

Examining the Economic Contributions of Undocumented Immigrants by Country of Origin

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Key Findings

— In 2019, there were more than 4.2 million immigrants from Mexico who lack documentation. Together, they make up more than 40.8 percent of the 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Rounding out the top 5 countries of origin of undocumented immigrants are: El Salvador (621,000, or 6.0 percent of all undocumented immigrants), India (587,000, or 5.7 percent), Guatemala (561,000, or 5.4 percent), and Honduras (416,000, or 4.0 percent).

— More than one half of all undocumented immigrants from Mexico live in just two states, California and Texas.

— The vast majority (96.7%) of Mexican undocumented workers are working and contributing to the economy and are vital to critical American industries including agriculture (11.5 percent of the

workforce), construction (6.7 percent), and the tourism and hospitality sector (3.4 percent).

- Given their productivity and their numbers, Mexican undocumented immigrants are significant economic contributors to the American economy. In 2019 alone, they earned almost \$92 billion in household income and contributed almost \$9.8 billion in federal, state, and local taxes.
- Mexican undocumented immigrants held more than \$82.2 billion in spending power, money that often goes back into local economies as they spend on housing, consumer goods, and services.

No country looms larger in the debate around undocumented immigration in the United States than Mexico. This is for good reason. Until as recently as 2017, the majority of undocumented immigrants in the United States were born in Mexico. And while migration trends to the United States have changed, immigrants from Mexico still continue to make up a significant share of the undocumented population in the United States.

Analyzing data from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample, we find that there were more than 4.2 million immigrants from Mexico who lack legal status in 2019. Together, they make up more than 40.8 percent of the 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Looking at the other four most common countries of origin for undocumented immigrants, we find that their numbers are considerably smaller in comparison, including: El Salvador (621,000 undocumented immigrants), India (587,000), Guatemala (561,000), and Honduras (416,000).

Chart 1: Share of Undocumented Population by Country of Origin

● Mexico ● El Salvador ● India ● Guatemala ● Honduras ● Other

More than one half of all undocumented immigrants from Mexico live in just two states. California is home to almost 1.1 million Mexican undocumented immigrants, or 26 percent of all Mexican undocumented immigrants. Texas is home to more than 1 million Mexican undocumented immigrants, or 24.8 percent of all undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Table 2: Top 10 States by Number and Share of Population, Mexican Undocumented Immigrants. 2019

State	Number of Mexican Undocumented Immigrants	Share of All Mexican Undocumented Immigrants
California	1,095,000	26.0%
Texas	1,046,000	24.8%
Illinois	219,000	5.2%
Arizona	175,000	4.2%
Georgia	147,000	3.5%
North Carolina	139,000	3.3%
Washington	125,000	3.0%
Florida	118,000	2.8%
New York	102,000	2.4%
Nevada	98,000	2.3%

Perhaps more importantly, Mexican undocumented immigrants have some of the highest employment rates in the country. The vast majority, or 96.7 percent, of Mexican undocumented workers are working and contributing to the economy. Together, they form a vital segment of the workforce to many critical American industries including agriculture (224,000 workers, or 11.5 percent of the workforce), construction (733,000 workers, or 6.7 percent), and the tourism and hospitality sector (524,000, or 3.4 percent).

Table 3: Top 5 Industries by Share of Workforce, Undocumented Mexican Immigrant, 2019

Industry	Mexican Undocumented Workers	Total Workforce	Share of Workforce
Agriculture	224,000	1,943,000	11.5%
Construction	733,000	11,016,000	6.7%
Tourism, Hospitality, and Entertainment	524,000	15,365,000	3.4%
General and Personal Services	202,000	7,597,000	2.7%
Manufacturing	370,000	15,800,000	2.3%

Given their productivity and their participation rate in the workforce, Mexican undocumented immigrants are significant economic contributors to the American economy. In 2019 alone, Mexican undocumented households earned almost \$92 billion in household income and contributed \$9.8 billion in federal, state, and local taxes, even assuming conservative estimates that only half of all undocumented households filed taxes. This is in addition to the \$11.7 billion in contributions to Social Security and \$2.8 billion to the Medicare Trust Fund that were made by or on behalf of employers of Mexican undocumented immigrants. After taxes, Mexican undocumented immigrants held more than \$82.2 billion in spending power, money that often goes back into local economies as they spend on housing, consumer goods, and services.

Table 4: Economic Contributions of Mexican Undocumented Immigrants by State, 2019

States	Household Income, in M\$	Federal income taxes, in M\$	State and Local taxes, in M\$	Spending Power, in M\$	Social Security contributions, in M\$	Medicare contributions, in M\$
California	\$25,128	\$1,570	\$1,147	\$22,411	\$3,289	\$784
Texas	\$21,549	\$1,199	\$1,032	\$19,318	\$2,630	\$632
Illinois	\$5,258	\$316	\$320	\$4,622	\$677	\$159
Arizona	\$3,541	\$194	\$167	\$3,180	\$438	\$103
Georgia	\$2,986	\$159	\$142	\$2,684	\$381	\$90
North Carolina	\$3,236	\$194	\$143	\$2,899	\$359	\$96
Washington	\$2,892	\$169	\$162	\$2,561	\$388	\$91

Florida	\$2,070	\$104	\$85	\$1,881	\$294	\$69
New York	\$2,538	\$189	\$155	\$2,194	\$306	\$72
Nevada	\$2,287	\$134	\$81	\$2,071	\$286	\$67
United States	\$91,992	\$5,396	\$4,391	\$82,205	\$11,689	\$2,798

Zooming out again to the top 5 countries of origin among undocumented immigrants, we find that across the board, undocumented immigrants are significant economic contributors as earners, taxpayers, and consumers.

Table 5: Economic Contributions for the Top 5 Countries of Origin Among Undocumented Immigrants, 2019

Country of Origin	Total Household Income (in Millions \$)	Federal Income Taxes (in Millions \$)	State & Local Taxes (in Millions \$)	Spending Power (in Millions \$)
Mexico	\$91,992	\$5,396	\$4,391	\$82,205
El Salvador	\$12,906	\$782	\$631	\$11,493
India	\$18,306	\$1,965	\$840	\$15,501
Guatemala	\$10,163	\$586	\$496	\$9,082
Honduras	\$7,184	\$434	\$344	\$6,406

While the debate over legalization and the future of undocumented immigrants in the United States continues without resolution, the data suggests that they have already proven to be integral parts of the U.S. economy and valued members of communities across the country. ▲

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