to open an account [with us]," — **Jeff Ivey, President and CEO of River City Federal Credit Union**

CITY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

The City of San Antonio every year provides millions of dollars worth of direct services so residents can access libraries, parks, and community events. The City also contributes financial support to delegate agencies that provide essential social services, including childcare, domestic violence prevention, small business development and more. Immigrants and refugees are still learning about the extent of these services, many of which are free, as city and business leaders develop stronger outreach and targeting plans.

MORE THAN

55%

of respondents said they agree or strongly agree that most services are open to immigrants and refugees

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We receive[d] a lot [from the City of San Antonio]. We need to give now ... We want to show the City of San Antonio: thank you,"

— Iraqi Refugee

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San Antonio Central Library

Barriers

Language barriers and continued challenges with public transit

A lack of proper identification keeps immigrants and refugees from being able to access some healthcare services or acquire property

A lack of information about what opportunities and services are offered, coupled with a distrust of government agencies and fear, can keep new neighbors from accessing services

Immigrants and refugees report a lack of empathy among public service providers and government officials who continue to ask for identification to receive services, including for workforce programs, that don't require it

Immigrants and refugees fear calling the police when they're victims of or witnesses to a crime because they don't understand their rights

Nonprofit organizations serving this population reported having a hard time understanding the process for applying for city grants

Existing hours of operation for some city services and programs dovetail with working hours for immigrants and refugees

Recommendations

Increase language offerings and translators; encourage city hiring practices that employ dual-language immigrants and refugees who understand the needs of that community first-hand

Research programs that recognize foreign-acquired licenses and training and work with foreign governments or consulates to help immigrants and refugees acquire proper documentation

Institute outreach programs and host resource fairs that provide a comprehensive view of services

Provide city employees with cultural competency training to increase empathy and educate them on what workarounds can be granted for immigrants and refugees who don't have proper identification; host a staff training that focuses on welcoming to immigrants

Partner with community actors who immigrants and refugees trust, such as non-government agencies, libraries, and radio and TV stations to help with an informational campaign about their rights; offer cultural competency classes for immigrants and refugees so they understand norms and laws

Ramp up outreach, education, and funding to nonprofit and city departments providing support and services to the immigrant and refugee community; provide training for nonprofits on how to access city funds

With libraries acting as hubs for community and city service and program information, consider areas where it might benefit to keep them open for longer or during different time periods

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Finding ways to incorporate immigrant and refugee voices into our local government will help guarantee that their needs shape public policy and broaden public opinion. A city that welcomes immigrants and refugees will also encourage their right to civic engagement. As city and community leaders help new Americans navigate this process, it's important to understand the barriers they face and implement solutions.

MORE THAN
75%

of respondents said they agree or strongly agree that they understand the laws and role of government in the United States

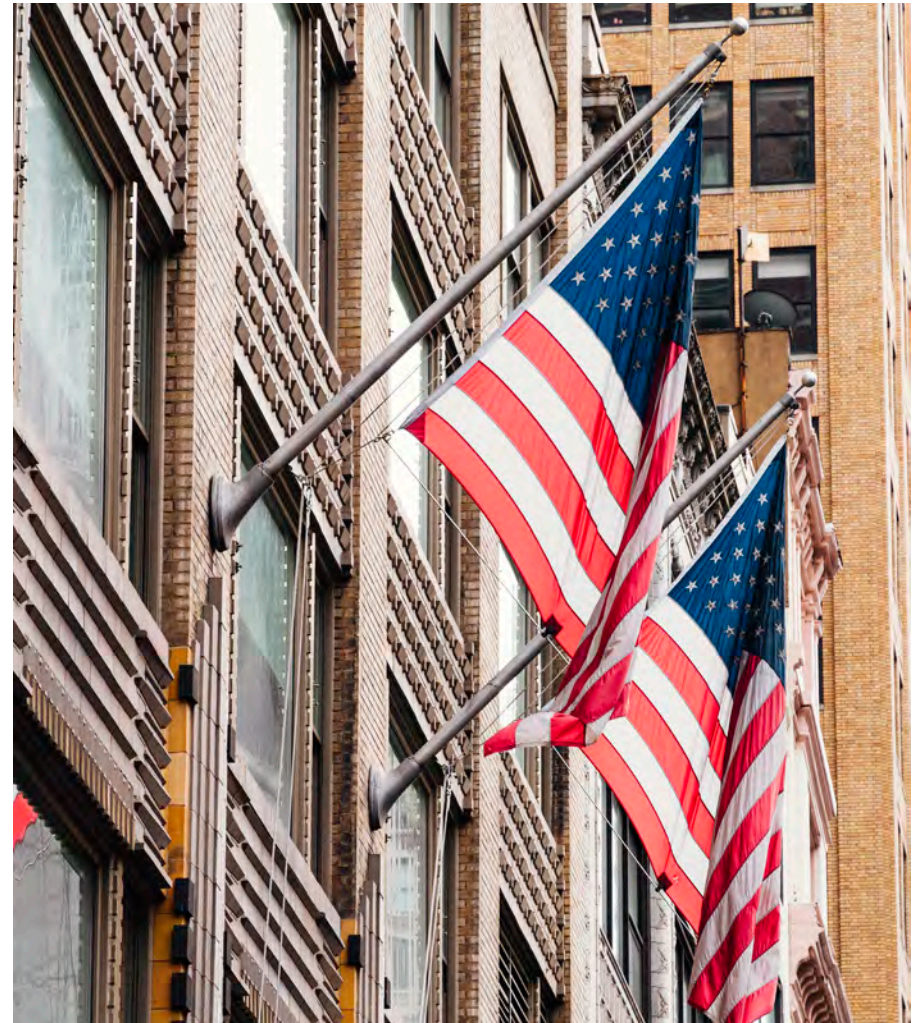
797

local jobs were supported by international students



IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

- **66.6%** Lived in Houses
- **31.4%** Lived in Apartments
- **2.0%** No Response



Barriers

Civic participation may not have been encouraged in their home countries, so practicing it may feel new, dangerous or outside cultural norms

There is a lack of knowledge about what resources are available to guide new Americans through participation at the local, state and federal levels

Language and literacy continue to pose challenges, as well as financial hurdles at institutions that offer support, e.g. church dues or form charges

Without affordable housing, the immigrant and refugee community is transient, discouraging them from being engaged in their local communities

Understanding the path toward citizenship or residency is hard and the public face of government can be unwelcoming

The digital divide creates access challenges while low tech knowledge can keep immigrants and refugees from receiving necessary information about voting and other forms of civic engagement

Recommendations

Launch an education campaign that helps immigrants and refugees feel safe in exercising their right to vote and communicates the opportunity they have to shape public policy through civic engagement

Host a community event that offers resources and information on all the ways our new neighbors can participate, whether its in local elections, participating at city council meetings, serving on a board or commission or petitioning their school board trustees

Ensure access to free, high-quality English classes, provide translation services when necessary, and work with community and business partners to increase awareness and access to engagement opportunities

Work with community partners to centralize information and resources and launch a public awareness campaign to inform the city of how the economic impact of immigrants and refugees should correlate with their civic involvement and helps produce a stronger San Antonio

Coordinate several points of education and outreach, working with school districts to help young people understand the importance of civic engagement and offer city-sponsored field trips to welcome newcomers to community spaces such as city hall, museums and more

Work within existing structures in the immigrant and refugee communities to share information and promote civic engagement by connecting cooperatives, small businesses, nonprofits and government, e.g. food trucks & restaurants with immigrant and refugee community gardens

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As a path to financial independence, immigrants and refugees strive to plug into the workforce in areas where they are most needed or in careers that align with credentials and experience from their home countries.

Barriers

Language and cultural norms present learning challenges for new immigrants and refugees as they try to find jobs at the same time they're learning English and navigating a new home

The visa and work permit process is an often lengthy process that can keep people from work and which few employers understand

High demands for low-skilled workers can make immigrant labor necessary but there exists no unified message from industry leaders and little outreach about what kinds of jobs there are for new Americans

Lack of coordination between the city and local industry leaders on how to recruit immigrants and refugees and implement outreach programs that specifically target this population

There is a lack of information about what services [transportation, language development, workforce training, etc.] are available to immigrants and refugees so they can pursue workforce opportunities

Recommendations

A resource center similar to CaféCollege can act as a one-stop-shop for immigrants and refugees looking for resources, including workforce development support, language acquisition, legal services and more

Offer educational and outreach services for local businesses so they understand the challenges newcomers face and partner with the Alamo Colleges District on workforce training

Work with industry and community partners to create a unified task force that establishes a model for connecting immigrant and refugee talent with high-demand jobs; identify immigrant and refugee business owners who can serve as ambassadors and advocates

Work with city, county, and state leaders on how immigrants and refugees can plug into workforce shortages; partner with news organizations to communicate that a welcoming plan for new Americans is good for our city

As "Military City, USA," we can learn to better engage new Americans and understand what workforce opportunities are available through our military bases

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Forging ahead in a new country, many immigrants and refugees have found ways to create their own career opportunities through entrepreneurship. By contributing to the local economy through startup businesses or by providing contract work in critical industries, new Americans are finding innovative ways to meet community needs.

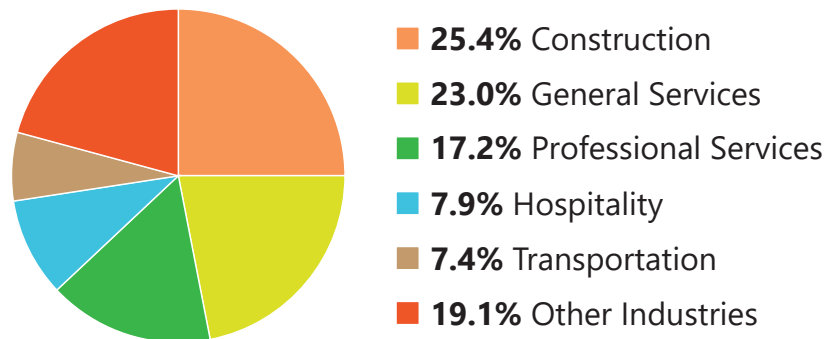
**MORE THAN
35%**

of respondents said they learned English through language classes offered at the library, community center or school

43%

43 percent of respondents said they experienced discrimination or racism in San Antonio

IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS TENDED TO WORK IN THE INDUSTRIES:



Immigrants were more than twice as likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S. born counterparts” — **New American Economy Report**



14.6% of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses compared with 6.7% of U.S.-born residents in 2017.

IMMIGRANTS



U.S.-BORN



Barriers

Many immigrants and refugees struggle to gain credit or open a bank account, preventing them from accessing the kinds of low-interest loans needed for small business development and entrepreneurship

Language barriers can keep new Americans from understanding what resources exist and how to use them

Many immigrants and refugees, especially those with uncertain immigration statuses, may have challenges getting legal employment

Significant differences in the business culture of the U.S. can cause difficulty for immigrants and refugees looking to economically integrate.

The federal government has promoted negative tropes about immigrants and refugees that create biases among potential business partners and clients

Many immigrants and refugees lack access to childcare, making it difficult for parents to find and sustain work; immigrant and refugee women can also face additional hurdles overcoming sexism in their own cultures that prevent them from taking on jobs

Some refugees and immigrants experienced trauma on their journeys to the U.S. and need access to mental health resources before pursuing workforce and entrepreneurship roles

Recommendations

Work with community partners including banks, to deliver economic and social services new Americans need to get on their feet, including childcare and access to lines of credit

Work with organizations to help break language and trust barriers that exist among immigrants and refugees

Offer a "gathering place" for the immigrant and refugee community where they can work with advocates and attorneys on the status of their immigration process

Ensure local government agencies are working collaboratively to provide a welcoming message to new Americans that amplifies our international community and exemplifies strategies for integration

Develop a community-wide strategy for getting money into the hands of immigrants and refugees through microloans that can assist budding entrepreneurs and business owners, especially women

Develop a community-wide strategy for getting money into the hands of immigrants and refugees through microloans that can assist budding entrepreneurs and business owners, especially women

Create an outreach campaign that shows how immigrants contribute to the local, state and national economy

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Whether reacting to natural disasters such as a hurricane or a global pandemic, or addressing the needs of humanitarian disasters that send waves of refugees seeking respite, the safety of the entire community depends upon the safety and well-being of all of our residents and visitors. Ensuring that immigrants and refugees are informed and involved during all phases of emergency response guarantees an equitable response and recovery, as well as securing community well-being and mobilizing the talent of all of our residents. The recent response to COVID-19 both exposed the vulnerabilities of community responses to emergencies, as well as effective strategies for equitable responses.

Barriers

Lack of access to information about important emergency orders and existing community resources

Language barriers bar access to critical emergency messages, information about resources, as well as information and applications to funds for disaster assistance, recovery, or mitigation

Fear of accessing available resource because of fear of immigration enforcement or negative future consequences

Lack of resources to access health care services

Recommendations

Create a comprehensive digital and low-tech outreach campaign that: utilizes platforms widely used by newcomers such as Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook; and establishes partnerships with relevant businesses, and trusted community members and organizations to ensure dissemination of information about available resources

Develop a comprehensive language access policy for local governments that takes into account the literacy levels of residents, the use of human versus machine translation for online resources, the use and availability of human interpreters, and budgets dedicated to multiple language access services

Create a common message among local government, non-profits, advocates, and community members around the safety of accessing emergency resources, hotlines, legal services and explanation of legal rights related to: housing, employment, relief from deportation, and access to funds for disaster assistance, recovery, or mitigation, and health care

Expand immigrant access to health care, including investment in community navigators. Coordinate with emergency management officials to provide list of medical providers that serve immigrants and refugees, as well as other uninsured populations

Lack of proper identification, documentation and/or social security number requirements bar access to funds for disaster assistance, recovery, or mitigation, thereby creating increasing vulnerability to homelessness

Limit request for personal information, including social security numbers, in initial applications and forms for assistance. Expand criteria for proof of identification to include identification issued by foreign governments, educational institutions, and municipal agencies. Expand proof of residency verification requirements to include utility bills, school enrollment, written verification from shelter, hospital, or social service facility and/or non-profit verifying receipt of services. Develop procedures to recognize informal rental agreements. Consider local options for issuing an acceptable proof of identity that contains a photo and basic information for use with local agencies instead of a State of Texas issued identification

Immigrant and refugee families face additional barriers to affordable housing in San Antonio during and after a disaster or emergency

Determine enhanced housing security protections in the aftermath of a disaster or emergency. Adopt local policies that keep people housed, including explicit language in non-eviction policies to ensure housing rights of residents are protected regardless of immigration status. Expand access to affordable housing and finance housing options through non-profit providers; reallocate housing funds to invest in high poverty areas of the community; implement rent control policies where appropriate; develop a reference guide of affordable housing

Lack of information and fear about asserting legal rights leaves immigrants and refugees vulnerable to exploitation during disasters or emergencies

Create or expand existing policies and disseminate information about reporting: labor violations, safety violations at work, crime, fraud, and family violence. Expand legal services available to immigrants through legal clinics and establish fund for legal fee assistance. Local government coordination with the Department of Justice, for training of representatives to serve as immigrant advocates

Immigrant and refugee serving institutions lack resources to provide needed case management

Allocate emergency and permanent funds to support non-profits providing services to the immigrant community that considers the following costs: operational and personnel; outreach, and comprehensive integrated case management systems

Low civic engagement prevents the voices of immigrants and refugees from being considered in emergency planning, operations, and recovery efforts. Immigrants and refugees do not know how to become involved in their communities and make their voices and concerns heard by decision makers

The San Antonio community should follow recommendations from this report to increase the civic engagement of immigrants and refugees in order to prevent inequitable outcome from emergency and disaster relief planning, operations, and recovery efforts. This should include targeted outreach to immigrant communities to engage them to participate in decision-making opportunities, as well as supporting ESL classes and public awareness campaigns



Thank you to the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the North San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, and the Mexican Consulate for their partnership in leading our engagement sessions.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

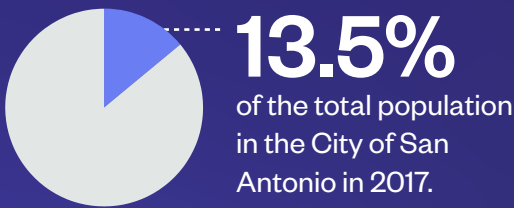
New Americans in San Antonio

The Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the City¹



Population Growth

Immigrants made up



8.7%

of total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants.

Between 2012 and 2017, the population in the city increased by:

8.2%

from 1,373,247 to **1,485,672**.

The immigrant population grew by:

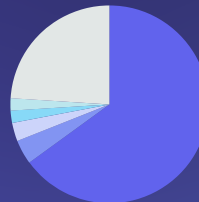
5.2%

from 190,265 to **200,081**.

200,081

immigrants lived in the city in 2017. Their top five countries of origin were:

1. Mexico **64.8%**
2. India **4.4%**
3. Philippines **2.4%**
4. Afghanistan **1.6%**
5. El Salvador **1.6%**



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.

Amount earned by immigrant households in 2017:

\$4.6B

\$674.8M

went to federal taxes.²

FEDERAL

\$369.2M

went to state and local taxes.³

STATE AND LOCAL

Leaving them with **\$3.6B** in spending power.

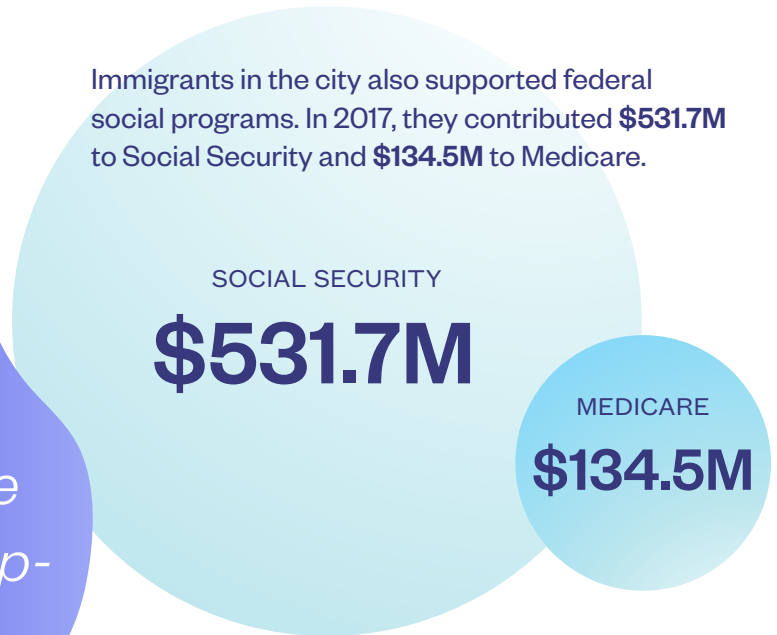
Spending Power & Tax Contributions Continued

Foreign-born households held 14.1% of all spending power in the city, more than their 13.5% share of the population.

21.9% of immigrants in the city received Medicare or Medicaid, compared with **32.0%** of U.S.-born residents in 2017.



Immigrants in the city also supported federal social programs. In 2017, they contributed **\$531.7M** to Social Security and **\$134.5M** to Medicare.



52.4% of immigrants had private healthcare coverage, while



22.8% had public healthcare coverage in 2017.

Workforce

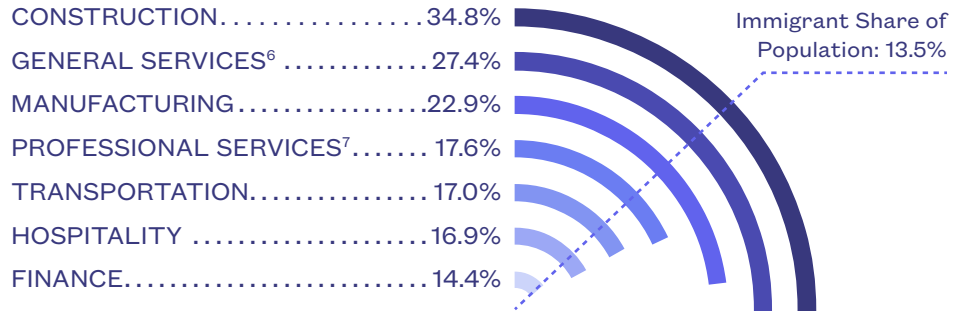
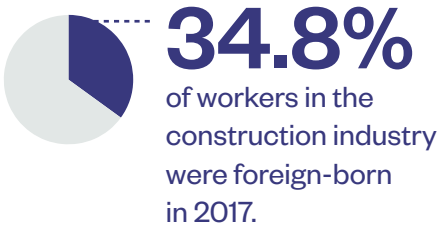
Although the foreign-born made up **13.5%** of the city's overall population, they represented **16.1%** of its working-age⁴ population, **16.6%** of its employed labor force, and **19%** of its STEM⁵ workers in 2017.

Immigrant shares of the...

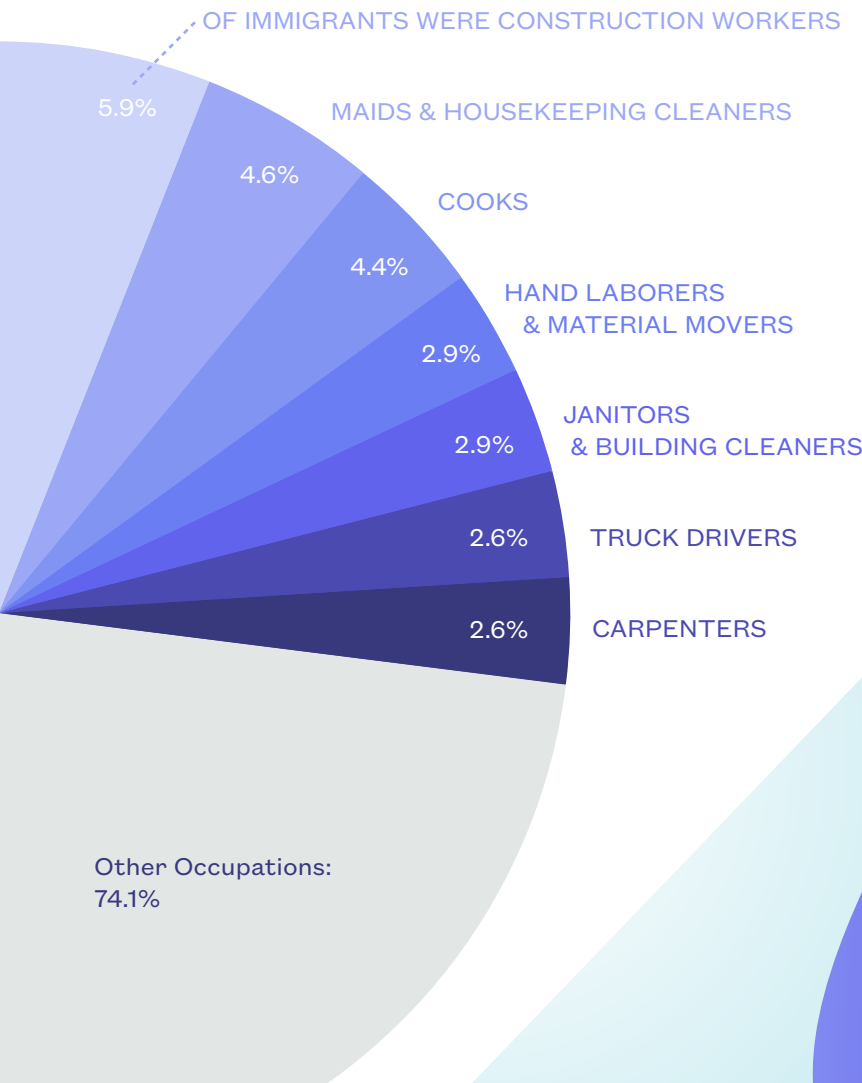


Workforce Continued

Immigrants played a critical role in several **key industries** in the city. This included:



Immigrants tended to work in these **occupations** in the city in 2017:



Because of the role immigrants play in the workforce helping companies keep jobs on U.S. soil, we estimate that:

Immigrants living in the city had helped create or preserve 9,204 local manufacturing jobs that would have otherwise vanished or moved elsewhere by 2017.⁸

Entrepreneurship

Despite making up **13.5%** of the population, immigrants made up **30.3%** of the business owners in the city in 2017. This is higher than the national average of **21.1%** of business owners.

IMMIGRANT SHARE OF POPULATION



17,036

immigrant entrepreneurs lived in San Antonio in 2017.

IMMIGRANT SHARE OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CITY



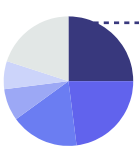
\$360.7M

in business income was generated for the city by immigrant entrepreneurs that year.

IMMIGRANT SHARE OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE U.S.



Immigrant entrepreneurs tended to work in these **key industries**:



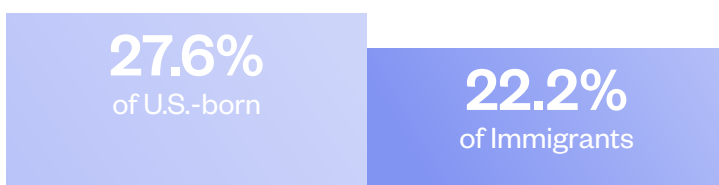
25.4%

of immigrant entrepreneurs worked in the construction industry in 2017.

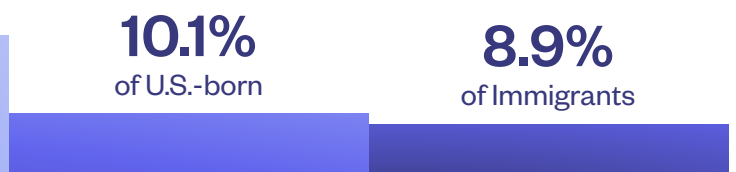
CONSTRUCTION	25.4%
GENERAL SERVICES	23.0%
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	17.2%
HOSPITALITY	7.9%
TRANSPORTATION	7.4%
OTHER INDUSTRIES	19.1%

Education

Share of the city's population aged 25 or above that held a **bachelor's degree or higher** in 2017:



Share of the city's population aged 25 or above that held an **advanced degree** in 2017:



14.6% of foreign-born residents worked for their own businesses, compared with **6.7%** of U.S.-born residents in 2017.

IMMIGRANTS

U.S.-BORN

That made immigrants **more than twice as likely** to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Education Continued

3,005

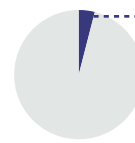
students who were enrolled in colleges and universities in the city during the fall of 2015 were temporary residents.⁹

797

local jobs were supported by international students.

\$85.7M

were spent by international students in the 2017-18 academic year.¹⁰



3.6%

of public school students under 18 were born abroad.

Housing Wealth



In 2017,

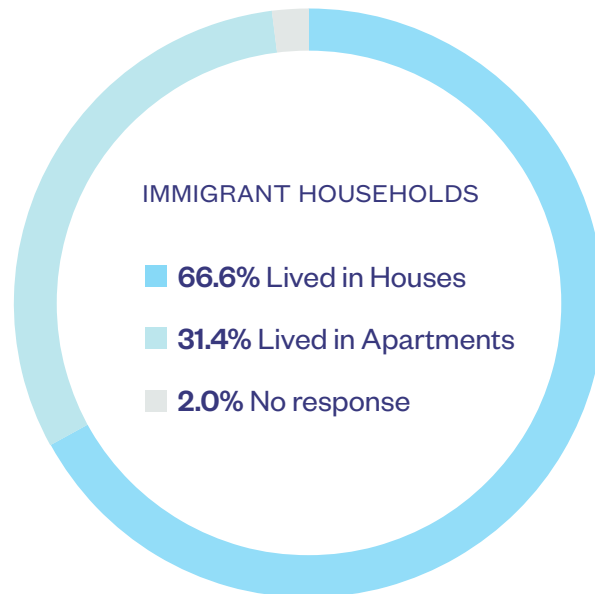
53.4%

of immigrant households in the city owned their own homes, compared to

56.5%

of U.S.-born households.

46.6% of immigrant households were renters.



IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

■ **66.6%** Lived in Houses

■ **31.4%** Lived in Apartments

■ **2.0%** No response

The total property value of immigrant households:

\$6.9B

Their total annual rent paid:

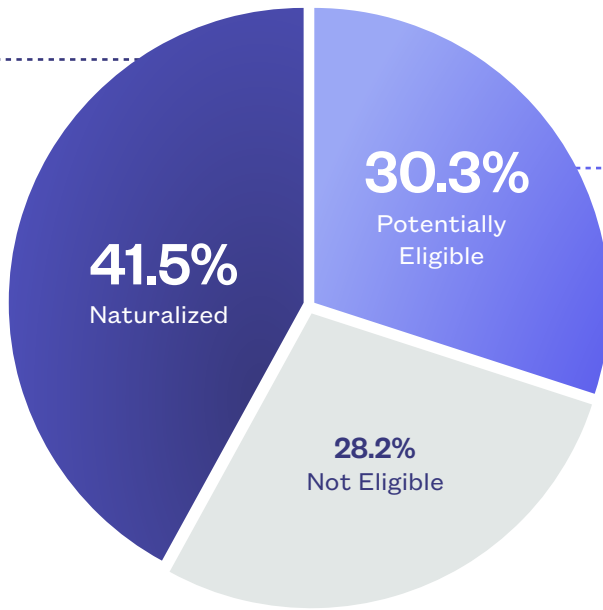
\$343.6M

Naturalization

Share of immigrants in the city who were naturalized U.S. citizens. This represents a total of

83,064
immigrants.

Nationally, **49.4%** of all immigrants are naturalized.



Share among the 117,017 who were not citizens but potentially eligible for naturalization. This represents a total of

35,465
immigrants.

Refugees

9,328
immigrants were likely refugees in 2017.¹¹

4.7%
of the foreign-born population were likely refugees.

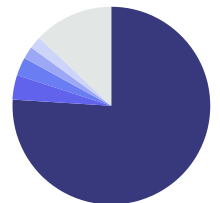
Their median annual income:
\$54,000

Undocumented Immigrants

31.6%
of the foreign-born population were undocumented.

63,157
undocumented immigrants lived in the city in 2017. Their top five countries of origin were:

1. Mexico **75.6%**
2. India **4.4%**
3. Pakistan **2.6%**
4. Guatemala **2.0%**
5. Honduras **1.8%**

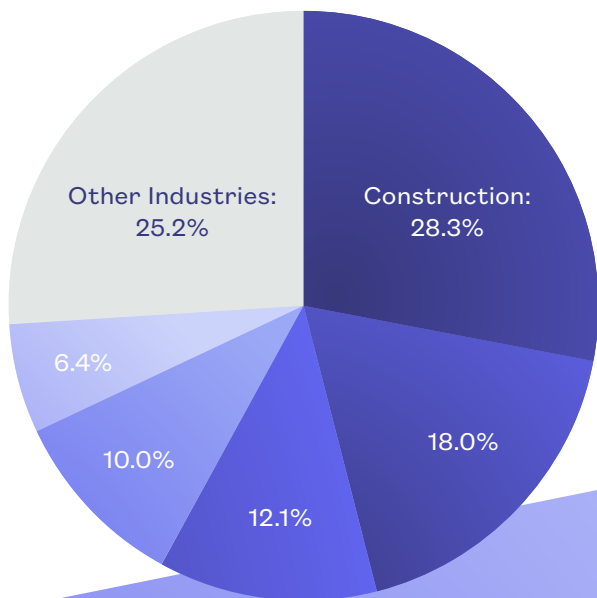
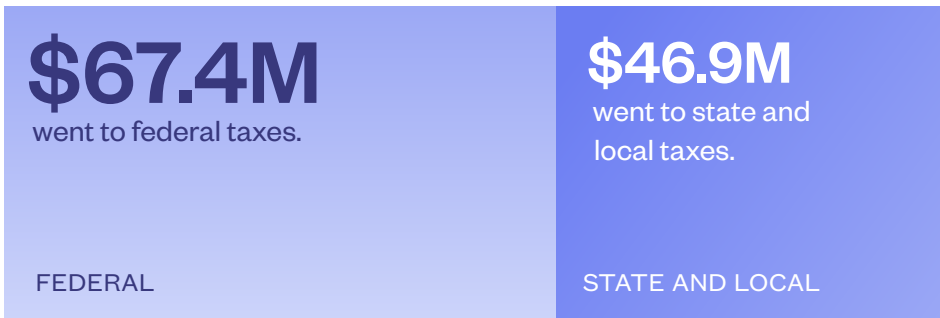


Undocumented Immigrants Continued

Amount earned by undocumented immigrant households in 2017:

\$1.1B

After taxes, this leaves them with **\$974.3M** in spending power.



Undocumented immigrants tended to work in these **key industries** in 2017:



1 Unless otherwise specified, data comes from 1-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2012 and 2017 and figures refer to the City of San Antonio, Texas.
 2 U.S. Congressional Budget Office. 2016. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2013."
 3 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. 2015. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States."
 4 We define working age as 16-64 years of age.
 5 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
 6 General services include personal services (e.g. laundry services, barber shops, and repair and maintenance), religious organizations, social services, and labor unions.
 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 Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. "Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market." New American Economy.
 9 Data on total student enrollment in the city 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."